

Join the Conversation!

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING
DURING THE TRANSITION BACK TO LEARNING
THE 3 R'S: RELATIONSHIPS, ROUTINES & RESILIENCE

Thursday August 27, 2020 | 6:30 - 8:00 pm

Zena Shereck: Good evening, I'm Zena, a co-chair of the Parent Involvement Advisory Committee also known as PIAC. I'm also a parent member of the Parents as Partners Mental Health and Well-Being committee. And thank you to all parents and the Director of Education for the Toronto district School Board for joining us this evening. For our conversation this evening Returning to Learning and Well-Being Relationships the 3 Rs, Resilience, Relationships and Routines. This evening is an event jointly hosted by the Toronto District School Board and Parent Involvement Advisory Committee. Our presenters this evening are from the Professional Services Staff and Student Equity Workers of the Toronto District School Board. Before we begin, I would like to start with the Land Acknowledgment.

We acknowledge we are hosted on the lands of the Mississaugas of the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Wendat. We also recognise the enduring Presence of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

Before I introduce our next guest how important this conversation is and how important it is to me as a parent understanding that mental health and well-being is part of our children's learning and part of their whole environment. So thank you very much again for being here this evening. I would like to introduce the Toronto District School Board Department of Education, Carlene Jackson, Director of Education.

Director Carlene Jackson: Good evening and welcome to the parents as partners virtual conference. My name is Carlene Jackson. I'm the Interim Director of Education for the Toronto District School Board. Before we begin, I want to thank the parent and community engagement office for planning this great event and for inviting me to participate. It is a pleasure to join you today for today's conversation about mental health and well-being. As you know, this year has been nothing short of challenging for many of our school communities. Aside from the physical impacts of

COVID 19, this pandemic has taken a toll on the mental health and well-being of so many. More than ever, student mental health and well-being is an important part of student success and a priority for the TDSB, especially as we plan to safely reopen schools for the first time since March. Returning to school after many months away will require time to address the social and emotional needs of students on top of continuing to provide on-going support for those who need it. From our student survey, we know that about half of the students were concerned about getting used to school routines again. About one-third of students were concerned about getting used to in person interactions with teachers and peers. And not being able to interact with friends like they used to. As well as coping with their fears and anxiety. This evening you will hear from various speakers that will help to address many of the concerns that were expressed by you, parents and guardians in the return to school survey. You will also learn about the new and on-going supports we will be offering students including those to help students transition back to school. Professional support services and various online supports that will be available to students and their families. I hope that you find these conversations informative and engaging. Thank you once again to everyone who has helped to plan this great event. I am now pleased to introduce our mental health and well-being lead, Heather Johnson. Thank you very much.

Heather Johnson: Thanks so much, Carlene. That was a great introduction and we're happy to be here today to really try and share some information that we hope people will find helpful as we continue on this journey. My name is Heather Johnson. I'm a mental health lead here at the TDSB.

Shelley Moretti: I'm Shelley Moretti a psychologist here at TDSB. Good evening, everyone.

Heather: Joining this evening are members of our TDSB support services. Can you put the next slide, Margaret, please. Joining us this evening are people from social work, psychology, speech and language, occupational physiotherapy and child and youth serves. We also have our student equity program advisers, some of us joining. Our presentation tonight, people have already heard a few times is called return to learning what is next. And we're hoping to really look at how we can promote and protect mental health and well-being at this time. The three areas that we're going to talk about are resilience, relationship and routines after the presentation, we'll offer you an opportunity to join the breakout group and I believe that people were able to sign up for those as they joined in. So we can engage in a smaller group discussion. And the groups are kindergarten to grade three, grade four to grade eight, we have a high school group. We have a developmentally delayed and ASD, low incidence group. We have a

special education group. Another group around identity belonging and anti-black racism and our 7th group is mental health challenges. So if you have students dealing with mental health challenges. It gives us an opportunity to look at some of the things we have talked about tonight in terms of relationships and resilience and routines from the lens of those particular areas.

Shelley: Next slide, please, Margaret. We have been in a pandemic for almost 6 months and we're wear that we're living in really uncertain times and this is created a different degree of challenge for everyone.

Uncertainty, concern about the return to learning is a source of great stress for many parents and caregivers. We want to acknowledge how challenging this time has been and how difficult it continues to be.

Especially as we approach the beginning of a new school year. Parents and caregivers have real concerns about the safety and well-being of their children. Many of us here presenting tonight are also parents and we understand your worries. Everyone has been working incredibly hard to balance family and work life obligations and learning from home for our children. It certainly has not been easy. And there is no question that we are all doing the best we can. We appreciate your partnership now more than ever. We want parents and caregivers to know that you are definitely not alone when it comes to helping your children with the return to school or learning in whatever form that may take for you and your children. We are here to help. Our shared vision for supporting students and parents during this time puts the emphasis right where it should be on everyone's mental health and well-being.

Next please, Margaret. COVID has affected everything. I don't need to tell you that. School will not look as it did prior to the period of remote learning. And what we know about this seems to check by the hour.

There will be a need for physical distancing. Wearing masks. There is going to be changes to recess and lunch routines. And the list goes on and on. And it is possible that there may be a need for future transitions through learning at home as the pandemic evolves. All of this is understandably unsettling for students, parents, families and staff alike. We need to consider that circumstances have varied for students during the period of school closures. Depending on one's experience during the pandemic, this transition may either be more or less impactful on people's mental health and well-being.

