



# Special Education Superintendent Update

September 2021



The Special Services department continued to provide support and services to students throughout the summer months.



A **credit course**, *Dynamics of Healthy Relationships*, was offered during July for secondary students with Autism in grades 10, 11, 12 who are working towards the Ontario Secondary School Diploma. The course focused on understanding individual and group factors that contribute to healthy relationships, exploring self-concept and interpersonal relationships, practicing strategies for developing and maintaining relationships with friends, family, and community members. This course gave students an opportunity to connect with students who share similar experiences, participate in cooperative learning, and engage with learning specific to their needs.

Through consultation with the Autism Team, two **Board Certified Behaviour Analysts** supported students engaged in summer programs.



Our TCDSB **Social Workers** were privileged to be a part of the team delivering back-to-school gear to our students. Thank you to the Toronto Argonauts for their generous donation of 75 backpacks filled with school supplies.



The TCDSB clinical team of Social Workers and Psychology Service Providers offered **counselling services** to students and responded to situations of crisis over the summer months.

The clinical team also worked in collaboration with the *Focus on Youth* program to provide training to key youth leaders to facilitate **daily social-emotional wellness activities** with student campers during the *Focus on Youth* TCDSB summer camp program.

The Continuing Education **summer school programming** included emotional wellness activities prepared in collaboration with the mental health team.

The Mental Health Team prepared **professional development workshops** for the system for a mentally-healthy return to school. Resources included:

- A 90-minute webinar on mental health for staff with key messages for supporting the mental health of ALL students by focusing on the foundational building blocks of **creating a mentally-healthy classroom** and school through Welcoming, Including, Understanding students and Promoting wellness. A message of hope and gratitude was shared with all staff (<https://youtu.be/1j7Os5hupG4>). Included were also resources for teachers to implement brief and simple social-emotional strategies with students upon return to school, virtually or in person from School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO).
- A 30-minute workshop on the **Student Re-Engagement Kit** for teachers to implement evidence-based, brief, social-emotional, wellness activities for the first 21 days of school.
- In collaboration with Safe Schools, the team helped develop a webinar on **Anti-Human Trafficking** shared with all school staff.
- St. Anne educators were provided with an opportunity to engage in a professional development workshop on **Social-Emotional Learning**, with a focus on the Student Re-Engagement Kit for implementation in the classroom with remote learners during the first 21 days back to school.
- Here is a sample of a one-week calendar of activities:

**September 13 - 17**  
*Your Catholic community is stronger when we are able to recognize and value the God-given talents and strengths of others, focusing on seeing the good in them.*

Monday Sept. 13th	Tuesday Sept. 14th	Wednesday Sept. 15th	Thursday Sept. 16th	Friday Sept. 17th
<b>Virtual Field Trip:</b> Breathing Strategies: Early Years Primary Junior Intermediate Senior	<b>Daily Check-in</b> (All)  <b>That's Me</b> (All)  <b>Take Five Breathing</b> (All)	<b>Emotion Charades</b> (P, J, I)  <b>Two-minute Mindfulness</b> (All)  Based on your students' learning needs, select an <b>SMHO read aloud video</b> . (Click)	<b>What Comforts You?</b> (All)  <b>Giving Thanks</b> (All)  <b>Finding Calm:</b> Forest Visualization (2 min. Video) (Junior/Int/Senior)	<b>Tense &amp; Relax</b> (All)  <b>The Book of Gratitude</b> (All)  <b>Stretch In Your Chair</b> (All)

These are links to videos demonstrating breathing strategies.

**Infographic for parents and families** to support a mentally-healthy return to school for all is available on the TCDSB website: **Supporting Your Child/Teen With Return to School.**



SPECIAL SERVICES

Members of the Psychology team connected with families over the summer months to facilitate summer assessments.



Elementary Summer Camp and Secondary Summer School opportunities were offered at four sites for special education students with multiple exceptionalities and developmental disabilities. The programs provided fun and engaging opportunities for students during the month of July. The program was further supported by a generous donation from the *Angel Foundation for Learning*.



### Assistive Technology Team



The members of the Assistive Technology team have started the year offering full support to the staff and students of our virtual school, St. Anne Academy of Virtual Learning. Professional development opportunities supporting literacy and numeracy initiatives through *Google Read and Write* for language and *EQATIO* for mathematics have been offered in sessions prior to the start of the school year. Working in conjunction with the 21C and members of the curriculum team, the AT team have generated sessions to support students in asynchronous learning.

### SEA Technology Rollout

Students who access devices through Ministry SEA funding will be receiving devices throughout September. Delivery that was delayed due to the school closures will roll out to ensure access to curriculum as the school year commences for all eligible students. Additionally training for optimal use of the devices through Bridges Canada will rollout simultaneously.



### Professional Development – Instructional Equity

Members of the Special Services team created a 45-minute professional development resource session to support the system understanding of instructional equity and its relevance to special education teaching and learning. The strategy of differentiated instruction was highlighted. Monthly opportunities for staff to continue this learning will be offered.