



# Special Education Superintendent Update

October 2021

## OCTOBER IS AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

In Canada, October is Autism Awareness Month. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that includes impairments in language, communication skills, and social interactions combined with restricted and repetitive behaviours, interests, or activities.<sup>1</sup> Today prevalence rates of ASD in Canada are approximately 1 in 66.<sup>2</sup>

An increase in the number of students with Autism has been observed in the Toronto Catholic District School Board. Currently there are over 2,000 students with Autism in our schools.

The TCDSB offers a range of programs, services, and resources to support students, staff and families.

**Autism Support Team:** Multi-disciplinary staff on the Autism Team are available on a referral basis to help support schools and students in building capacity around best practices focusing on ABA strategies.

**Connections For Students:** Connections For Students is an Ontario government initiative, intended to facilitate the transition of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders from Autism Intervention Programs (AIPs) to school. This initiative partners school boards with AIP providers.

**The Program to Assist Social Thinking (PAST):** [PAST](#) is an elementary school program for students diagnosed with Autism level 1.

**Resources:** Information about resources available through the Autism Department and allied community organizations are available on our [Resources](#) page. Resources and materials for board staff can be accessed through the board's intranet [TCDSB Autism Services Team Site](#) (staff login required).

Our [Transition](#) page gives detailed information on how TCDSB supports students transitioning to secondary school and beyond. Some resources we provide to students and families are:

- [Tips and information to help parents and their children prepare for high school](#)
- [Transition to High School for Students with ASD on the Credit Earning Pathway](#)
- [Transition to High School Support for Parents of ME/DD ISP Students](#)
- [Preparing For Life After High School - For Parents and Families of MEDD ISP Students](#)

**World Autism Awareness Day:** April 2<sup>nd</sup> is World Autism Awareness Day. TCDSB recognizes Autism Awareness Day every year through various school initiatives. Visit our [Autism Awareness Day page](#) for more information.

The following websites may be of interest for those looking to learn more about Autism.

[Autism Ontario](#)

[Autism Canada](#)

[Ontario Autism Program](#)



*Watch out for information on events being planned for World Autism Awareness Day on April 2<sup>nd</sup>!*

<sup>1</sup> American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: DSM-5 (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association.

<sup>2</sup> Public Health Agency of Canada. (2018). Autism Spectrum Disorder among Children and Youth in Canada 2018: A Report of the National Autism Spectrum Disorder Surveillance System. Ottawa, ON.



SPECIAL SERVICES



October is Child Abuse Prevention Month. The social work department continues to support the system with ensuring we are protecting the rights and needs of children and families. The current Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Policy will be reviewed and all stakeholders will be invited to sign off on our shared Duty to Report as well as our Duty to Support. We invite all staff to wear purple for prevention of Child Abuse on October 27.



The Mental Health Team promoted mental health activities and resources throughout the system by:

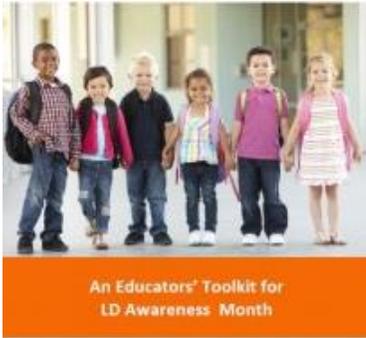
- Providing Professional Development refresher workshop on Brief Digital Interventions to 22 Social Work and Psychology staff members.
- Collaborating with the Communications Department on the development of three student videos on ways that staff can support the mental health of students. The six featured students were selected from the Catholic Student Leadership Impact Team (CSLIT), Student Mental Health Advisory Committee as well as our student trustees. The student videos were then shared with all school staff and through social media as well: [We all Have a Role to Play in Student Mental Health](#).
- Promoting the [Student Re-Engagement Kit](#) for implementation in the classroom via system email and social media. Here is a sample of a one week calendar of activities:

| October 4 - 8   |   |  |   |  |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| Taking time to acknowledge and celebrate the world around us, all of the living and nonliving things that God created provides an opportunity to make meaningful connections to Scripture. It also provides opportunity to live our Catholic values and virtues through action. |   |  |   |  |
| Monday<br>Oct. 4th  | Tuesday<br>Oct. 5th   | Wednesday<br>Oct. 6th  | Thursday<br>Oct. 7th  | Friday<br>Oct. 8th   |
| <p><b>Virtual Field Trip:</b><br/>Gratitude<br/><u>Early Years</u><br/><u>Primary</u><br/><u>Junior</u><br/><u>Intermediate</u><br/><u>Senior</u></p>   | <p><b>Deep Belly Breathing</b><br/>(All)</p> <p><b>High 5 to Friendship</b><br/>(P/J/I)</p> | <p><b>Help-Seeking Resource:</b><br/>discuss/distribute<br/>(Int/Sen)</p> <p><b>Walking in Your Shoes</b><br/>(P/J/I)</p> <p><b>Two-minute Mindfulness</b><br/>(All)</p> | <p><b>Inspirational Snowfall</b><br/>(All)</p> <p><b>Imaginary Walk</b><br/>(All)</p> <p><b>The Book of Gratitude</b><br/>(All)</p> | <p><b>Congratulations on completing The First 21 Days of Wellness!</b><br/><b>Keep it going!</b></p>                     |
| <p>These are links to videos demonstrating gratitude strategies. You can find full lesson plans including a variety of consolidation activities <a href="#">here</a>. Consider extending the learning all week!</p>   | <p><b>Conversation Starters:</b> Healthy Sleep (pink cards)<br/>Click for jam board</p>     |  |   | <p>For more resources to support mental health promotion and literacy in your classroom, click <a href="#">here</a>.</p> |

- Distributing a message of Staff Well-Being with a focus on Gratitude for the month of October with mental health resources for staff and classroom educators.
- Promoting student engagement in a provincial mental health initiative, #HearNowOn, with youth surveys and forums from School Mental Health Ontario via email and social media.



**OCTOBER is**  
Learning Disabilities Awareness Month



## October is Learning Disabilities (LDs) Awareness Month.

Learning Disabilities (LDs) are very common and affect approximately 10% of Canadians, which means that 1 in 10 students in our classroom may have learning disabilities.

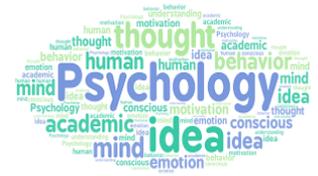
The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LD@school) team has developed a toolkit for educators to use during Learning Disabilities Awareness Month (#LDmonth) to help spread awareness in our schools and classrooms. The toolkit also contains great information for students, parents and the school community.

“My learning disability is what I have, it is not who I am”.

<https://www.ldatschool.ca/awareness-month-tool-kit/>

All are encouraged to focus on the strengths and abilities of our students with learning disabilities!

The Psychology Department continues to serve students, families and the school community. This includes in-person psychoeducational assessments, as well as ongoing counselling and mental health supports, school team consultation, and psychology education for school staff and caregivers.



Our Assessment and Programing Teachers and our Programing and Assessment Teachers have been busy supporting the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process at our schools.

Workshops and drop-in sessions have been offered for administrators and teachers. The focus of the process has been a collaborative approach as we continue to support our students .



### Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT) Assessment Update

At this time, the elementary teachers' work-to-rule sanctions, that restrict teachers' ability to engage in the administration of the OLSAT assessment, remain in place. Parents will be promptly notified by their child's school principal of the date and details related to the administration of the test at their child's school.