Next slide please Margaret. When all of this started we learned how viruses spread and how to wash our hands like pros now we have to learn thing things about the impact of a pandemic on mental health and well-being. This is new learning for all of us. In the best of times returning to school after a summer break can be awfully hard. In light of the extended school closure and uncertainty about plans for return to school and learning, families and student are now faced with extra challenges. Caregivers and churn may have many questions, many thoughts and mixed

feelings about the idea of returning to learning. And whatever form that takes.

Heather: As a participant or caregiver it is really important to take care of yourself. Just as when you get on a plane they say, put your oxygen mask on first before you put it on someone younger or older than you. So as you can continue to live with the on-going uncertainty of the pandemic, it is important to find ways to support your own well-being. And I know that is not easy given what we have been living with. Often we feel guilty for taking that time just to focus on ourselves. I think as parents that is a common feeling. And self-care, taking care of ourselves can look different for everyone. But it really does make a difference. It can improve your energy. It can help you feel more joy around refocus on what really is important to you. We also know that research shows that getting outside and being active and eating healthy and getting sleep and maintaining daily schedule are important contributors to well-being.

Next. As parent care give you mask, what can help at this time like we all feel so helpless. What can I do that might make a difference? The best thing that we can do is really maintain communication with our children and teams and to be patient and understanding. I know it sounds simple but staying calm makes a difference. How calm you remain really impacts how your child is. Try to keep it simple. The COVID situation feels so overwhelming and complex. So much information coming at us. All at once. You can really help your child by breaking it down into manageable parts and focusing on the things that are really important. Listen, take the time to listen to what your child might say. Talk through how they're feeling. Acknowledge how they're feeling. And help them to kind of label those emotions. And keeping information age appropriate. I think sometimes it is hard to know what to say so answering here that questions as factually as possible but keep response animal appropriate is a great way to go. Limited exposure. It is -- we're bombarded in every form of media with all kinds of information and sometimes having too much information is not helpful. There is a man on my street and he's always on his phone and he and I have conversations about how that really isn't helpful for his mental health but he finds it really hard not to. He's a father of three young boys. It is important to be patient and understanding. You might notice behavior changes in your children. Your children might react differently to changes in routine and stress and I don't know about you but I have also -- I call it kind of the COVID coaster of emotions going up and down. So also to be patient and understanding with ourselves that we need to give ourselves a little breathing room as well.

Shelley: During school closure professional support services staff created resources with a focus about protecting and promoting mental health and well-being. The resources were aimed at staff, educators, parents and caregivers as well as our students. Just so families are aware, when you

go on the TDSB home page, there is a tab, a well-being tab. If you click on the well-being tab you will find your way to our resources and we hope you have the opportunity to check them out because there are some resource available to you on our website.

Next please. So in terms of our intentions for tonight's presentation, we have several. We're very glad to have you along with us this evening. First we would like to talk about and explore a concept known as social and emotional learning and talk about how these skills can be really helpful for your children and the other is to share practical strategies for supporting relationships, routines resilience.

Heather: Social emotional learning is all men health and well-being and something we have only started to talk about more intentionally in the last five years I would say. As parents we often think about how our children learn and do in school. Social emotional learning is about all the other parts of learning. These are the skills you need to do well in life. Things that include like knowing how you're feeling and how to manage your feelings, getting along with others. Coping with stress. Many goodness knows we've all had lots of that to deal with. Motivating yourself and working toward your goals. Knowing who you are, what your identity is and thinking creatively. These skills are essential and really start to developing when children are infants and continue into adulthood. We listen to your input as we've said and formed the presentation around the three areas you identified. That includes the resilience and parent and car gives ask for ideas for helping them with their children to develop skills to help them bounce back during this challenging time. They recognize the skills are essential for their child's overall well-being. If we really support our child's well-being they'll also do better academically at school. Relationships. During our absence from the school building, we all recognize the important role that relationships play in learning. It is vital that we focus on getting back to basics and making sure that our students feel safe enough to play and learn by connecting with each other and school staff. The last one and I think that we're all challenged with this is around routines. The importance of keeping a regular schedule providing a sense of control, predictability, calm and well-being. All things that are very necessary.

Shelley: Next we're going to talk a little more about resilience, our ability to bounce back during challenging times, and this includes a focus as we mentioned on social and emotional learning.

Dayna Morris: Margaret, I think we have to move down a couple of slides please. Perfect, thank you. I'm Dayna Morris and a member of the psychological services in the Toronto District School Board.

Chevalier Taylor: I'm Chevalier Taylor with the Toronto District School Board.

Dayna: We're going to speak to you about social emotional learning and we want to also welcome [NAME] for helping us put together this presentation. Thank you, Andrea. In the previous presentation, Heather and Shelley introduced us to the concept of social and emotional learning and highlighted how essential it is for good mental health and well being. And for improving resilience. In this presentation, I'll take a look at the core social emotional learning skills, talk about their benefits, and discuss some strategies that you can try at home.

