

Special Education and Inclusion Newsletter for Parents and Guardians



October HIGHLIGHTS

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Check it Out Video



Join Indigenous artist Abigail Clarke in this video tutorial showing how she beads earrings using moose hide and birch bark.

Autism Regional Services Parent/Guardian Drop-in Sessions

Join us for a drop-in session to ask questions, share insights, and receive neuro-affirming strategies and practical suggestions to support students with Autism at home and at school.

These informal sessions provide an opportunity to connect with members of the Autism Regional Services team and access information, resources, and support in a welcoming environment.

All parents, guardians, and caregivers are welcome.

Where: Microsoft Teams

 When: 12:00pm - 1:00pm

[Thursday October 22, 2026](#) (Click to join)

[Thursday November 19, 2026](#) (Click to join)

[Thursday December 17, 2026](#) (Click to join)

[Thursday January 21, 2027](#) (Click to join)

[Thursday February 25, 2027](#) (Click to join)

[Thursday March 25, 2027](#) (Click to join)

[Thursday April 22, 2027](#) (Click to join)

[Thursday May 27, 2027](#) (Click to join)

Special Education & Inclusion Parent/Guardian Engagement Sessions

Date	Description	Registration
October 5, 2026 6:30 PM	WEBINAR From Talking to Learning: Why Talking at Home Matters. Discover how everyday conversations at home can build strong foundations for your child's learning and language development.	Oct 5: Registration - PM Link
October 7, 2026 10:00 AM		Oct 7: Registration - AM Link
October 22, 2026 12:00 PM	DROP-IN Neuro-Affirming Strategies to Support Students with Autism at Home and School. Gain practical, neuro-affirming tools to better support your child's success, comfort, and engagement at home and school.	Link

More Than a Grip! The Hidden Secrets to Strong Printing

Text Only Version

Printing is a **whole-body activity**.

Consider adding activities in these skill areas to your child's day to help improve their printing.

Stability

Core Strength & Posture: Is needed to sit upright, preventing slouching, leaning, and fatigue

Shoulder Stability & Wrist

Position: A strong shoulder and extended wrist are needed to hold the arm steady and to allow finger movement.

Activity Idea: Try drawing or mazes on a vertical surface



Visual Motor & Perceptual

Eye-Hand Coordination:

Good communication between your hand and eye are needed to link the sensory and motor system so you can see and then form printed letters

Visual Spatial Awareness and Shape Recognition:

Are needed to understand concepts like up/down, left/right, and big/small, all required for letter sizing & spacing, and knowing an "A" is an "A" whether it's big, small, typed, or printed.

Activity matching games.



Fine Motor & Hand Strength

Hand & Finger Strength: Is needed to maintain your grip.

Palmar Arches & Hand

Separation: Arches allow a natural curve to cup & control a pencil. The pinky and ring finger stabilize while the thumb and index finger move the pencil. Fingers need to move independently.

Activity Idea: Hide small toys in a ball of playdough. Have your child use their hands to find them



Sensory Processing

Proprioception (Body

Awareness): Is needed to help understand how much pressure your muscles are using.

Tactile Discrimination: Is needed to feel the pencil in the hand.

Activity Idea: Try finger painting, forming letters in sand, or identifying objects with your hands when you are blindfolded.



Cognitive Executive Functioning

Motor Planning: Is a skill where the brain directs the body to move the fingers to form a letter.

Attention & Working Memory:

Are needed to hold an image in the mind long enough to write it down without getting distracted.

Activity Idea: Play imitation and memory games and do fun obstacle courses.



To learn more about strategies to support printing and writing, refer to our parent engagement session on

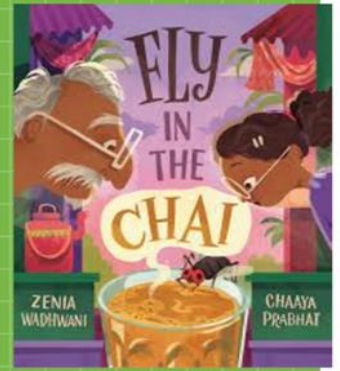
[Learning to Print and Write.](#)

There may be websites linked from this site that are operated by organizations outside of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). These organizations are solely responsible for the operation and information found on their sites. Linking from this site does not imply any endorsement of the organization or information found on the website. Any comments or inquiries regarding the linked websites should be directed to the organization operating the website.



