

## SEPTEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

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## CHECK IT OUT!

- [All Are Welcome – Read aloud kids book in full screen and with music!](#)
- [What is UDL? Universal Design for Learning Explained \(3 minutes\)](#)
- [12 Strategies To Build Relationships With Students](#)
- [Inclusive education video series: Positive behaviour approach](#)
- [The 5-4-3-2-1 Method: A Grounding Exercise to Manage Anxiety](#)
- [Introduction to 5-4-3-2-1 and Skill Practice](#)
- [Circle Of Control Activity For Kids - Good Mental Health And Stress Management](#)

## WHAT'S NEW?

The [Guide to the Special Education Program Recommendation Committee \(SEPRC\) for Parents/Guardians/Caregivers](#) outlines the SEPRC process, which provides differentiated support for students new to the TDSB with complex medical/physical/safety needs and/or complex disabilities/special education needs by ensuring timely access to learning in an appropriate learning environment.

### Important Dates

#### Elementary PD Days:

September 26, 2025  
October 10, 2025  
November 14, 2025  
January 16, 2026  
February 13, 2026  
June 5, 2026  
June 26, 2026

#### Secondary PD Days:

September 26, 2025  
October 10, 2025  
November 14, 2025  
January 29, 2026  
February 13, 2026  
June 25, 2026  
June 26, 2026

#### School Year Holidays (as per Ministry)

Labour Day: September 1, 2025  
Thanksgiving: October 13, 2025  
Winter Break: December 22, 2025 – January 2, 2026  
Family Day: February 16, 2026  
Mid-Winter Break: March 16-20, 2026  
Good Friday: April 3, 2026  
Easter Monday: April 6, 2026  
Victoria Day: May 18, 2026

## Special Education and Inclusion Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Video Series

These videos provide an overview of our Guides to Special Education and Inclusion, designed to help families understand the programs, services, and supports available to students. From learning about Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to navigating the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) process, these resources can support you every step of the way.

Detailed information can be found in the [full guides](#) on the [Special Education and Inclusion Website](#), where you will find additional Special Education resources for families.

## School Spotlight

### School Spotlight: Highfield JPS

A powerful assembly was held about Autism Awareness, led entirely by students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in grades 1 to 5, showcasing their leadership and unique abilities. This assembly not only highlighted the incredible skills and talents of the students but also served as an important platform for raising awareness and understanding about autism within the entire Highfield JS school community.

They spoke candidly about the challenges they face, as well as the unique strengths they possess. This not only fostered empathy and understanding among their peers but also empowered the students to take pride in their identities. By sharing their stories, they encouraged the audience to consider how they can support individuals with autism in their everyday lives (i.e., in the school yard and hallways).



## Resources



### September is FASD Awareness Month

The Government of Canada officially recognized September as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Month. This month is devoted to raising awareness of FASD to improve prevention, diagnosis and support for individuals with FASD. Historically, research and discussion about FASD has focused on challenges. While this discussion is necessary, it is also important to recognize people's unique talents, abilities and interests. When we don't

explore the success of people with FASD and celebrate their contributions, we fail to recognize their immense potential.

The theme for this year's FASD awareness month is ***Everyone Plays a Part***.

For more information on how you can get involved, please visit: [www.CANFASD.ca](http://www.CANFASD.ca)

### Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

FASD is a complex disorder that manifests with varied symptomology for each affected individual. The symptoms of the disorder are a result of brain dysfunction due to prenatal alcohol exposure. Symptoms may include, but are not limited to:

- Difficulties with executive function (e.g. attentiveness, focus, organization, planning, etc.)
- Sensory processing challenges which may present as:
  - *Auditory hyper/hypo sensitivities; Challenges with navigating visually stimulating environments; Challenges with recognizing body cues and bodily functions (resultant difficulties with adaptive function such as eating, dressing, knowing when to use the bathroom, recognizing fatigue, stress, pain, etc.); Food aversions and/or an inability to detect hunger cues; Tactile defensiveness or an inability to discriminate touch; Difficulty with grading movements and/or knowing where your body is in space; Balance/coordination challenges; Difficulty recognizing social cues; Difficulties with transitions*
- Intellectual and/or cognitive delays
- Delays with fine and/or gross motor development
- Recognizing, understanding, and planning around safety/environmental cues
- Emotional lability and difficulty regulating emotions and responses

Effective strategies to support individuals with FASD may include:

- Short concrete instructions
- Use of visuals to support understanding
- Maintain structure and routine
- Allow for additional processing time
- Provide frequent breaks (opportunities for physical movement)
- Model and roleplay upcoming events and expected responses

Each individual with FASD is unique and thus there is no rubric or protocol in how you may best support their needs. One approach that is universally sound is developing and nurturing a close, safe, and trusting relationship; this will avail reciprocal and open-ended communication enabling a true understanding of how to meet their needs.