Next please. Social emotional learning skills help us to be more successful in life. These skills are needed to start and keep friendships, complete tasks, manage our feelings and stay positive. They help us better understand ourselves. Also help us understand and connect with others. When we're more comfortable with ourselves and less stressed, we deal with problems and challenges and healthier and more effective ways. More than 20 years of research shows that developing social emotional learning skills has long term and widespread affects. These benefits include improved academic achievement in classroom behavior. There are also many mental health benefits as well such as better ability to manage stress and depression. Students also show more positive attitudes about themselves, others and school. Strong social emotional learning skills help us tolerate frustrations, focus better and feel less lonely. And these affects can still be seen after 18 years and are associated with reduced had poverty and police involvement. So as you can see, social emotional learning is beneficial for children and adults at any time. It is particularly important now to give our children the tools they need to manage the current challenges. so what exactly is social emotional learning school mental health Ontario has identified six key skills which include: Identification and management of emotions; stress management and coping; positive motivation and perseverance; healthy relationship skills; self-awareness and sense of identity; and lastly, critical and creative thinking. So we're going to spend some time briefly talking about each of these areas. And provide some strategies for you to try at home to help your children learn to identify and manage their emotions. Strategies to address some of the other skills will be covered in other presentation later this evening. Okay. The first area is the identification and management of emotions. Even as adults, we are experiencing a range of emotions about returning to learning and we're sure our children will be feeling many big feelings as well. When children understand the relationship between thoughts, feelings and actions and can accurately identify emotion in themselves and others, they're better able to express their feelings and regulate their behavior. The second skill area is stress management and coping. We've all been doing a lot of stress management these days. Returning to learning is going to be a big transition and periods of transition can be stressful. In addition, we know that learning environments will by different than they were before. Now more than ever it is important to

teach our children affective coping skills to overcome challenges both big and small. Helping children develop a range of strategies to draw on will help them bounce back and support overall resilience. The third area is positive motivation and perseverance. For our children, learning in September may be more challenging than usual. Whether they are in the classroom or learning from home. To achieve their goals, kids need to stay positive and persevere through difficult tasks and obstacles. Adopting an optimistic view is a good habit of thought that can be learned and practiced at school.

Chevalier: Many kids have not seen their friends while at home and caring adults have been enlisted. When returning to school, focusing on building social skills and re-establishing these connection will be very important. Being able to build and maintain friendships, communicate affectively, resolve conflicts and work as part of a team are skills that are foundational at school, work and beyond. Relationship skills can be learned and practiced at school and focusing on this area can benefit classroom culture and sense of belonging. Self-awareness and sense of identity. So as our kids return to school, they may require some support to help them determine how and where they fit in. Supporting self-awareness and encouraging self-confidence can help kids value their uniqueness and to appreciate their identity. Having a sense of who they are in the context of culture and community, may help kids see how they matter and contribute to the world around them. Lastly, we have critical and creative thinking. So this school year our churn will be faced with new situation and challenges. Developing critical thinking and problem solving skill will help them successfully address the challenges, make good choices, consider the consequence of their actions and the well-being of self-and others. Executive functioning skills such as planning task focus creative problem solving, time management and organization help children to be successful and academic task and prepare them for increasingly complex demands. We will now discuss some strategies that you can use at port identifying and managing emotions. It is important to note that the strategy work best when you teach them when your child is in a state of calm and not upset or in the moment so they can learn and consolidate the new knowledge. So in order to identify understand and respond to emotions in one self and others in a healthy manner, which were need to have the language skills to do so. As caring adults, we can hem them develop emotional literacy with the following strategies. So to help your child begin to understand and express basic emotions, help them label that you are own feelings. For example, it looks like you're feeling from you strayed or excited. And you can reinforce the use of these feelings worlds. You can also name and label your own feelings, talk about the things that make you happy, upset, frustrated and model how you manage those emotions. So, for example, I'm feeling from you strayed. I'm going to take a break. You can also model deep breathing during times of anger or frustration. You can also help your child recognize and understand how someone else will appear an

adult, a book character, how they might be feeling by pointing out their facial expressions, their body language or tone of words. The it is also important to acknowledge your children's feelings and it is okay to feel nervous when you're not sure what is coming. It is new for everyone and new can be scary or feel hard. Lots of people likely are having similar feeling and worries and they're not alone: So you can say things like I understand why you're feeling worried since the school year is going to be so different from what you're used to. Labeling and validating your child's feeling will help them identify their feeling and also help them feel understood and manufactured. Ensure that they realize that all feelings are okay. That is what we do with the feelings that is important. Had there are also some strategies you can try at home with younger children or those with special needs. Reading books during story time can be a great way to teach emotion and words. You can go through the book and pre-teach with your child and help create search student friendly definitions. So the storybooks do not actually have to be explicitly about the feelings. For example, the story Franklin in the darings not about the feeling word but the words within the book such as worried and brave are rich, emotional vocabulary words and they can be defined in a student friendly way. The facial expressions and visions in the book can support the new vocabulary. Also like to point out that there are some additional TDSB resources that were created by the speech and language department. With more strategies and ways to support identifying and managing emotion. That is provided in a follow up resource document. And so thank you for listening. The next presentation also relates to developing resilience by finding ways to cope with uncertainty.

Jeremy Ng: Hi. Good evening. I'm Jeremy Ng and I'm a social worker at the board.