Speech Language Pathology Services

FLY IN THE CHAI During Reading - A Guide for Parents



Notes from the SLP

Support your child's understanding and language skills while reading. Talking about the story, asking questions, and making connections to your child's experiences can help them stay engaged and better understand what they read

Discuss Big Ideas

Talk about themes like:

- Problem-solving, Patience, Everyday challenges

Ask:

- "What would you do if a fly landed in your drink?"
- "Was the character calm or frustrated?"

Learning Focus

1. Ask questions

- Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How Questions
- Ask open-ended questions while reading (e.g., What problem happens in the story? What will happen next? Why is Nanu frustrated?)

2. Make comments

- Use sentence starters such as I think, I wonder...
- For example, "Look at the fly's tiny wings. I wonder where it wants to go". "I think he looks surprised to see the fly in the chai"

3. Explain

- Define new vocabulary - "Gulp is when you take a big sip"
- Explain the problem - "The fly goes into the Chai"

Notice Details

Ask your child to look closely at pictures:

- "What do you see in the cup?"
- "How do the characters look (happy, annoyed, surprised)?"
- "How can you tell the fly is bothering the character?"
- "What do you think might happen next?"
- "What clues in the picture help you understand the story?"

Encourage Expression

- Let your child act out parts (i.e., buzz like a fly, pretend to "shoo")
- Use different voices for characters

Link to story on YOUTUBE; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVoXfpU95OE>

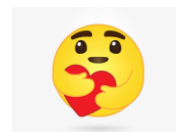


October marks Learning Disabilities Awareness Month, ADHD Awareness Month, and Dyslexia Awareness Month.

Helping Students Plan, Start and Finish

Executive functions act like “the director” of a student’s to-do list, helping them choose a priority, break it into steps and finish on time. Reading or spelling may take extra effort for a student with a learning disability. A student with ADHD may find it hard to stay focused on one task when other demands compete for their attention.

Elementary: Help your child complete a task or assignment by creating a short checklist with familiar words, or drawings, with one or two small steps. You can then support them to check off steps as they complete them with check-marks, or stickers in a paper document, or by using emojis in a digital checklist.



Secondary: Help your teen work backward from an assignment due date to set smaller steps/milestones. Assist them in blocking out time in their calendar to complete each small step. They can record these in a school-approved computer calendar or a paper planner and review progress as they complete the steps.



Remember to positively reinforce your child’s smaller accomplishments with verbal praise (e.g., “Great job finishing the small parts first - look doing this brought you to the finish!”). To help develop strong work habits, it is important to reinforce that they broke down the task into smaller parts.

Be sure to ask your child which strategy helped them the most, and share this insight with their school team.

Resources: LDAO – <https://www.ldao.ca/faq-items/improving-executive-function-skills/>

CADDAC – <https://caddac.ca/about-adhd/ages-7-17-yrs/>



STRONG
PARTNERSHIPS
SUPPORT
BRIGHTER
TOMORROWS

BRIGHT
FUTURES
TOGETHER

Planning for Transitions

Parents, guardians and caregivers are important partners in their child's IEP and transition planning. You will have opportunities to share information, ideas and priorities about your child through conversations with the school team and the IEP Parent Consultation Form.

Your Voice Matters

INCLUSIVE
SCHOOLS
THRIVING
STUDENTS

1.

KNOW THE IEP



Understand your child's strengths, needs, goals and supports.

2.

KNOW YOUR VOICE MATTERS



Your knowledge and perspective are an important part of the planning process.

3.

THINK BEYOND TODAY



Consider what your child may need next and ask questions about upcoming transitions.

4.

START EARLY



Transitions are easier when planning begins before a change happens.

5.

KEEP YOUR CHILD AT THE CENTRE



Keep the focus on participation, belonging, confidence and growing independence.

Different Paths. Brighter Futures.

BELONG
ACHIEVE
THRIVE

Learning Disabilities Awareness Month

Every October, the Learning Disabilities Associations of Ontario (LDAO) and LD@school celebrate Learning Disability (LD) Awareness month. The goal of the campaign is to raise awareness and reduce stigma to allow individuals with LDs to get the supports they need to reach their potential.

DON'T DIS MY ABILITIES (#LDmonth)

Please click the [link](#) for a Tip Sheet with more information.



*Click the image to access LDAO

Dyslexia Awareness Month

Mark it Read for Dyslexia Awareness Month 2025

For the past eight years, Dyslexia Canada has proudly celebrated Dyslexia Awareness Month each October with the *Mark it **Read** for dyslexia* campaign. Every October Mark it Read shines a light on dyslexia, a learning difference that affects 10–20% of Canadians.

