

## NOVEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

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## CHECK IT OUT!!

- [5 Finger Breathing](#)
- [How to Optimize Working Memory](#)
- [What's Executive Function -and Why Does it Matter?](#)

## TDSB Hearts and Minds Newsletter

The TDSB is pleased to share the Hearts and Minds newsletter, a brand new resource from Psychological Services to support parents, guardians and caregivers. Each newsletter is full of information, tips, and ideas meant to make parenting a little bit easier, for you and the students.

[TDSB Hearts and Minds Newsletter](#)

## Special Education and Inclusion Parent Guides

## IMPORTANT DATES:

### KEY DATES 2024-2025

#### ELEMENTARY PD DAYS:

September 27, 2024: Professional Development  
 October 11, 2024: Professional Development  
 November 15, 2024: Parent-Teacher Conferences  
 November 29, 2024: Professional Development  
 January 17, 2025: Professional Development  
 February 14, 2025: Parent-Teacher Conferences  
 June 6, 2025: Professional Development

#### SECONDARY PD DAYS:

October 11, 2024 - Professional Development  
 November 15, 2024 - Professional Development  
 November 29, 2024 - Professional Development  
 January 30, 2025 - Professional Development  
 February 14, 2025 - Professional Development  
 June 26, 2025 - Professional Development  
 June 27, 2025 - Professional Development

#### SCHOOL YEAR HOLIDAYS (as per Ministry of Education)







Labour Day: September 2, 2024  
 Thanksgiving: October 14, 2024  
 Winter Break: December 23, 2024 – January 3, 2025  
 Family Day: February 17, 2025  
 Mid-Winter Break: March 10-14, 2025  
 Good Friday: April 18, 2025  
 Easter Monday: April 21, 2025  
 Victoria Day: May 19, 2025



## Strategies for Parents/Guardians/Caregivers

### Tips for Learning the Connection between Letters and Sounds (Alphabet Principle)

Each speech sound or sounds connect to different letters of the alphabet (“alphabetic principle”). We teach children how to make these connections between sounds and letters through phonics lessons. It’s important to practice learning the sounds that letters make and what letters look like. Here are some fun activities to try:

	<h4>Sound Games</h4> <p>Sing nursery rhymes and play rhyming games to help children learn to blend and break apart sounds in words (e.g., “The cat sat on a mat.”).</p>
	<h4>Letter Tracing</h4> <p>Trace letters in sand, shaving cream, or with a finger on paper while saying the sound each letter makes. This helps children learn to form shapes and how it feels with their hands.</p>
	<h4>Letter Fun</h4> <p>Use magnetic letters on a fridge or magnetic board to practice forming words and matching letters to sounds. For example, you could put the letters “S”, “U”, and “N” on the fridge and ask your child to say each sound, then blend them together to read “sun”.</p>
	<h4>Letter Hunts</h4> <p>Go on a letter hunt around the house or classroom to find things that start with a specific letter and have the child practice saying it’s sound.</p>
	<h4>Read Aloud</h4> <p>Practice reading with your child every day and point out each word as you (or they) read it. Notice any interesting letter or word patterns.</p>
	<h4>Decodable Books</h4> <p>Beginning readers should use books that have many decodable words in them (words that have specific sound-letter connections they have already learned, such as “I like to play. I am big.”).</p>






For more information and resources, please check out our Google Site at:  
<https://sites.google.com/tdsb.on.ca/psychologicalservices/home>



Shared by TDSB Psychological Services.

## Study Skills for Students

Studying for tests involves more than just reviewing your notes; it's a skill that requires practice and development, much like any other. Here are some tips to help you become a more effective studier:

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Create a Study Schedule</b></p> <p>Develop a study schedule with specific, achievable goals for each study session. For example, "Finish reading Chapter 3 and summarize key points" rather than just "study biology." Try the Pomodoro Technique: divide your study sessions into manageable chunks, such as 25-30 minutes of study followed by a 5-10 minute break.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Create a Productive Study Environment</b></p> <p>Find a quiet, comfortable and well-lit space with limited distractions. Keep your study space tidy and all necessary materials on hand. If you enjoy studying with music on, try to limit it to instrumental tracks. Reduce distractions from social media by using focus modes or apps that block distractions. If necessary, leave your phone in another room!</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Use Active Study Techniques</b></p> <p>Highlight or color-code important information as you are reading. After reading each small section, summarize the main points in your own words. Try explaining test concepts to a friend or family member. Teaching others helps solidify your understanding and identify areas that need more review. Complete practice problems or practice tests. Create charts, diagrams, and mind maps to visualize and organize complex information.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Practice Retrieval and Application</b></p> <p>Practice by applying the course work to your own life. For example, try explaining your last cold using what you know about bacteria, or comparing the characters from a novel study with the personalities of your friends and family. Review material periodically rather than cramming. Test yourself with flashcards for key terms, concepts and definitions. Learn and use mnemonic devices to help with memorization.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Seek Help When Needed</b></p> <p>If you're struggling with a topic, don't hesitate to ask your teacher or classmates for help. Understanding concepts early on prevents confusion later. Create a study group: discussing and sharing with others can deepen your understanding and memory for the material!</p>