Nicolle McSweeney: I'm also a social worker at the board. My name is Nicolle McSweeney and we'll be hosting this section of the presentation. We also like to acknowledge that there were many other people who contributed to the information that we're presenting, people from the Psychological Department, Wyndham, Annette Grossi, and Jocelyn Lai.

Jeremy: You have been hearing a lot of information tonight. Don't feel like you have to get it all right or know everything. We're doing the best we can. There is no needs to make ourselves as parents feel like we're not doing enough. If you can pick one or two things from this whole night and practice that, that would be great. We're going to offer a few more tips around coping with uncertainty since pretty much uncertainty is the only thing that we're certain about these days. Both us as adults and our children can learn to cope with some uncertainty, help our mental health and well being e we can try to focus on some of the positives and some of the things within our control instead of the negative and things out of our

control. So what is uncertainty? Normally when our children get ready to go back to school we use our past experiences to help us. We'll say things like remember what it was like last year when you had to get up early I is with school and meeting a new teacher how nervous you were? What was helpful then. But this year unfortunately no one is going to really know what is going to happen. We don't have those past experience. So it can be helpful to talk about uncertainty. A kid friendly definition when I just don't know something will happen for sure. Here is a quote just to illustrate about the known and worries often associated with it. We do not fear the unknown. We fear what we think we know about the unknown.

Next slide please. And so as school approaches even after the first few weeks we might see some change in the following emotion or behaviors due to uncertainty. We might see a constant need for reassurance. It could be like a verbal reassurance or even feeling like a lot more physical touch. Our churn might be trying to overplan or see some physical symptoms like sleeping or eating difficulties or being more irritable or avoiding activities that they would like to do. We have been talking about feelings. I find this iceberg picture and what is underneath the behavior and what are they thinking and feeling was talked about in the last section so that we can name and validate it. And so we want to kind of get to resilience. So we don't just struggle with behaviors but able to bounce back from the challenges of uncertainty. We want to have the skills ourselves and be able to teach them to our children. One of the ways that we do this is through self-regulation. It is how we manage our own stress and emotions by the action we take. Many it can be as simple as taking a deep breath, journaling, doing art, talking with a friend, being physically active. For kids they have not quite learned how to do this yet oftentimes need help from caregivers to help them manage. So something simple like hey, let's take some breaths together. And it is important as we have been talking about we take care of ourselves as caregivers first so we can support our children. And so as we help our kids cope with uncertainty we kind of start from the bottom. We want to check in on their physical needs for as much as you're able to whether it is eat well or sleep well. As we move up to it to being able to be cared for and encouraged to share their feelings. Not being told that what they say or feeling is wrong or being judged for that but just saying hey we understand. It doesn't excuse their behaviors. But just to know they're loved in their home. And as we help our churn cope we prepare what we can. The I don't know about you but I'm not a huge fan of surprises. No we can't control everything that is going to happen at school. We can try to prepare our children for as much as we can to help reduce any feelings of anxiety. We might want to talk with our older children. What school might look like. Some different rules they might expect. For young or children to help them understand what they can expect. We'll talk a lot more about routines later on. Pay attention what might be useful to get them back into a routine.

Nicolle: Okay. Hi, everybody. In addition to identifying, accepting and validating emotions, trying to understand what might be underneath those emotion, taking care of everyone's basic needs and preparing for what you can. Another strategy to help children cope with uncertainty is to shift their attention to things they can control, positive things in their lives, and focusing on the present moment. We'll go through each of these three things. We're going to start with the circles of control. So we've heard the word uncertainty a lot. And what I would like to say about uncertainty is what I find is that it is difficult to know what to expect or what is expected of us. And when things were uncertain there were many things that feel out of our control and often are out of our control. What happens is that this sometimes can lead to increased stress, increased worry, increased anxiety because when we don't feel in control, what we often do feel is overwhelmed around helpless. So to help address the uncertainty and any feelings of being helpless or out of control, we can try to refocus on the areas that we can control and help our kids do the same. On this slide you can see in the green circle are things that children and kids do have some control over as they're returning to school. Some of these are specific or related to just general return to school and some are a little more specific this year to the COVID 19 that limitations. One of the areas I would like to point your attention to in this slide is the top icon in the green circle which is positive thoughts.

If we could go to the next slide that would be great. So you probably heard about positive thinking, positive self-talk, showing gratitude. We heard earlier today why this is important because our thoughts affect our feelings which affect our action and behaviors. If we can think positive about something we'll feel better and be better able to adapt and address anything that we come across. So showing gratitude. It is actually not that difficult to try and incorporate that into your family's life. Sitting around the dinner table. Tucking your kids into bed. It can be just as simple as saying what are you thankful for today? What am I thankful for today? What made you happy today? Some kids who like to write or journal could keep what we call a gratitude journal which is really just a diary where they list items that they are grateful for. On the right hand of the slide you can see a variety of different coping thoughts. So if a student or a child or a teen or even an adult resonates with any of these coping thoughts or can come up with one on their own, it is something that you can repeat to yourself almost like a mantra. When things are tough and you're feeling stressed and you're feeling a little bit worried, feeling a little anxious about something, you can go to that positive thought to remind yourself that you're going to be okay and that you are going to get through it. What I would say are the three basic messages and positive self-talk and positive thinking are also on the screen in front of you. So just reminding yourself, I have gotten through argued thinned before and I do have strategies to deal with hard situations. Also a reminder this is new for everybody and new can be scary and new could be hard. You'll get better at this. It will take practice but it

