

Special Education Superintendent Update

May 2022



Upcoming events:

Mental Health Team: Supporting Your Child Through Anxiety – May 25th

Speech-Language Team: Supporting Communication Through Play – May 31st



The Speech & Language Department
Presents a Webinar:
**Supporting Communication
Through Play**

By: Noel Barrett
Jessica Leech
Sarah Strathy-Alie

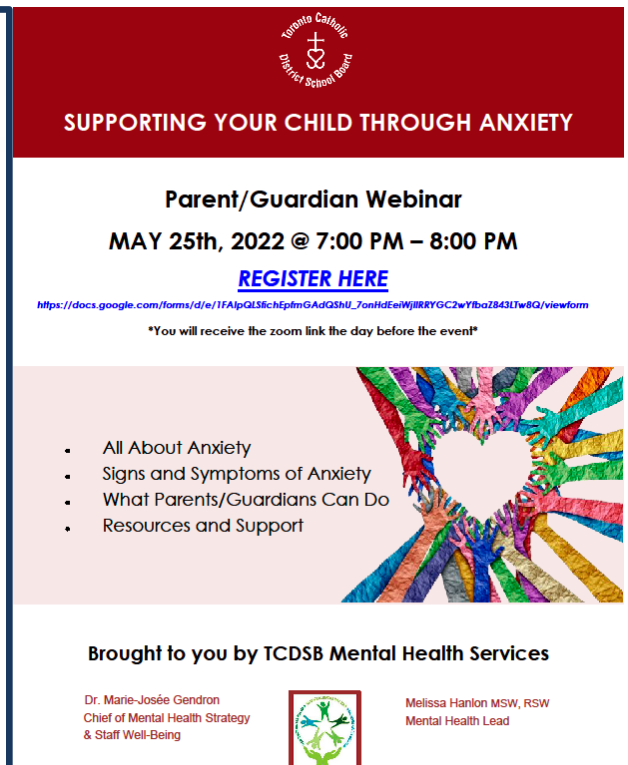
In this Special Services Parent Engagement Webinar families will learn:

- the types of play, speech, language and literacy skills
- what regulation is and how it supports communication
- examples of toys & play scenarios to build communication skills

May 31, 2022, 7:00 p.m.

SAVE THE DATE

Toronto Catholic District School Board
Speech & Language Department



Toronto Catholic District School Board

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD THROUGH ANXIETY

Parent/Guardian Webinar
MAY 25th, 2022 @ 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM

[REGISTER HERE](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLS8chpGmGAdGShU_TonkEeWjRRYGC2wYbaZ843Lw8Q/viewform)

You will receive the zoom link the day before the event

- All About Anxiety
- Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety
- What Parents/Guardians Can Do
- Resources and Support

Brought to you by TCDSB Mental Health Services

Dr. Marie-Josée Gendron
Chief of Mental Health Strategy
& Staff Well-Being

Melissa Hanlon MSW, RSW
Mental Health Lead



May



&



Hearing

Awareness Month

To celebrate, the department will host a parent workshop on May 31st, **Supporting Communication Through Play**, as part of the Special Services Parent Engagement Series.



The Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) ran a weekly drop-in "Communication Club" for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) users, a "Show and Share" Club for Early Learning Program (ELP) students and a "Girls' Group" for students in grades 6 to 8 in St Anne's Special Education Partial Integration classes. The goal of these learning activities was to create opportunities for communication for students in the virtual school.

St Anne Communication Club!

Come join our **small group** with Ms Megan (Speech-Language Pathologist)

We are moving back to **Thursdays** in May:

May 5, 12, 19 and 26
2:30 pm - 3:00 pm



TCDSB Speech and Language Drop-In Office Hours For St Anne Families

Do you have a question about Communication?

