

Special Education and Inclusion Newsletter for Parents and Guardians



November HIGHLIGHTS

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Special Education and Inclusion Parent/Caregiver Guides

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) provides many Special Education Guides for Parent/Legal Guardian which contain information about the supports, programs and services available for students with disabilities and special education needs in the TDSB.

November Parent/Caregiver Engagement Sessions

Date	Description	Registration
Nov 10, 2026 10:00 AM	WEBINAR Pathways to Success: Navigating Grade 8 to 9 and Post-21 Transitions. <i>Get guidance on planning for your child's future, including key considerations for major school transitions and beyond.</i>	Registration - AM Link Registration - PM Link
Nov 19, 2026 6:00 PM		
Nov 24, 2026 10:00 AM	WEBINAR Learning Through Chores: The Daily Grind as Therapy. <i>Learn how involving your child in daily routines and chores can provide therapeutic benefits while building independence.</i>	Registration - AM Link Registration - PM Link
Nov 25, 2026 6:30 PM		
Nov 19, 2026 12:00 PM	DROP-IN Neuro-Affirming Strategies to Support Students with Autism at Home and School. <i>Gain practical, neuro-affirming tools to better support your child's success, comfort, and engagement at home and school.</i>	Link



Breathing to Stay Calm: One Skill, Three Steps

When your child becomes emotionally overwhelmed, the body shifts into a stress response: the heart races, muscles tense, and the **thinking part of the brain** goes offline as the **survival instincts** take over. Slow breathing counters this directly: an out-breath slightly longer than the in-breath signals safety, settling the heart rate and bringing the thinking brain back online. That makes breathing a powerful self-regulation skill: always available, discreet, and something your child can do on their own.

Teach it in small steps. More support at first, more independence as your child is ready



STEP 1 · MOST SUPPORT We breathe together

The caregiver leads. Sit close, breathe slowly together, and rest a soft toy on the belly to watch it rise and fall.



STEP 2 · SOME SUPPORT I breathe with a picture

Your child follows a picture card: in - smell the flower; out - blow the candle.

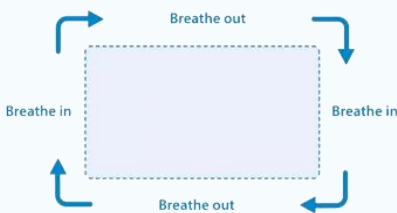


STEP 3 · ON THEIR OWN I breathe on my own

When a big feeling comes, your child breathes on their own: in for 1-2-3, out for 1-2-3-4-5.

Breathing strategies to try

A simple **shape to follow** gives the breath a rhythm. Trace the path slowly with a finger.



Rectangle breathing

Trace the four sides, breathe in for 3 seconds and breathe out for 5 seconds

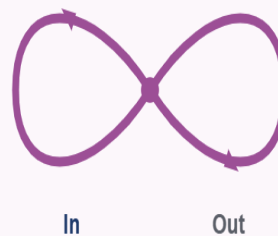


Figure-8 (lazy 8)

Breathe in around one loop, out around the other. Repeat slowly.

A stepping stone to other self-regulation skills: Breathing can be a skill your child masters as a precursor to:

Requesting movement breaks

Identifying zones of regulation

Accessing Sensory tools (fidgets, headphones)

PAIRING: BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The Piggy Bank Analogy



Every positive interaction is a “**deposit**.” Before you can place an instruction (withdraw), you need a surplus of positive associations (deposits) with you and the environment. If the environment feels safe and enjoyable, students are more likely to follow your lead, participate and try new things!

YOU SHIFT FROM THE “PERSON WHO GIVES WORK” TO THE “PERSON WHO BRINGS THE FUN”.

 Follow the Lead	Sit near the student while they engage with their interest. • Make no demands. • Don't ask questions (“What are you building?”) or give instructions. • Simply be present, calm, and interested in what they're doing.
 Narrate Play	Act like a sports commentator. • Describe what's happening without taking over. • “Oh, the blue car is going so fast! Look at it jump!” • This shows you're paying attention without interrupting the student's focus.
 Giver of Good Things	Provide access to items and activities of interest and give them freely - no work required. • If they love movies, play a movie on a random Wednesday afternoon. • Before you provide access to preferred items, make sure you know what your students are interested in - seek their input! • This makes you the “source” of the fun, and not just a bystander.
 Add Value	Make the activity better because you are there. • If they love dinosaurs, make “rawr” noises or build a cave from a cardboard box. • The goal: playing with you is more fun than playing alone. <i>*It is important to note that if the student is seeming to become overwhelmed or irritated by what you are adding to the activity, take a step back. Sometimes just sitting near the student adds value!</i>
 Fade in Small Instruction	Once the student is smiling and engaging, introduce one <i>tiny</i> instruction. • Keep it easy: “High five!” or while watching a movie ask, “That was cool! What do you think will happen next?” • Immediately follow with more of the interest as reinforcement. • If they disengage or pull away, try again at a later time.