will get better and easier. The last point to remember is that you're not alone. You can always ask for help if you need it. Thank you. Focusing on the present. So focusing on the present is about trying to shift you and your children's attention from the uncertain future to the present moment. You can do this by engaging in mindfulness activities. So here is a basic definition about what mindfulness is. Basically all it is, is about being aware what we're thinking, feelings and doing in the present moment without any kind of judgment attached to it. So as you can see from the picture on the slide, when you're in the present, you're not thinking about what is happening in the past which you can't change any way. And you're also not thinking about anything in the uncertain future that might be causing anxiety. You are in the present moment. There are many mindfulness apps and online videos that you can find and a lot of people think that you need to have a really long time to sit down and do this affectively but actually there is many apps where there are two or 5 minute mindfulness routines of that is sometimes all you need to just ground yourself. So what I'm going to do now is actually take you through a very short mindfulness activity.

So if we could just go to the next slide. I'm hoping that everyone who is with us can look around just note five things that you see. The first five things that you notice. You don't have to attach any value to it. Just what are you seeing? Great. Now I would like everyone and some time I find it is helpful if you close your ideas. It is up to you. If you could identify four things that you mere. You might be hearing my voice. You could be hearing a lawn mower or dog barking outside your window. You could be hearing something in your family's apartment. Okay. Now I would like you to try and identify and note three things that you're feeling right now. So it could be the chair that you're suggest on. The way that your feet are touching the floor. It could be whether you're hot or cold. It could even be an emotion that you're feeling. Three things. Now I would like you to try and identify two things that you are smelling. And once you have done that, one thing that you might be cost right now. So as you can see we're just incorporating our senses to bring us in the present moment. What I'm hoping is that those that joined in the activity, that while you were identifying the things you were seeing, feeling, smelling, tasting, you weren't thinking about something that had happened earlier in the day or something that was happening tomorrow but that you were just in the moment. So for younger children and chun with special needs mindfulness can be as simple as just learning how to breathe. We talk about breathing be a super power because if you are able to do deep breathing it can calm your nervous system as well as your mind. So to teach children, younger children or children with special needs, there is a couple of different ways that you can teach this breathing technique. You can have them hold a real flower, toy flower or even just imagine they're holding a flower. Ask them to smell the flower. They're breathing breath in through their nose. Then you ask them to blow on the pedals so they're breathing out through

their knife. Similar to using the pinwheel that you see in the picture you ask them to breathing in through their nose to take a deep breath in and blow out of their mouth and make the pinwheel move. As other panelists have suggested there are going to be other resources and suggestions in a digital resource list that is going to be sent out I believe at the end of the evening. Okay. And this last slide for this part of the presentation is a list of coping tools. This is just an example of a list of different coping tools that can and may be helpful for different people. And what you can do is personalize this list to work and make it reflect what works for you -- for you or your child. You can download images from the Internet. You can draw picture yourself. You can have handwritten lists. But what we suggest is if every child returning to school has a list of coping tools, five or ten I would suggest, that they can refer to when they're feeling uncertain or worried or anxious. It would be helpful way for them to deal with those feelings. I wanted to just let people know that not all coping strategies work for all people. And not all coping strategies work in all situations. So that is why it is nice to have a list so if you try one and it doesn't work you can try something else to see if that is a bit more helpful at that moment. You can see from the list that there is kind of two categories and so some are helpful to calm down and focus similar to the mindfulness exercise that we just did a few minutes ago. Some strategies are more active and meant to get your body moving and getting yourself active. So on that note, I would like to encourage everyone to take a few second to take a quick stretch while we transition to the next part of our transportation which is about the important role that relationships play in your children's learning.

Alana Lowe: Thank you Nicolle and Jeremy. I'm Alana Lowe. I'll be talking a little bit more about relationships. So relationships and student success have always gone hand-in-hand. But since the school closer we realize now how important school relationships are not just academic success but really how important they are just to sense of well being and belonging. So things like school clubs and extracurricular activities, they affirm identity and connection. Okay. We can also cup this one, too. Thank you. So common questions, we received from parents were on foster and strengthening relationships during remote learning. How do you build relationships through remote learning platforms like Google classroom and how might you connect with teachers and staff outside of those platforms via e-mail or phone?

So before I touch on a few strategies we can go to the next slide. I think it is really important to just mention how relationships may be impacted by student identity and whether they have a strong sense of belonging or feeling connected to their school or their school community. So we know that students feel included. We know that students that feel included at school, they're more likely to have positive and healthy relationships. We also know that students that feel excluded, they're more likely to have negative experiences and feel less supported at school. So there are