For additional information, please refer to the TDSB OT/PT services [public webpage](#) for links to more resources.



# Resources







## Psychological Services

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### Supporting the Mental Health and Well-Being of Newcomers

Supporting the mental health and well-being of newcomer students is crucial, as they may face unique challenges when adjusting to a new environment. Here are some practical tips for school staff:

	<h4>Create a Welcoming Environment</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greet students warmly each day by name to help them feel seen and valued.</li> <li>• Pair newcomers with a peer buddy who can help them navigate the school, understand routines, and feel included.</li> <li>• Display posters or artwork representing the cultures and languages of the students in the school.</li> </ul>
	<h4>Promote Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize events that celebrate different cultures and encourage students to share their traditions.</li> <li>• Offer materials and instructions in the student's first language when possible. Understand that language barriers can lead to frustration and anxiety.</li> </ul>
	<h4>Build Strong Relationships</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take the time to learn about each student's background, interests, and challenges. This helps build trust and makes students feel understood.</li> <li>• Encourage students to express their feelings and concerns. Offer regular check-ins to see how they are doing emotionally.</li> <li>• Involve families by keeping them informed and engaged. Offer translation services during meetings and school events.</li> </ul>
	<h4>Support Emotional Well-being</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create safe spaces in the school where students can go if they feel overwhelmed. A quiet room with comfortable seating can be a great resource.</li> <li>• Incorporate mindfulness, relaxation techniques, or short breathing exercises into the school day to help reduce stress and anxiety.</li> </ul>

# Resources



## Psychological Services

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### Supporting the Mental Health and Well-Being of Newcomers



#### Encourage Social Connections

- Encourage students to join clubs, sports, or other activities where they can meet peers with similar interests.
- Use group work in class to help students build relationships and develop a sense of belonging.
- Organize lunchtime or after-school programs where newcomers can socialize in a relaxed setting.



#### Academic Support

- Recognize that newcomer students may need different levels of academic support. Provide differentiated instruction to meet their needs.
- Offer English as a Second Language (ESL) programs or other language support to help students catch up academically.
- Provide after-school tutoring or homework clubs where students can get extra help in a supportive environment.



#### Be Patient and Flexible

- Understand that newcomers may take time to adjust academically, socially, and emotionally. Be patient and offer flexible deadlines or additional support as needed.
- Praise efforts and small successes to build confidence. Positive reinforcement can boost self-esteem and motivation.



#### Monitor for Signs of Stress or Trauma

- Be attentive to signs of anxiety, depression, or trauma, such as withdrawal, changes in behaviour, or academic decline.
- If you notice concerning signs, connect the student with school or community based mental health supports promptly.



#### Encourage a Growth Mindset

- Emphasize the strengths and resilience that newcomer students bring to the school.
- Teach students that challenges are part of learning and that they can overcome difficulties with support and perseverance.

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



## Resources

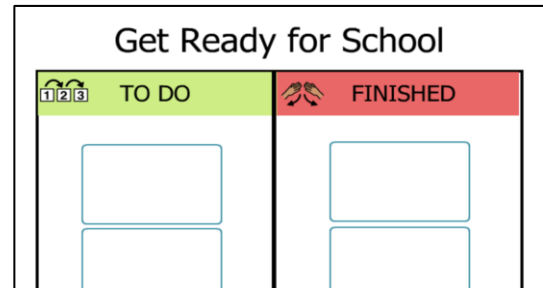


Welcome back to another school year!

As we all start to re-establish school routines, you may find it difficult to get back into the rhythm of things. Included in our [“Daily Routines and Transitions” handout](#) are strategies to make this transition easier.



