



Special Education Superintendent Update

January 2022



Upcoming events:

Transition Planning Workshop for Parents of Children with Autism in Grades 7 and 8 in a Multiple Exceptionalities/Developmental Disability (ME/DD) Intensive Support Program (ISP)
Tentative date: February 22nd

Transition Planning Workshop for Parents of Children with Autism in Grades 7 and 8 on the Credit Earning Pathway
Tentative date: February 24th



On December 3rd, the Social Work Department was engaged in continued equity work supported by the **Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice**. Principles of Indigenous teaching applicable to all groups will continue to inform our practice.



Throughout the holiday season, and ongoing, the Social Work Department distributed gifts and donations to the neediest families with the support of generous donors and *The Angel Foundation for Learning*.

We continue to serve the system with a variety of supports including counselling, crisis response, prevention and early intervention and consultation to all staff despite school closures.



The TCDSB has received Ministry funding to offer **Enhanced Autism Training** through the Geneva Centre. This is an opportunity for staff to take one of two courses, *Charting a Path to Success in Your Classroom*, or *Registered Behaviour Training (RBT) 40-hr Online Training Course*.



The Speech-Language Pathology department hosted a half-day professional development presentation on November 19, 2021 to 40 Educational Assistants working with students who use **Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)**, specifically picture boards, Flip n' Talks, iPads with communication apps in the classroom. The focus was on how to model core language with these students to increase their comprehension and self-expression in class.

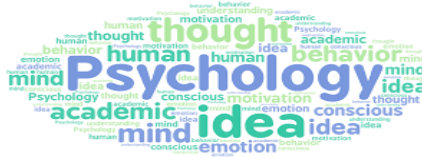


SPECIAL SERVICES

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Audiology provided an in-service on December 10, 2021 to the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH) itinerant Teachers on new updates to hearing equipment to help support student needs.

The department facilitated the distribution of clear window PPE medical grade *Humasks* to all D/HH Itinerant teachers and students on their caseloads and their classroom teachers.



For this month's Pastoral Day of Care, Dr. Saeid Chavoshi from our Psychology Department presented ***Dancing in the storm: Being there for our students and ourselves during a global pandemic***. The presentation focused on the prominent role of technology, digital media, and remote education during the pandemic, and its impact on student learning and wellbeing, as well as the wellbeing of educators and front-line education staff.

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



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

- Provided a workshop on ***How to Create a Mentally-Healthy Classroom*** to 14 New Teachers being hired at the TCDSB.
- Facilitated Staff Well-Being workshop for the Pastoral Day of Care for about 128 secondary school administrators and Chaplains. This session provided information and strategies regarding staff wellbeing; provide stress management strategies to staff; classroom resources to support student well-being: ***Fostering our Own Resiliency During COVID-19***.
- Facilitated a workshop to 22 social work and psychology staff members on ***Brief Digital Interventions*** to better support students' mental health.
- Launched the ***January Wellness Calendar*** providing classroom ready Social Emotional Learning activities for easy implementation in the classroom to all School Administrators for distribution to educators.
- Provided the ***LivingWorks START Suicide Response*** training (asynchronous) plus live session on TCDSB Suicide Intervention Guidelines to 25 elementary support staff.
- Through ***Strong Minds Strong Kids***, provided a ***Masterclass in Stress Management*** focusing on stress management strategies to about 100 elementary support staff.
- Distributed a ***Holiday Wellness Guide*** providing well-being strategies and community resources to parents.



SPECIAL SERVICES



TCDSB Holiday Wellness Guide 2021



MAKE ROOM FOR EMOTIONS

We often have expectations of a holiday season filled with smiles and laughter. But let's face it, things aren't always merry and bright. Some people experience more anxiety, stress, and frustration at this time of year. **Take time to check in with yourself and with your children/youth.**

Allow yourself (and them) to feel a range of emotions. When we acknowledge and name our feelings it helps calm us. We can help our children with this by using statements such as "I see you are frustrated" or "You seem worried, do you want to talk about it?"



JUST BREATHE



Deep breathing really works! It calms our bodies and our minds, making emotions feel less intense. Once we are calm we are able to think more clearly and problem solve. Check out [this resource](#) for family-friendly activities that teach us important coping skills like breathing. Teens may wish to check out the [Youth Mental Health Resource Hub](#) or [Anxiety Canada](#) for more stress management ideas. **Remember that spending time in prayer can also help calm our minds and ease our worries.**



MAINTAIN ROUTINE



Routine allows us to predict what's coming next which can give us a sense of control and help ease anxiety. **Be sure to build in time for self-care.** Check out these tip sheets: [Take Care of Yourself](#); [Self-Care 101 for Youth](#).



MAKE TIME FOR PLAY



At any age, play can reduce stress and help us cope with big emotions. **Holidays can be hectic, but try to schedule some unstructured downtime to allow for free play to occur.** While individuals can engage in play solo, it's also a great opportunity to connect. [Click here](#) for inspiration.



NOTICE MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS



The following resources can help you notice potential concerns:

- [Noticing Mental Health Concerns for Your Child](#)
- [Quick Reference for Youth Suicide Prevention](#)



REACH OUT

- **School mental health supports** are available during school hours through your child's teacher or administrator.
- **Outside of school hours or during holidays, you or your child can contact community resources:**
 - **Kids Help Phone:** 24/7 support in English, French, or Arabic. Call 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868 ANYTIME.
 - **What's Up Walkin:** Free Virtual Mental Health Counselling. Call 1-866-585-6486 Mon to Sat, check website for hours.
 - **Multilingual Distress Line:** Support available in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu. Call 905-459-7777. Check website for hours.

In case of emergency: call 911 and ask for mental health response team, or attend your local hospital emergency rm.

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM TCDSB MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



MARIE-JOSÉE GENDRON PHD, C.PSYCH
CHIEF OF MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY & STAFF WELL-BEING
EMAIL: MARIE-JOSEE.GENDRON@TCDSB.ORG

MELISSA HANLON MSW, RSW
MENTAL HEALTH LEAD
EMAIL: MELISSA.HANLON@TCDSB.ORG