several reasons for why someone feels excluded or has a low sense of belonging and sometimes they are connected to their identities. So a student sense of their body image the way that they see themselves. That might impact the relationships at school. Their sexual identity or gender identity or the way they express their identities might impact the way that they're treated or their distractions at school. Religious beliefs and race and neighborhoods that they come from and the language that they speak. Their immigration status, all these things have -- can be hard for students to develop positive and healthy relationships because students and families are experiencing challenges that are very unique to them. So a big concern shared by students was on how limited interactions might impact relationships and student well being. So this chart is just some findings from a 2020 preliminary summary report for the team return to school participate caregiver and student survey 59% of parents were concerned that interactions with friend won't be like they used to. 49% were concerned about their children's ability to cope with the new reality of school. And 45 percent were worried about how they would re-adjust to school life. So I'm just sharing this data to let you go you're that out alone with your concerns and that students, families and staff they share similar concerns when it comes to relationships and the new real presented from remote and virtual learning. Thank you so much. So how can we build and strengthen relationships when we're unable to interact and connect in the ways that we used to? Here are just a few strategies that I hope can help. Firstly I want to say that building and strengthening relationships it takes time and it takes a lot of several -- it takes a lot of several -- like small steps but there are small steps that I think that can be taken day-to-day, week to week. So the first one that I would say is -- would be connecting with as many staff in your school that you can connect with. So first would be definitely checking with a classroom or course teachers. That is definitely vital. But I think it is important you connect with the admin and support staff, too. This can be done by sending an e-mail to the principal or the VP at your school. You can find out the names of the principal and the VP at your school by just typing in your school name in Google and it should -- the website will come up. The names are usually listed there. It is usually the first name dot the last name@tdsb.on.ca. That is just to send the staff or the principal and the VP just to send them an e-mail for a list of the support staff at school. So Jocelyn will provide more information about what support staff there are available and pretty much how they can support you. So that will be presented later on in the presentation. I think it is also really important to connect with the teacher virtually. So outside of like telephone or e-mail you can connect with teachers through comment sections on Google classroom or bulletin board or social media if they use it for learning. Parent council -- sorry we're going to go back to the other slide. Still on that one. Yep. So parent council cans and committee I highly suggest you get connected with and if you have time get involved in that. I understand that you know some of you might be working with when

meetings are held. You may not have the time to go to meetings or support council activities but you can request to be put on an e-mail list. They can keep you updated about what is going on. I would also stay connect with community organization in your local community. That is another way to build relationships with the school from outside of the school. Some schools already have strong relationships with local community organizations like the Boys and Girls Club or after school program. So definitely ask the teacher, ask the principle, ask your child and youth councilor or your child and youth worker or your student equity program adviser about what organizations will be best fit for you. So outside of those tips that I shared, I would also say that it is really important to learn about TDSB policies and procedures. Ones that existed before the closures and also keeping updated with new policies and things that might be put in place now that we're in remote learning. I think it is really important you as a parent understand your rights as a parent and you understand your child's rights as a student. So you can Google TDSB policies and they'll come up type in TDSB policies and procedures and all that stuff will come up. There might be a time where you might need to advocate for your child. I think it is really important that you're supported through that process. I would encourage you to connect with support staff if you can. They can help you during that time. Student leadership opportunities, they're also really great way for your child to build positive and supportive relationships at school. I know with remote learning many in-class activities will continue to remain on hold. But there will be remote learning opportunities. Like leadership clubs and equity groups. Those will be offered to students. So please again ask peach teachers and admin about that and hopefully that might also go out through e-mails or regular communication, too. If you need additional support, I would definitely urge you -- sometimes we're hesitant to reach out to teachers or principal or VP if a problem comes up. We feel like it is not our place. Some parent are very comfortable with that. Parent that might not have strong relationships or connections definitely might experience some challenges or barriers requesting additional support. I definitely say start by talking to someone that you're comfortable. If you're not comfortable or have any relationships with the teachers or staff in your school, look out, seek out additional support from a leader within your community or community based organization. That is it for relationships. The next presentation is about regular routines and organizing your day as another way to provide a sense of well-being.

Afshan Siddiqui: I'm Afshan Siddiqui, a psychologist with TDSB.

Yvonne Wyndham: I'm Yvonne Wyndham, a speech language pathologist at the board.

Afshan: We're going to talk about establishing routines in uncertain times.

This presentation was also developed by Jocelyn Lai. I hope I got it right this time. Who is a physiotherapist and Fiona Currie who is another psychologist with the board. So if your family is anything like mine, I'm sure your routines have probably been pretty irregular lately. Things I think are a little bit better for us now. Initially when this whole school closure and pandemic started, we were pretty much in your pajamas 24/7 and making a lot of banana bread for some reason. How about you Yvonne how have your routines been?

Yvonne: I'll raise you by soda bread, too. Our routines definitely are still a little out of whack.

Afshan: I totally agree with you. Ours as well. Now that we're going back to school and back to work, it will be important to try to go back to some of our regular routines as well. Because they are important to our mental health. I think Heather briefly mentioned some of that initially. But --especially now with -- with the world feeling a little bit chaotic and out of control, it is nice to have some of that normalcy that routines can give us. So if we go on to our next slide, we have a -- comic that kind of shows us one of the benefits of having a routine. So Kelvin has decided initially that he's going to try at different cereal. Change things up and make things exciting for himself and by the end he realizes that this new cereal doesn't have the chocolate frosting that he knows and loves and he decides to go back to what he finds comfortable and his regular routine.

Yvonne: So why are we even talking about it?

