



SPECIAL SERVICES

SUPERINTENDENT UPDATE

MAY 2025



UPCOMING JUNE PARENT WEBINAR

Parent Webinar – Addictive Behaviours

We are excited to share a valuable opportunity to support your child's well-being. School Mental Health Ontario is offering a free webinar as part of the [By Your Side learning hub](#), designed to help parents and caregivers navigate important topics related to substance use and addictive behaviors.

This expert-led webinar will provide insights and practical strategies on:

- ☒ **June 4, 2025 12:00pm – 1:00pm**
Technology overuse and problematic gaming

The webinar will include answers to questions that parents/caregivers can provide ahead of the webinar, giving you the chance to ask questions and gain practical guidance.

 [Register for free today](#)

We encourage all parents and caregivers to participate in this informative webinar. Together, we can support the well-being of our children and communities.



May is

SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND HEARING

Month



This May, in recognition of **Speech, Language, and Hearing Awareness Month**, we have been actively fostering communication accessibility and awareness across our schools.

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE

The Speech-Language department shared valuable resources with educators and families to support early communication development in young learners, as well as strategies for older students. They provided guidance on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). AAC is a range of tools and techniques that help individuals express themselves when spoken language is challenging. These efforts highlight the diverse ways in which our students communicate.



DEAF/HARD OF HEARING (D/HH)

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing department shared a meaningful prayer and resources for schools while preparing for an exciting Social Butterfly event on May 23rd at St. Bruno/St. Raymond Catholic School. This learning opportunity for students in grades 3 to 7 will help support the social-emotional well-being of D/HH students and foster a strong sense of community. Additionally, our department helped spread awareness about VOICE Dress Loud Day. VOICE is a parent organization that supports children who are deaf and hard of hearing across Ontario. We shared information with students about this important initiative that celebrates the importance of inclusivity and the many ways people communicate.



SOCIAL WORK

This month the Social Workers engaged in professional development from EGALE to strengthen our support to students who identify as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. This opportunity solidified our commitment to ensure that our students rely on the foundation of their faith in growing to their full potential and understanding that they are loved and welcome always.

MENTAL HEALTH

During April and May, the mental health team actively supported student wellbeing through various initiatives:

1. **Stress Busters Program:** In partnership with Strong Minds Strong Kids: Psychology Foundation of Canada, an 8-week program called Stress Busters was conducted for Grade 4-6 students in selected elementary schools. These schools were chosen in coordination with our social workers. A social worker from Strong Minds Strong Kids facilitated this evidence-based mental health promotion program, empowering students with adaptive coping skills.
 2. **Health and Physical Education:** In collaboration with our Health and Physical Education (HPE) lead educator, the mental health team oriented all HPE heads to tools and resources for teaching about healthy relationships and mental health. This included the Kids in the Know program from the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and mental health lesson plans from School Mental Health Ontario.
 3. **Suicide Prevention Implementation:** In collaboration with School Mental Health Ontario, the TCDSB participated in a provincial panel to present our school board's implementation of suicide prevention protocols and resources across the school board.
 4. **Suicide Prevention Workshops:** Several suicide prevention workshops were facilitated for various stakeholders across the school board, including chaplains, elementary and secondary guidance educators.
 5. **Professional Development:** Professional development sessions on supporting a mentally healthy classroom were conducted for secondary student success teachers and math de-streaming facilitators.
 6. **Preventative and Restorative Practices:** In collaboration with Safe Schools, Indigenous Education, and Nurturing our Catholic Community, the Mental Health team facilitated practices focused on creating mentally healthy spaces for all principals from K to Grade 12.
 7. **Social-Emotional Poster Series:** Distributed a series of eight social-emotional posters to all Education and Community Partnership Program (Section 23) teachers for use in their classrooms with students.
-

-
8. **International Collaboration:** The Mental Health team showcased mental health initiatives in a few TCDSB schools to a German delegation and representatives from the Ministry of Education.
 9. **Professional Development on Progressive Discipline:** Facilitated professional development on Mitigating and Other Factors related to progressive discipline for school administrators.
 10. **Suicide Intervention Skills Training:** Conducted a two-day Suicide Intervention Skills training for re-certification for some mental health professionals (social workers and psychologists).
 11. **Mental Health Awareness Week:** Shared various resources, including wellness calendar activities and daily announcements for classroom teachers. Resources for staff wellbeing, including information about the employee assistance program, were also shared with school and business leaders.
 12. **Parent Engagement:** During Mental Health Awareness Week, a parent newsletter was distributed to school principals to share with their parent community. Additionally, a brochure about an upcoming parent webinar on supporting children with anxiety was shared (attached here).
 13. **ESL Instructor Professional Development:** Facilitated a professional development session for English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors for adult learners on staff wellbeing, emphasizing the importance of personal boundaries.
 14. **Student Leadership and Mental Health Resources:** In collaboration with Student Success, Guidance Educator leads, and Toronto Public Health Nurses, a professional development session was conducted for all Mental Health Action Team members on student leadership and mental health resources. Keynote speakers from the Rick Hansen Foundation presented on the importance of physical health for good mental health and the connection between inclusion and mental health.
-