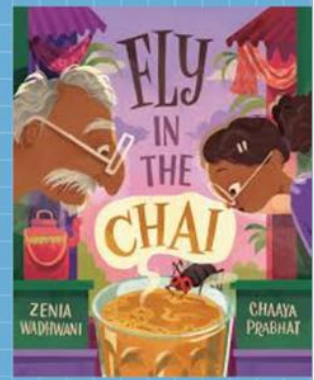
Tips for Success

  	Give “Freebies.” In the beginning, give the student what they enjoy without requiring any work. Watch for social signals. If the student turns away or stops engaging, you may be crowding their space. Back off or become quieter (narrating from a slight distance). Let the student lead the play. If they want to line up the cars by colour instead of racing them, line them up with them! Pairing is about joining their world, not redirecting it.
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Speech Language Pathology Services

FLY IN THE CHAI After Reading - A Guide for Parents



Note from the S-LP

Talking about the book after reading helps your child remember key events, understand characters and themes, and relate the story to their own experiences. These conversations strengthen language skills, critical thinking, and overall understanding

Extend Vocabulary

Review new or interesting words from the book

- Use the words in new sentences
- Act out the words
- Play a quick game such as "Show me buzzing!" or "Can you think of something that might be frustrating?"

Learning Focus

Retell the Story

Encourage your child to tell the story in their own words.

Ask:

- Beginning: "What happened first?"
- Middle: "What was the problem?"
- End: "How did it get solved?"

If needed, provide support with prompts such as, "What happened after that?"

👉 Tip: Use the pictures to help your child remember key events.

Try a Creative Activity

Extend learning through play and creativity

- Draw your favorite part of the story
- Act out the story together
- Create your own version of the story (e.g., The Fly in the Soup)

Tips for Parents

- Keep conversations relaxed and enjoyable
- There are no right or wrong answers—focus on sharing ideas
- Follow your child's interests and pace
- Use pictures to support understanding
- Re-reading favorite books is valuable and helps build confidence and language skills
- Praise effort and thinking: "Great idea!" "I like how you remembered that!" "Nice thinking!"

Make Personal Connections

Ask your child:

- "Has something like this ever happened to you?"
- "How would you feel in that situation?"
- "How is this story similar to your life?"
- "How is it different?"



Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

Access Changes Everything: A DHH Student Mosaic

Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students across TDSB recently took part in a collaborative project centred on the theme *Access Changes Everything*.

DHH students were invited to reflect on what access means in their own lives and how it helps them participate, connect, learn and communicate. They shared their ideas through drawings, photographs and written reflections, highlighting the many ways that communication access, technology, supportive environments and self-advocacy can make a difference.

Each student created one small, individual piece. Together, their contributions became a *Giant Access Mosaic*, a powerful reminder that every student's experience is unique, while each voice contributes to a larger DHH community.

The finished mosaic celebrates student voice, belonging and the importance of creating learning environments where Deaf and Hard of Hearing students have meaningful access to communication, learning and participation.



Blind and Low Vision Services

SEA Claims

Blind/Low Vision SEA equipment continues to evolve, and the BLV Team is committed to ensuring that students have access to appropriate, up-to-date technology that supports equitable access to learning. Below are some examples of equipment that you might see in the classroom setting:

Equipment to Support Visually Accessing Curricular Materials:

Tools that support near and distance viewing help students with low vision access classroom materials more independently and in real time. Devices such as the Explore 12, MagniBot, and MagniLink Zip are video magnifiers that allow students to adjust magnification, contrast, and brightness to meet their visual needs. These tools support near tasks such as reading worksheets and books, as well as viewing information at a distance such as whiteboards, anchor charts, or the classroom teacher. So much information is conveyed through facial expressions, which these devices can provide access to.



Equipment to Support Tactual Access to Curricular Materials:

Tools that support students who are blind provide accessible options for reading and writing in braille. Devices such as the Perkins Braille, Braille Display, and BrailleNote Touch allow students to produce written work, take notes, and access curriculum materials in their primary literacy medium. The Perkins Braille supports the development of foundational braille writing skills, the BrailleNote Touch allows students to read and write refreshable braille and access digital materials, like Google suite, and the Braille Display supports student in accessing a laptop.



Accommodations and the IEP

Providing accommodations to students with special education needs should be the first option considered in program planning.