Afshan: Go on to our next slide we have a whole list of reasons. This isn't everything. We couldn't fit it in the time that we have. Just to give you an idea of some of the reasons why and we have touched on a bit of the first one already. Routines give us structure and consistency and a sense of control. Because we know what we're getting into and what we can expect. When we know what we can expect, it also lessens the stress and the anxiety that we are feeling. Because we're doing something familiar that we likely have done many, many times. And because of that, we're also more confident because we have repeatedly done something and so we're getting better at whatever it is that we're doing over time and becoming more independent as well.

Yvonne: Give us a couple of example if that is okay. The

Afshan: Go to our next slide. A few example. We talked already about what we wear. So not wearing pajamas all the time. We have talked about cereal routines and right now we are -- I think going to have a little bit of time readjusting our bedtime routines and sleep routines because our bed times are kind of all over the place. Sleep -- wake up times are all over

the place. Really we can have routines for anything because routines are just habits that we form through repetition.

Yvonne: Could you give us a little example of how to establish a routine if you don't mind.

Afshan: On our next slide we start off. If you can take us to the next slide, Margaret. So a lot of these concepts -- stop right there. A lot of these concepts may be familiar to you. But we just wanted to kind of give you a refresher because we are going back to school and back to work for some of us. But if any of these concepts are new learn something then all the better. But basically you would want to start with familiar routine and our example here it is the morning routine. And what you want to do is give your children choices. Margaret click one more time. Two more times maybe. You would give your children choices. In this example. Click once more. We have make your bed. The or make breakfast. The choices don't necessarily just have to be the activities that you're asking your children to do. It could also be the timing of when the activities are done. You can make your breakfast or bed now or you can make your bed after breakfast. Click one more time. Just want to remind everybody to as much as you can into your routines. Especially if you're having your children do something quite lengthy in nature. Or more academic. They do need those little brain breaks to just move and to stretch. And then if we click one more time. We can see that motivators are also really important and routine especially when you're first getting them started. It kind of gives your children the reason or the why that they're doing what they're doing. In this situation it could be things like -- easy way to do this is through like a first kind of strategy. First is what you're asking your child to do. Then it is the motivator. So make your bed. Then you can go to the park or in this example here.

Yvonne: Usually motivated by chocolate.

Afshan: Work for chocolate me, too. There is lots of different motivators that you can use. It doesn't have to be necessarily like an object or an activity. It could be really even be something as simple as one-on-one time with a parent or maybe going to visit a grandparent. Really you should maybe just sit down with your children and talk to them to see what would work for them. Okay. The up we can go to our next slide. We just wanted to give you some ideas of schedules, checklists and notification. If you just click it one more time. We also have some more electronic schedules and checklist and schedules and checklists are a good way of just trying to make our routines more structured and predictable. And there is like I said a range of schedules and checklists and it could be really simple and visual. Especially for younger kid who may even need pictures of themselves doing the activities to understand what is needed to more text

based or electronic for older kid. When you're building your routines make sure that you do include some time for fun or wellness kinds of activities. And remember that some kids may need a little bit of extra support when you're switching between tasks or what we call transitions to kind of queue them to let them know that it is time to move on to something and so right in the bottom right-hand corner we have an example of a timer. Just a time, timer. It goes off to let them know it is time to move on to something else.

Yvonne: Sound good.

Afshan: Yvonne is going to talk to us about some of the old routines that we lost track of during this period as well as some very new routines our kids will have to deal with. The

Yvonne: Absolutely. We -- if you go on to the next slide Margaret. Thanks. As parents or caregivers, it is a good idea for you to use routines to help your children practice skills. So that you can prepare them in advance for any new activity coming up or even this new normal that we're going to be having when we get back to school. If you do that get them to practice a little bit in advance, you can actually help them become a little more independent with these skills and bring down any anxiety, you know, if they're worried a little bit you can actually minimize that. And just in the next couple of slides so if you can go on to the next one Margaret. So one more before that Margaret sorry. In order to increase that buy in it is a good idea if you're trying to establish a routine foregoing back to school, have your older child or any age if you like if you think they can manage to sort of be a part of what their schedule should look like. Particularly if they're -- whether they're going into school physically or whether they are going to be doing more remote learning at home. Have them involved in the discussions. The more input that they have, the more likely they're going to follow the routines and actually keep to the schedule. And for older children who have been sleeping in Afshan, we talked about this a lot. How is your teenage boy doing at home?

Afshan: Oh my goodness it is record breaking at time. He rolls out of bed whenever he wants.

Yvonne: Mine could sleep and win an Olympic medal. Older children that have been sleeping in like our kids are going to have a much more -- sleep schedule is not going to be that regular. It is a good idea to try to get them to re-adjust to a better sleep schedule a couple of weeks before you think school will start. I know we have a date now but you never know. Starting now to get them to do that is a good idea. If you can build in some time before bed. At least an hour before. Where you're not going to have any devices at all. Have them unplugged, no screens to help them to promote that kind of sleep cycle that you're trying to get to be more

regular. Even calming music or mindfulness. Anything like that. Deep breathing to kind of get them going into sleep. When they wake up do some exercise. Not just before bed but better they do it in the morning and get some sun exposure as well. Even for younger kids, it is probably more important to establish a routine especially if that younger child has special needs. So something as simple as going out you can practice whatever the routine is of leaving your home and coming back and any kind of trip outside. And set some clear and specific rules. For instance you might ask permission to hold their hand before you cross the road. Anything like that. Obviously in this time that we're in right now, there should going to be new health measures. Even practicing putting on the mask and using the loop its around the ears rather than the front. Anything like that is good. But keeping the tone light. Not having our kids become anxious because of what they're hearing in the news and this, that and the other. Limit that kind of exposure:

Afshan: We have a tip sheet.