One thing that may assist with resuming routines is having a visual chart to outline what is needed to get ready for school. See our [“Get Ready for School” chart](#); text or visuals of the task can be placed in the ‘to do’ section and moved to ‘finished’ once complete.



## Playing at Home & School

### WHY PLAY?

Play time for children is essential to reduce stress and to help build relationships. Children may demonstrate emerging or repetitive play skills. Educators and parents/guardians/caregivers can help children choose developmentally appropriate toys and activities to foster their play skills. It is fun to be a play partner; a chance to be silly and have a good time together! As an educator or parent/guardian/caregiver, engaging in play supports critical learning. The summary below highlights the different stages of play starting with sensory exploration!

**International Day of Sign Languages: September 23, 2025**  
**International Week of Deaf People: September 22 to September 28, 2025**

International Week of the Deaf (IWD) 2024 runs from September 22nd to 28th. The World Federation of the Deaf has declared this year's theme as “No Human Rights without Sign Language Rights”.

Please visit their [website](#) for more information about celebrations and daily themes.



## Resources



### Understanding and Enhancing Oral Language and Literacy Development at School and at Home

This school year, Speech Language Pathology (SLP) Services is focused on providing educators and caregivers with information and resources supporting **early oral language and literacy development for ALL students**. September is a time of fresh starts, new connections, and exciting possibilities. By fostering meaningful conversations and creating language-rich classrooms/spaces, you are laying the foundation for your children to grow as confident communicators, social navigators and achieve meaningful academic success.

Our newsletter additions are designed to provide simple, effective strategies to encourage oral language development and make meaningful connections with your students/children. Each month will include SLP Services' popular Kindergarten Oral Language and Literacy Calendars as well as our new Story Time Lessons. These lessons provide an interactive and engaging medium for all educators/caregivers to support oral language development. Any books referenced in our Story Time Lessons are available for FREE lending by your TDSB Library or the Toronto Public Library. SLP Services recommend reading from a physical book when one has a choice. We have included a YouTube video of the story being read aloud should one not have access to the physical book.

We hope these ideas inspire engaging interactions that strengthen your relationship with the children around you.

Wishing you a fantastic start to the school year!

#### [Kindergarten Oral Language and Literacy Calendar](#)

#### Story Time Lessons - Looking For Bongo

**tdsb** Special Education and Inclusion  
Speech and Language Services:  
Story Lessons

**storytime**

**music break**

**activities**

**storytime**

**Looking for Bongo**  
By Eric Velasquez

This is a story about a boy who lost his stuffed animal. Have you ever lost something? I wonder where he'll find it.

Click the picture to listen to the story.

After you watch the story, ask your child these questions: Click [here](#) for answers

How did the boy **feel** at the beginning of the story? Middle? End?  
Who did the boy ask for help?  
Why do you think his sister took Bongo?

Click the envelope to read a message!

Speech-Language Pathology Oral Language Fun: September 2025						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 <b>SEPTEMBER</b>	2 Labour Day	3 Welcome Back! First Day of School	4 Ask your child to tell you three things he/she did in school today.	5	6 Ask your child to name as many farm animals as possible. Draw pictures of the animals.	7 Have your child write a letter to a friend. Put a stamp on the envelope and mail it.
8 Involve your child in making pancakes for breakfast. What ingredients are needed?	9	10 Play the iPad app "Yuck! You're Sick!" by Night & Day Studios. Guess which farm animals are hiding in the barn.	11	12	13 Have your child write a letter to a friend. Put a stamp on the envelope and mail it.	14 Visit the library. Find a favourite book and bring it home to read. Tell the story from the pictures.
15 Use your home language to name 5 things in the kitchen. Name 5 things that are not in the kitchen.	16 Have your child help you write a shopping list.	17	18 Before your child leaves for school, ask her/him to tell you two things they think they will do at school today.	19	20 Try the app "Toca Kitchen 2" by Toca Boca. Talk about different types of food items and fun ways to cook them.	21 Read or tell a story to your home language.
22 Take your child grocery shopping. Talk about food that grows on trees versus in the ground.	23 Enjoy family reading time. Everyone reads for at least 15 minutes.	24	25	26 PA Day	27	28 More than 90% of students attending TDSB schools speak a language other than English. Learn how to use your home language to build your child's oral language and literacy skills. Visit Early Years - <a href="#">Family and Languages</a> on the TDSB website for more information!