Instructional

Explanation

Adjustments in teaching strategies required to enable the student to learn and to progress through the curriculum

Examples

not an exhaustive list

- Buddy/peer tutoring
- Duplicated notes
- Reinforcement incentives
- Augmentative/alternative communication systems
- Assistive tech, such as text-to-speech
- Reduced/uncluttered format
- Repetition or rephrasing of information
- Extra time for processing

Environmental

Explanation

Changes or supports in the physical environment of the classroom and/or the school

Examples

not an exhaustive list

- Strategic seating
- Proximity to instructor
- Reduction of audio/visual
- Minimizing of background noise
- Adaptive equipment
- Alternative work space

Assessment

Explanation

Adjustments in assessment activities and methods required to enable the student to demonstrate learning

Examples

not an exhaustive list

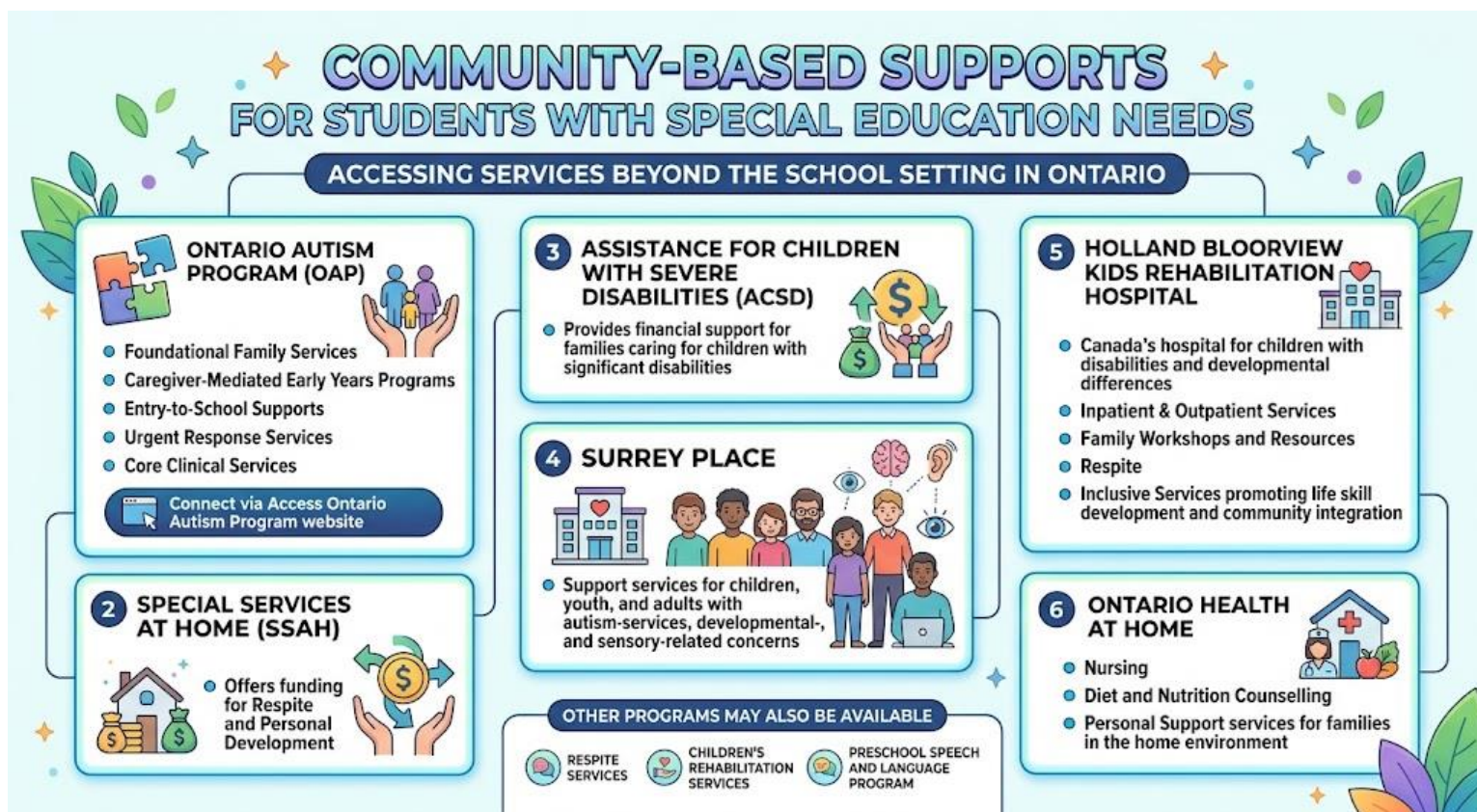
- Extended time limits
- Oral responses, including audiotapes
- Alternative settings
- Assistive devices/adaptive equipment
- Prompts to return student's attention to task
- Augmentative/alternative communication systems
- Reduced/uncluttered format
- Reduction in the number of tasks used to assess a concept