Yvonne: I'm going to mention that at the end. The routines foregoing back to school or having remote learning even for older children, if you have the space, it is a good idea to sort of designate that space for their learning if at all possible. Make sure the materials are organized and no clutter or anything like that. Set clear expectation. You might be working at home as well. Perhaps you have them work at a time when you're free so that if they have any questions they can ask you. And set goals for the day. If they have certain tasks you could do it for the whole morning. Set out what the expectation or the goals would be for that particular portion of the day or the entire day if you feel your child can manage that. But all the while make sure that you plan frequent breaks to help them to be more productive in the end. We also have Margaret you can move on for younger children, don't forget to get them comfortable if you do end up having a little bit of a space for them and if they have a device at home it could be a computer but some of our special needs children have other devices and have them practice switching it on, logging in, doing some tasks, anything like that. Many before school actually starts. And you might actually -- last slide Margaret. You might actually need to use visual to help children so they understand what the roles and expectation of work time are. For instance on this screen you have one of the visuals on here is a queue card that shows kids what they should be doing when you're on the phone or if you're on the computer as a parent or the adult in the house. I know that Afshan and I spoke very fast. So because we don't expect you to have a photographic memory or remember everything that we said, we do have most of what we've talked about especially the last few slides with the visuals and different tips and strategies for establishing routine in a digital tip sheet which you will get access to. You'll have access to all of our information. In fact, the whole presentation will have some sort of link in that digital

piece. The final part of our presentation and click one more time, the final part of our presentation by a colleague is going to give a brief overview of our professions to the School Board and how you can access our services in the TDSB as well as community resources.

Jocelyn Lai: Thank you. Good evening, I'm Jocelyn Lai. I'm a physiotherapist with occupational and physiotherapy services at the TDSB and I'm going to present this last part of our presentation. I wanted to thank you, too two other individuals who contributed to this presentation. Korea who is a social worker with the board and Shelley Moore, a psychologist with the board. With respect to mental health and well being resources an steps to accessing supports in your child's school and in the community. You'll give a quick summary on that. So here is a list of the professional support staff that are in your child's school. In the various disciplines. They are available to your children school teams for support. Starting with social work and attend services. Social workers provide support to children and family and school teams around mental health and well- being. Services include crisis and intervention, individual or group counseling, as well as helping to connect families with support within the TDSB in the community and providing sport to children and families and dealing with school attendance issues. Psychological serves, those associate possess specialized training in child development, learning and mental health and well- being. In collaboration they support mental health and well- being by conducting comprehensive so assessments and providing individual and group counseling and consulting with schools, classroom and families as well as supporting children with activities of daily living skills, fine and gross motor skills, sensory processing needs and self-regulation and mental health and well- being. Through comprehensive assessments and consultations with the school teams we also evaluate needs for assistive equipment for children. Our main goal is to maximize and optimize student function participation and inclusion in the school setting. Speech language pathologist are concerned with the prevention, identification, assessment treatment and rehabilitation of communication and swallowing disorders in children and adults. We also support children and schools with language development and communication and provide education and counseling service for educating

Speaker: And as a parent, your first connection would be someone in your local school setting such as a teacher, vice principal, principal, special education, guidance, or alternately if you're ready involved with the professional support staff. Professional support services staff member you can coordinate with them as well. After referral is made to our staff the service provider will call to offer and explain service and obtain consent. Also explain confidentiality and rules around it. And just so you're aware interpretation phone services are available for all exchanges or interactions with caregivers. This provides mental health supports and assistance.

These resources will also be included in a list that will be shared with you for this is a support that is offered across the city. It is similar to medical walk in clinics and presently they're offering support on the phone or online through the Internet. These resource listed above provide strategies and education on preventative measures and ideas on how to address mental health concerns such as social, emotional learning. Through videos, books and other formats. 211 is a service that helps you navigate the many service providers within the community quickly and easily to promote health and well-being and provides additional support for marginalized populations as well. We're moving to our parent breakout rooms where we have a chance to meet in smaller groups. There are 2 TDSB staff who are moderating each group. There are three guiding questions. How are they helpful for your No. 2 how can routine be supportive in return by during this time. So participants, you will notice that there is seven breakout groups that we have created. Each with its own focus. Some groups are more general in nature. And are based on different age grouping while others are more specialized and be focusing on more specific concerns issues. And if you have multiple children of different needs and/or different age groups, please pick the group that you think would be best suited for your family and don't worry about missing out as the groups will all be discussing many of the same issues. Unfortunately we are running a bit late this evening so we will be extending the breakout rooms to 8:15.

Heather: I think Zena was going to say something at this point. Zena.

Zena: I would like to thank all the parent and caregivers who have joined us and continuing some really important conversations in the breakout rooms. Also like to remind people that PIAC has a website. If you go to the TDSB website this evening or afterward actually offer resources for parents as well and even school council but again thank you very much for all the professional staff, and student equity staff for joining us and we'll continue on in the breakout rooms. Thank you Carlene for being here tonight. Thank you, everyone.