ADHD Awareness Month

October marks ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) Awareness Month, a time to build understanding, reduce stigma, and support students and families. This year, the Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada (CADDAC) is highlighting “[The Many Faces of ADHD](#),” reminding us that ADHD does not look the same for everyone.

The ADHD Awareness Month Vision: A world where understanding ADHD leads to support, connection, and real opportunities to thrive.

The ADHD Awareness Month Mission: To raise awareness of ADHD by sharing accurate information, elevating lived experience, fostering connection, and promoting access to support across the lifespan.

Please find information on ADHD in this [ADHD Fact Sheet](#) created by members of TDSB SEAC and staff.

- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**
- ADHD Is a medical condition involving differences in brain development and brain activity that affect attention and self-regulation (Kid's Health Website, 2023).
- ADHD is one of the most common childhood neurodevelopmental disorders and it is often characterized by inattention, impulsiveness, and hyperactivity. Those with ADHD may have more difficulty:
 - Paying attention
 - Thinking or acting thoughtfully
 - Exercising self-control and inhibiting responses
 - Coping with feelings of frustration or other strong emotions
 - Remaining settled, due to feelings of restlessness (NHS, 2021)
- There are many other symptoms that go unnoticed because they're internal and affect executive functioning. Dr. Gioia and colleagues found the following specific processes involved (ldonline, 2023):
 - ***Inhibition*** The ability to stop one's own behaviour at an appropriate time (the counterpart being impulse control)
 - ***Shift*** The ability to move freely from one situation to another and to think flexibly in order to respond appropriately
 - ***Emotional Control*** The ability to modulate emotional responses by bringing rational thought to bear on feelings
 - ***Initiation*** The ability to begin a task or activity and independently generate ideas, responses, or problem solve
 - ***Working Memory*** The capacity to hold information in mind for the purpose of completing a task
 - ***Planning/Organization*** The ability to manage current and future-oriented task demands
 - ***Organization of Materials*** The ability to impose order on work, play and storage spaces
 - ***Self-monitoring*** The ability to monitor one's own performance

- **Reframing ADHD**
- 1.8 million Canadians have been diagnosed with ADHD, which is between 5-7% of Canadian children (CADDAC, 2023).
Approximately 8% of children and 6% of adolescents have been given an official diagnosis worldwide (Salari et al., 2023.)
- While the barriers relating to ADHD are more widely discussed, many individuals with ADHD note advantages of the disorder, such as increased creativity and energy (Cimera, 2002).
- Increased creativity and energy allows for strong motivation in different domains, such as teaching, athletics, and jobs that require physical activity (Cimera, 2002).
- Hyperactivity can lead to quicker reaction time/endurance (Cimera, 2002).
- When those with ADHD are highly motivated and drawn to a task, it is thought that they can sometimes become very focused and can complete these tasks in a very timely manner (Adda, 2023).
- One study conducted in 2018 found six main themes depicting positive traits: cognitive dynamism (naturally curious, state of 'flow', hyper-focus), courage (being an outsider, thrill seeking, integrity), energy, humanity (persuasive abilities, humour) resilience, and transcendence (appreciation of beauty) (Sedgwick et al., 2018).
- ADHD is highly manageable. When taught adaptive techniques to help with time management and organizational skills, students with ADHD are able to achieve higher levels of concentration.

- **Diagnosis**
- ADHD is diagnosed by a psychologist or paediatrician who assesses the child and observes their behaviour. There is no single test to determine if someone has ADHD (CDC, 2022). The criteria used to determine whether a diagnosis is warranted is outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual - 5th Edition (DSM-5).
- To receive a diagnosis, ADHD symptoms should be persistent and have been observed over the course of the past 6 months (APA, 2022).
- Disorder begins in childhood, symptoms must be present before the individual is 12 years of age. Symptoms must affect multiple areas of one's life (e.g., home, school, social events) (APA, 2022).
- The psychologist or paediatrician conducting the assessment must ensure that the symptoms are not better explained by another disorder (CDC, 2022).
- **Subtypes (DSM-5):**
- **Inattentive:** Students who are inattentive (easily distracted) have trouble focusing their attention, concentrating, and staying on task. They may not listen well to directions, may miss important details, and may not finish what they start. They may seem absent-minded or forgetful, and lose track of their belongings.
- **Hyperactive:** Students who are hyperactive are fidgety, restless, and easily bored. They may have trouble sitting still, or staying quiet when needed. They may rush through things and make careless mistakes. They may climb, jump, or roughhouse when they shouldn't. Without meaning to, they may act in ways that disrupt others.
- **Combined:** Criteria for both are met.