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK 2025

"We must fan the flame of hope that has been given to us." (Pope Francis)

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Every year the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#) marks the first full week in May, this year May 5-11, as Mental Health Awareness Week. During this week, and throughout the school year, students have an opportunity to engage in discussions and activities that promote good mental health. We encourage you to review the tips and resources below as you continue to support your child/youth's mental health at home. Don't hesitate to reach out to your child's school with questions or concerns.

1

Support and Validate

Whatever your child/youth 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. Check out the following resource: [Listening & Coming Alongside Kids Emotions](#).



2

Nurture Sense of Identity

Exploring cultural, faith, and/or community activities together with your child/youth can help build cultural identity, create social connection, and boost self-esteem. Are there cultural foods or other traditions that your family can enjoy together? Are there stories about your family or culture you can share? Listening to music and dancing are other ways to celebrate culture and improve well-being.



3

One-on-one Time

A child/youth's relationships with parents/guardians and other caring adults are key to their well-being. Spending regular one-on-one time together goes a long way to nurture your relationship. Even just a few minutes a day makes a difference. Building this time into everyday activities such as involving your child in meal preparation can help make this more achievable.



4

Get Active Together!

Physical activity helps reduce stress and boosts mood. Even a short walk outdoors can really make a difference. Try building activity into your family's daily or weekly routine.



5

Support Your Own Well-being

Self-care is not only essential for your own well-being, but is also necessary in order to support your child/youth's well-being. Check out this [Personal Resiliency Tip Sheet](#) for ideas. Also consider reaching out to family, friends, your parish, or other members of your community for support. If you're looking for mental health support, [Connex ON](#) can link you to counselling services.



6

Try a New Mental Health Practice

Each of the exercises below can help us cope with stress and improve our overall mental health. Consider choosing one or two to practice together with your child/youth. When learning new skills, it's important to practice when calm.

- **Deep breathing** relaxes the body and mind and can be done anywhere. [Read about how to do it here](#). Kids Help Phone's offers a helpful visual: [Breathing Balloon](#).
- **Prayer** can be a healing act in times of difficulty. Consider a family prayer routine. Check out these [prayer resources](#).
- **Practicing Gratitude** helps us to develop a more optimistic and hopeful outlook even in challenging times. Consider asking each member of the family to share one positive thing about their day at dinnertime each evening.
- **Practicing mindfulness** can help reduce stress and help us cope with a range of feelings. Check out this [4 minute video](#) to learn about how you can be more mindful everyday.



How to Notice and Respond to Mental Health Challenges

It can sometimes be tricky to know whether behaviours and feelings you observe in your child are typical reactions to life's challenges or signs of a mental health concern. Start by reflecting on the questions below. Consider also speaking to other caring adults in your child's life, such as teachers or other school staff, to see what they are noticing.

- Are these behaviours and emotions out of character for my child?
- Are they impacting my child's ability to enjoy everyday life?
- Are concerning behaviours happening more often?
- Are they more intense and lasting longer?



For more information, click on this resource: [Noticing Mental Health Concerns for Your Child](#).

Reach Out When Needed

- Mental health support is available to your child/youth through school social workers and psychologists. Speak to your child's principal to discuss.
- [Kids Help Phone](#) offers counselling 24/7. Children/youth can call 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868.
- [Black Youth Helpline](#) offers culturally relevant services for youth and families. Call 416-285-9944. Check website for more details and hours of operation.
- [Hope for Wellness for Indigenous Peoples](#) offers 24/7 phone counselling and crisis intervention for Indigenous peoples across Canada. Call 1-855-242-3310 or visit website for online chat.
- [What's Up Walk-In](#) offers virtual or in-person counselling with no appointment needed. Variety of languages available and 2SLGBTQ+ counsellors available on request. [Click here](#) for locations, hours, and further details.



**SPECIAL
SERVICES**
MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

For more information or to access mental health supports for your child, please reach out to the school principal