For more information and resources, please check out our Google Site at:  
<https://sites.google.com/tdsb.on.ca/psychologicalservices/home>



Shared by TDSB Psychological Services.



# Strategies for Parents/Guardians/Caregivers

## Test-Taking Skills for Teens

By Jennifer Kapler, M.A., C.Psych

As secondary schools return back to traditional routines and course schedules, students might find that they are faced with more exams and tests than in the past several years. For some students, taking a test or an exam can provoke stress and anxiety, especially if they have not had much experience with these in the recent past. Here are some helpful tips for successful test-taking and managing test anxiety in secondary school:

- 1. Identify Roadblocks—** It could be helpful to identify what's 'getting in the way' when it comes to studying and test-taking. Help your teen to identify their specific roadblocks to successful test-taking, whether it is something external (for example, a lack of study strategies, too many distractions in class) or internal (such as, school stress, fear of failure). Once your teen has identified potential roadblocks, discuss ideas on how to 'clear the roadblocks', especially ones that are in their control.
- 2. Thinking Traps—** According to decades of research, the thoughts we have directly affect how we feel, and also how we perform or act in any given situation. Sometimes, we can fall into "thinking traps" – unfair or overly negative ways of thinking – and these thoughts can lead to feelings of anxiety or shame, which can then negatively impact our performance. For example, thinking "I will definitely fail the math exam next week" doesn't necessarily mean it's true, but it might make your teen feel defeated and lead them to conclude that studying is pointless! Help your teen pay attention to their thoughts and feelings around test-taking, and identify common "thinking traps" they may have fallen into. Challenging those thoughts with more realistic thoughts ("I have a better chance of passing the math exam next week if I study hard and ask my teacher for help!") can be helpful.
- 3. Learning Preferences & Study Skills—** Not every student prefers to study or learn in the same way. It can be helpful for students to try many different techniques for learning and studying material, to determine what approach is best for them. If applicable, your teen should be aware of – and ask for! – test-taking accommodations that they have access to through their Individual Education Plan (IEP). Help your teen learn & practice successful studying strategies, such as using mnemonic devices, graphic organizers, checklists or flashcards, chunking content into smaller, separate study sessions (spaced practice), paraphrasing and reflecting, reviewing concepts with a partner, or self-quizzing.
- 4. Healthy Habits—** Getting a good night sleep, staying hydrated, and eating a full meal are essential for an alert and focused mind, and they are important steps leading up to a test. To manage test anxiety, your teen may find it helpful to do a simple relaxation exercise prior to, during, and/or after their test. Practice relaxation exercises with your teen on a regular basis so that they become automatic, and they can be used more easily during moments of stress.

**Remember that tests and exams are a component of a student's education, but they do not solely define a student's success. If your teen is dealing with a significant amount of anxiety related to test performance, consider reaching out to their guidance counsellor or teachers for support.**



## Upcoming Events/Sessions

### Special Education and Inclusion Drop-In Sessions

These informal gatherings provide a welcoming space for parents, guardians and caregivers to learn about available services, ask questions, and connect with other families. Facilitators will guide discussions on topics such as supporting student transitions and exploring occupational therapy/physiotherapy strategies to use at home with students.

All drop-in sessions for the 2024-2025 school year can be found [here](#).

### Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Sessions

#### Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Wednesday, November 27, 2024

10:00 am to 11:30 am

[Nov. 27, 2024 Registration Link](#)

Thursday, November 28, 2024

6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

[Nov. 28, 2024 Registration Link](#)

\*If you require an interpreter for the session, please indicate this when registering, using the links above.