Community-Based Supports for Students with Special Education Needs

Beyond the school setting, families may also access a wide range of supports, including:

- Ontario [Autism Program \(OAP\)](#): Provides foundational family services, caregiver-mediated early years programs, entry-to-school supports, urgent response services, and core clinical services. Families can connect through [Access Ontario Autism Program website](#).
- Special [Services at Home \(SSAH\)](#): Offers funding for respite and personal development.
- Assistance [for Children with Severe Disabilities \(ACSD\)](#): Provides financial support for families caring for children with significant disabilities.
- [Surrey Place](#) provides support services for children, youth, and adults with autism-services, developmental-, and sensory-related concerns.
- [Holland Bloorview](#) is Canada's hospital for children with disabilities and developmental differences offering various inpatient and outpatient services, family workshops and resources, respite, and inclusive services promoting life skill development and community integration.
- [Ontario Health at Home](#) provides nursing, diet and nutrition counselling, and personal support services for families in the home environment.

Other programs such as [Respite Services](#), [Children's Rehabilitation Services](#), and the [Preschool Speech and Language Program](#) may also be available.



Tip Sheet: Supporting Memory

What Is Memory?

Memory is our ability to hold on to, use, and recall information over short and longer periods of time. It supports learning, following directions, solving problems, and completing everyday tasks.

Memory includes:

- **Short-term memory** – holding a small amount of information for a short time
- **Working memory** – holding information in mind while using or applying it
- **Long-term memory** – storing information over longer periods of time
- **Retrieval** – accessing information when it is needed, through recall or recognition

Children and youth may have different strengths and needs across these areas of memory.

Memory Needs May Look Like...

A child or youth may:

- Forget information they have just seen or heard
- Have difficulty following multi-step directions
- Lose track of information while completing a task or having a conversation
- Have difficulty remembering information learned days or weeks earlier
- Need cues or prompts to recall information
- Have difficulty remembering sight words, spelling, or facts when writing
- Have difficulty recalling math facts or steps in a calculation

You may also notice your child frequently asking for instructions to be repeated or seeming unsure of what to do next.

How Families Can Help

- ✓ **Keep information manageable:** Give a few directions at a time and break longer tasks or routines into smaller steps. This reduces how much your child needs to hold in mind at once.
- ✓ **Use reminders:** Try checklists, calendars, schedules, sticky notes, or phone reminders to help your child remember what to do and what comes next.
- ✓ **Make information meaningful:** Connect new learning to something your child already knows or has experienced. Ask them to explain it in their own words to check understanding.
- ✓ **Practise and recsit:** Review important information in short sessions over time. Encourage your child to say, write, draw, or demonstrate what they are learning.
- ✓ **Try memory strategies:** Use rhymes, acronyms, songs, grouping, or mental pictures to help information stick.
- ✓ **Practise recalling information:** Ask your child what they remember before looking at the answer. Offer a hint or cue when needed.
- ✓ **Make it playful:** Matching games, card games, and games that involve remembering rules or sequences provide natural opportunities to practise memory skills.
- ✓ **Give time to remember:** Pause and allow your child time to recall information before repeating the question or providing the answer.
- ✓ **Support healthy sleep:** Consistent, good-quality sleep supports memory, learning, and thinking.

Resources and Support

- [TDSB Special Education and Inclusion](#) – Learn about special education supports and services available to students and how families can work with their child's school team.
- [TDSB Psychological Services: Memory](#) – Learn about different types of memory and explore practical strategies to help children remember, learn, and use information.
- [Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario \(LDAO\)](#) – Ontario-based information and resources about learning differences, including how memory can affect learning and everyday tasks.
- [LD@Home](#) – Practical resources and strategies families can use to support learning, organization, and memory at home.
- [AboutKidsHealth – SickKids](#) – Trusted, family-friendly information about sleep and healthy habits that support children's learning, thinking, and memory.

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Pathways to Success: Navigating Grade 8 to 9 and Post-21 Transitions

Online engagement session for parents/caregivers.



**Tuesday,
November 10, 2026**
10:00 a.m.



Click [HERE](#) to Register



**Thursday,
November 19, 2026**
6:30 p.m.



Click [HERE](#) to Register

About the Session

In this online engagement session, you will gain a better understanding of two important transition points: moving from Grade 8 to Grade 9 and preparing for life beyond school.

Presented by Transition Navigator Consultants, the session will explore key areas that support successful transitions, including pathways, available supports, planning timelines, student voice, and working together with school teams.

You will leave with practical strategies to help your child build confidence, explore opportunities, and prepare for their next steps in secondary school and beyond.



What you'll learn



**Grade 8 to 9
transition
planning**



**Post-21
transition
planning**



**Pathways and
available
supports**



**Planning
timelines and
student voice**



**Working
together with
school teams**

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