- **Truths and Myths about ADHD Truths**

- A strengths-based approach to ADHD is important for students.
- Understanding students have strengths can make a difference in their academic careers.
- A high level of energy and drive, creativity, hyper-focus, agreeableness, empathy and willingness to assist others were the most consistently reported strengths associated with ADHD (Mahdi et al., 2017).
- A focus on developing assets associated with ADHD such as creativity, problem solving and hyper focus may reduce comorbid issues and allow students to focus on their own happiness, relationships and occupational success (Climie and Mastoras, 2015).
- Students with ADHD are shown to have strengths in verbal abilities, logical thinking and common sense (Ek et al., 2007).
- Although often helpful, medication alone does not treat all skills leading to academic and/or social impairments (CADDAC, 2023).
- ADHD presents differently from one child to the next.

- **Myths**

- *ADHD is not a real disorder* – First study was done in 1775. Since then, 10000 studies have been published on ADHD. Research studies show similar symptom presentation from childhood to adulthood and the brain differences in children with ADHD.
- *ADHD is a childhood disorder*. Recent studies show ADHD remains from childhood to adolescence (50-80% of cases) and into adulthood (35 – 65% of cases) (CHADD, 2023).
- *ADHD is overdiagnosed*. Indeed, rates have increased by 5% every year 2003 -2011 (according to the National Survey of Children's Health).
- However, there are many reasons for this increase, including: a decrease in stigma, more paediatric screenings, improved awareness, availability of better treatment options, and more cases arising from suspected environmental factors (CHADD, 2023).
- *Girls have lower rates and less severe ADHD*. Studies on female ADHD only began in the last few decades but generally show similar impairment (CHADD, 2023).

If your child is diagnosed with ADHD

Learn all you can about ADHD. Follow the treatment your child's health care provider recommends.

Work with your child's school. Meet often with teachers to find out how your child is doing. Maintain open lines of communication with your child's classroom teacher. Work together to help your child do well.

Talk openly and supportively about ADHD with your child. Focus on your child's strengths and positive qualities.

Connect with community agencies for support, awareness, and guidance.. Join a support group like CADDAC for ADHD to get updates on treatment and other information.

Why is there so much variability in my child's performance? ADHD symptoms may be more pronounced:

- Later in the day (Dane et al., 2000)
- When the task is more challenging – and there are greater demands on organization skills (Douglas, 1983)
- When restraint/stopping is needed (Barkley & Ulman, 1975)
- When stimulation is low (Zentall, 1985)
- When immediate consequences in the task are more variable (Douglas & Parry, 1983)
- When reinforcement is delayed (Solanto et al., 2001)
- When adult supervision is reduced (Gomez & Sanson, 1994)

[ADHD Awareness Month](#)

[Resources](#)

[References Cited](#)

- **Student Voice**

- *Maya W., Grade 8, TDSB, May 2023*
- *School has been good, but I feel that some things have been harder for me than other students. The things that made me most comfortable were when people would talk about the diagnoses that I have and relate to them, and also having teachers understand that our daily activities and routines are a lot harder for me than others and we learn in different ways. For example I need everything I learn written down on very organized notes or I'll forget it all.*
- *One of my teachers over the last 10 years at my school has been amazing. She would talk to us about and normalize conditions, like learning disabilities, as well as ADHD or ASD. Another thing that has really helped me is when my teacher has let me go into the hallway or to a private room when my anxiety or ADHD is acting up and I need a break. It is best that the teachers understand what goes on with you, but they don't let that define you.*
- *Another thing I'd like to add is how important it has been for the teachers to help keep me on task and check in with me daily. My favourite teachers have done this in such a kind way without making me feel ashamed for not knowing how to do this on my own. It may not seem like a lot but I can get very overwhelmed very fast and it is so helpful to get help around how to organize myself and my materials. My teachers have also been really good at realizing that I need help with my social communication, and have often checked in and coached me around this as well. I think that my Elementary school teachers have really prepared me as I get ready to start high school next year!*
- *Kristen (Novotni, 2022)*
- Diagnosed in grade 1
- Learned when to ask for help and take advantage of resources
- Happy her parents took action with her diagnosis when they did and that they always believed in her and encouraged her
- *Jason (Novotni, 2022)*
- Diagnosed in grade 1
- Used a planner, home/school communication, help from tutors
- Signed up for both individual and team sports