Drop in: **Every Tuesday from 4:30pm - 5:30pm**
Every Friday from noon - 1:00 pm





The Mental Health Team is continuing to promote mental health activities and resources throughout the system with the following activities:

- On April 7th, the Annual Stop the Stigma Symposium featured special guest, Asante Haughton who spoke to students in Grades 7 to 12 about creating safe and inclusive spaces for our students through his lived experiences. A total of 300 classrooms participated in the Symposium this year. Earlier in March, Asante Haughton also hosted a staff event titled: Deep Responsibility: Building safer spaces for inclusion and empowerment.
- During the Safe Schools Symposium, the mental health team presented on The Power of Hope: Impacts on Well-being to students in Grades 6 to 8.
- Facilitated a workshop to 30 new teachers on supporting students with ADHD.
- May 2nd to 8th marks Mental Health Awareness Week, a Special Edition Mental Health Newsletter was shared with parents/guardians so that families can extend the learning at home. As well, the TCDSB Mental Health Awareness Week Kit (2022) was shared with the school leaders and educators with daily announcements, discussion prompts and daily Social Emotional Learning activities for use in the classroom all week.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The department will host the annual Family Fun Day on May 30th at the Catholic Education Centre (80 Sheppard Avenue East). This annual event, which has been ongoing at TCDSB for over 30 years and organized by the Itinerant Teachers of the Deaf, provides our students and their families with an opportunity to socialize with one another in a positive and inclusive community. Each year, more than 200 attendees participate in a variety of fun activities and games and engage in enriching experiences.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK 2022

"Love is possible, and we are able to practise it because we are created in the image of God" (Deus Caritas Est).

Every year the Canadian Mental Health Association marks the first full week in May, this year May 2nd-8th, as Mental Health Awareness Week. The theme this year is Empathy. Empathy, or the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes, is a skill we all can learn and develop. At school students have the opportunity to engage in discussions and activities that promote empathy and good mental health. We encourage you to extend the learning at home using the information and resources provided here.

1 Practice Self-Care

We cannot respond to others with empathy without first understanding our own needs and taking time to care for ourselves. Discuss with your child the things we can do everyday to take care of our own mental health. The following resources may inspire you and your family to implement a small change in routine to support good self-care:


- [Personal Resiliency Tips for Caregivers](#)
- [Self-Care 101 for Youth](#)
- [Digital Detox: How to Unplug and Recharge](#)



2 Identify and Support Emotions

Whatever your child is feeling, simply listening can help. If they are upset, resist the urge to cheer them up or fix the problem right away. Instead try to put yourself in their shoes and focus on validating their experience. This empathetic approach will not only help the child/youth to regulate, but will also help them feel seen and understood. Over time, they will learn how to respond to others with empathy as well. Check out the following resources for more:

- [Listening & Coming Alongside Kids Emotions](#)
- [Name it to Tame it for Kids](#) (video, 5 minutes)
- [Being Empathetic Without Fixing](#) (video, 1 min.)



3 Develop Empathy through Prayer

Centering ourselves in prayer can help cultivate empathy for ourselves and others. Together with your child you can call to mind the needs of your family and of others in the community and the world. Try Pope Francis' 5 Finger Prayer.



4 Promote Empathy Through Stories & Discussion

Reading together with your child has many benefits including promoting empathy. Through stories children can learn about diverse cultures, identities, and experiences. They can practice putting themselves in someone else's shoes. The key is pausing throughout the story to talk about what the characters are thinking, feeling and experiencing. Try these prompts: "How do you think she feels right now?" or "What do you think he needs?" ([pbs.org](#)). The same strategy can be used when watching movies together or even when observing people or situations in the real world. For younger kids, check out these read-aloud videos compiled by School Mental Health Ontario.



Additional Mental Health Resources & Activities

- [Empathy: A Skill You Can Learn](#)
- [Easy and Fun Mental Health Activities for Home](#)
- [Everyday Mindfulness for Youth](#) (video, 5 min.)

Mental Health Supports

- School Mental Health Professionals (speak to child's teacher)
- Kids Helo Phone
- What's Up Walkin Counseling
- Multi-Lingual Distress Line



This newsletter is brought to you by the TCDSB Mental Health Services. Feel free to contact us with any comments, questions or suggestions at 416-222-8282