### ASD After School Skills Development Program – Fall 2024 Session

Fall/Winter sessions of the ASD After School Leisure Program, available both in-person and virtually, will run from November 26, 2024 to February 27, 2025. The program is available to students in Grades 4-10 who have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This program provides an opportunity for students to develop, build and enhance their social communication skills through either weekly in-person or weekly virtual sessions. The [information letter](#) includes registration information for parents of Grades 4 – 10 students with ASD. The registration period will remain open until **Friday, November 15, 2024**. Please direct any questions about this to Special Education at [SpecialEd@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:SpecialEd@tdsb.on.ca).

## Upcoming Events



Presents: **"Winter Wellness: Engaging Kids in Fun and Functional Activities"**.

Wednesday, November 20, 2024 - 11:30am

A session for Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Caregiver(s) of children with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities or other diagnoses

More details can be found [here](#).

Join: <https://bit.ly/OTPTVOHPARENT>

### OT/PT Welcomes Parent/Guardian/Caregiver to...

#### Drop-In Q & A with Occupational Therapy/Physiotherapy Staff

For children who would benefit from:

- Sensory and/or Regulation supports
- Fine Motor and Printing supports
  - Receive general OT/PT strategies for your child(ren)
  - Chat with other parents/caregivers
  - Ask questions

Monthly [Evening](#) and [Daytime](#) sessions available.

## Parents & Caregivers as Partners Conference 2024

### PARENTS & CAREGIVERS as PARTNERS

*Journey to Joy, Wellness, and Wholeness*

Conference 2024

You are invited to attend the Parents & Caregivers as Partners Conference 2024 on **Saturday, November 16, 2024**. This year, you can attend the conference virtually and/or join our in-person presentations.

Click [here](#) to register.

# Upcoming Events



## TDSB Social Workers present the **DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES VIRTUAL CONNECT** Formerly the Virtual Community Fair



**tdsb** | VIRTUAL DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES CONNECT

**Supporting Parents/Caregivers of Children, Youth and Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities and Complex Needs.**



**WHEN**  
*Morning Session*  
November 18, 2024  
9:30 am - 12 Noon  
*Evening Session (A Repeat)*  
November 25, 2024  
5:30 pm - 8 pm

  
**CLICK TO JOIN THE MEETING**  
Meeting ID: 940 1581 5609  
Passcode: 445164  
[DOWNLOAD ZOOM](#)  
JOIN ON YOUR LAPTOP OR MOBILE DEVICE

**OR**  
**SCAN**  


**JOIN US AS WE INVITE LEAD COMMUNITY AGENCIES WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SECTOR TO SHARE WITH US.**

<b>Get Direct Contacts and Ask Questions about Accessing Supports/Services</b>	<b>Connect with TDSB Parent Community who just like you are dedicated to nurturing children, youth, and young adults with Developmental Disabilities and Complex Needs</b>	<b>Learn About their Programs that are best suited to support the needs of your child</b>
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**FOR ANY QUESTIONS CALL:**  
VANESSA WONG: 647-229-0730 OR  
LARENA CASE: 416-570-3314  
 **Email us at:**  
[VIRTUALFAIRINFO@TDSB.ON.CA](mailto:VIRTUALFAIRINFO@TDSB.ON.CA)



## Post Secondary Session

### Post-Secondary Transition for Students with Disabilities - York University

#### Academic Accommodations and University – Virtual Workshop

All high school students and parents/caregivers (or other support persons) who have questions or concerns about the transition to university for students with disabilities are invited to attend this session. This workshop is for you, your family and support team to ask questions about the transition to university.

You will learn about:

- Documentation required to access academic accommodations
- The supports and accommodations available through Student Accessibility Services at York University
- Transition planning

This workshop will take place from **7 pm to 8 pm** on the dates listed below.

To participate, register before the workshop begins.

Wednesday, December 11, 2024: [Registration Form](#)

Wednesday, March 5, 2025: [Registration Form](#)

Wednesday, May 14, 2025: [Registration Form](#)

#### [Student Accessibility Services Transitioning to University.](#)

#### Strengthening Transitions to Post-Secondary for Students with Autism and their Families – in person on York University Keele Campus

This informational day is designed for grades 10, 11, and 12 students with Autism planning to attend post-secondary, as well as their families. High school educators and support staff are also cordially invited.

Join us to explore key insights! You'll delve into:

- The transition realities facing students and their families
- How to access support
- Strategies for academic success
- Insights into student life at the university shared by current York University students
- Methods to nurture and strengthen independence

This workshop will take place in person at the York University Keele Campus on **Thursday, February 20, 2024** from **9am to 1pm**. To register visit [Student Accessibility Services Transitioning to University.](#)

If you have questions about any of the above programs, please contact [projecta@yorku.ca](mailto:projecta@yorku.ca).