



Special Education Superintendent Update

October 2017

Autism



OCTOBER IS AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

In Canada, October is Autism Awareness Month. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Autism are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviours. Prevalence rates of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in Canada are about 1 in 94 children – a ten-fold increase in prevalence in 40 years.

This increase in the number of students with autism has also been observed in the Toronto Catholic District School Board. There are over 1,700 students with autism in our schools, making this the third largest exceptionality in the board.

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

 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.

 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 schools boards with AIP providers.

 The Program to Assist Social Thinking (PAST) is for students with high functioning Autism. Students are supported through a one-day per week withdrawal program.



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 Information about resources by Autism Department staff are available on the board's website at [Autism Programs and Services](#). Visuals and materials for board staff can be accessed at [Autism Team Site](#).

 Parent workshops for students transitioning into secondary school and for students transitioning into post-secondary will be offered in October and February.

During the month of October, the following are some of the special events taking place:

 A 3 day course focusing on supporting students with ASD is taking place for Kindergarten Teachers.

 A group of students with Autism who attend the PAST program will be going to Camp Olympia from October 11th – 13th. This initiative is being supported by our student leadership team.

The following are some websites that may be of interest for those looking to learn more about autism:

Autism Ontario: www.autismontario.ca

Autism Canada: www.autismcanada.org

**For additional information, please contact
Autism Programs and Services at
416-222-8282 ext. 2799**

*Look forward to information on events being planned in
April for World Autism Awareness Day!*



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Speech and Language

- The SLP department hosted a one day, interactive workshop for kindergarten teachers and ECEs on October 3rd. Teacher/ECE teams participated in round-table discussions and case studies to identify effective teaching strategies to support students' oral communication skills.
- SLP staff were invited by the TCDSB Early Years team to give mini-presentations at the Collaborative Inquiry for Focus Schools' Early Development Instrument (EDI) discussions.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- The D/HH department is offering an interactive workshop on October 18th for classroom teachers at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The workshop will focus on strategies to support D/HH students in the regular classroom.

Mental Health and Well-Being

Upcoming Sessions:

October 6: Suicide Awareness Workshop available to all TCDSB staff

Oct. 11-12: K-12 Principals Meeting to Discuss new amendment to TCDSB Mental health Policy (addition of the Mental Health Crisis Response Guidelines), and sharing Ministry Resources for Administrators "Leading Mentally healthy Schools"

Oct. 13: Presentation to Ontario Physical Education Association annual conference " Stronger Together: The connection between HPE and Mental health"

Oct. 19: Introduction to Stop the Stigma PD for new elementary Stop the Stigma Schools (36 schools in total)

Oct. 24-25 Suicide Intervention Training for Mental health Response Team Members

During October all Social Work and Psychology staff were in-serviced on the New Supporting Minds Module "The Mentally Healthy Classroom"