



From TDSB Psychological Services
to Your Family



Welcome to the first issue of Hearts & Minds for the 2022-2023 school year!

This newsletter is brought to you by the TDSB Psychological Services department. In each issue, we aim to provide caregivers with helpful information, as well as tips and ideas to use at home with your children. Our goal is to enrich the school communities we serve, and support students and families in learning, mental health, and child development.

Don't **DIS**
my **ABILITIES!**

Help stop the stigma and
realize the ABILITIES!

#LDmonth

October is Learning Disabilities (LD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Awareness month!

Here at the TDSB, we celebrate the neurodiversity of our students with LD's and/or ADHD. We understand that it takes intervention, appropriate support, and a strength-based approach to learning, both at home and school, in order to provide the best outcomes for our students.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) website and the Children and Adults with ADHD (CHADD) website are excellent, accessible resources for parents. Members of TDSB Psychological Services are experts in understanding and supporting students with LD's and/or ADHD. Reach out to your child's teacher or administrator if you have questions for us!



Our articles, tips, and suggestions do not constitute treatment advice. If you or a family member is in crisis, please contact Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 or Distress Centres of Greater Toronto: 416-408-4357.

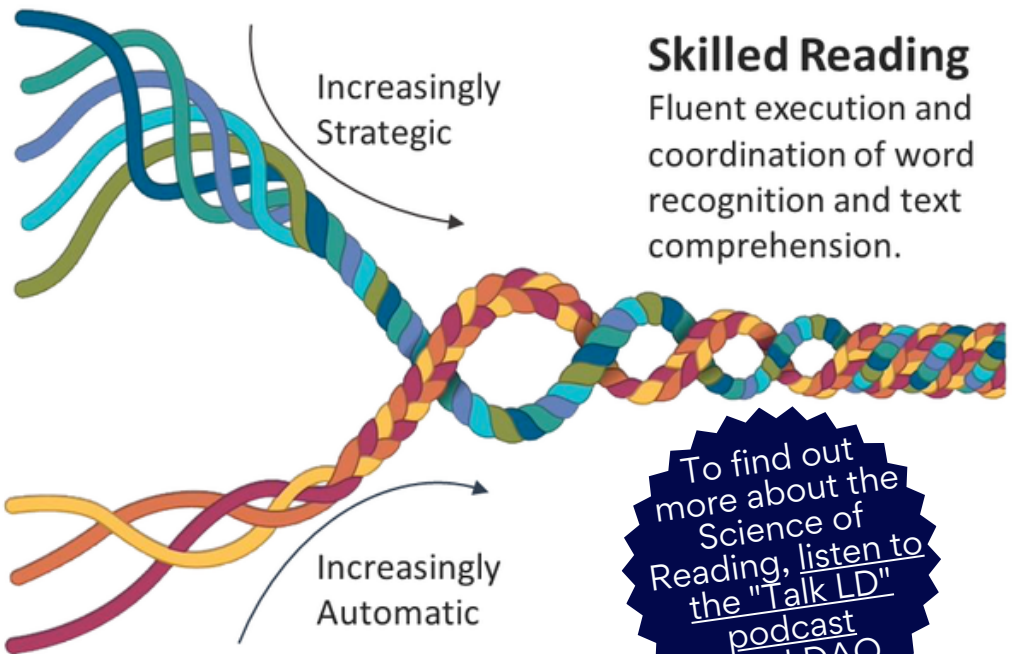


What does it take to be a 'Skilled' Reader?

Children who are skilled readers are good at understanding spoken language and they are also good at recognizing words and decoding letter sounds. The Scarborough's Rope model of reading (Scarborough, 2011) looks at all the parts that bind together to make reading feel simple! It looks at language comprehension and word recognition as two 'strands', that gradually twist together to form a strong 'rope' of skilled reading.

Language Comprehension

- Background Knowledge
- Vocabulary Knowledge
- Language Structures
- Verbal Reasoning
- Literacy Knowledge



Skilled Reading

Fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension.

Word Recognition

- Phonological Awareness
- Decoding (and Spelling)
- Sight Recognition

To find out more about the Science of Reading, listen to the "Talk LD" podcast from LDAO.

There are teaching tools backed by the science of reading that help children have 'strong, stable ropes' on which to build their reading skills! These strategies are good for all students, and especially good for students with a reading-based LD, like dyslexia. [The website "Reading Rockets"](#) has excellent guides for books and activities you can use at home to nurture your child's reading journey, **or try these tips:**

- **Phonological awareness** (knowledge of letters and their sounds) – Play guessing games like "I spy with my little eye something that starts with the /s/ sound" or "I am thinking of a word that rhymes with goat; can you guess what it might be?"
- **Vocabulary & sight word recognition** – When learning new words, draw it, write it down, act it out, watch a video about it, and make up stories using the word!
- **Background & literacy knowledge** – A wide variety of experiences build your child's background knowledge and makes them better readers. Go for a walk, visit a construction site, go to a museum or local farmer's market and talk about your experiences with your child - the options are endless!

ADHD & Social Relationships

by Megan Smith, Ph.D. C.Psych

Most students with ADHD are very social. They want to have friends and get along with people. But their ADHD symptoms often make this more difficult. Here are some common ways ADHD may affect students' relationships.

Inattention
Missing social cues
Distracted during games
Difficulty listening to others

Hyperactivity and Impulsivity
Poor physical boundaries
Difficulty playing quietly with others
Interrupts or bothers others
Difficulty following rules
Doing or saying the "wrong thing"

Weak Working Memory
Difficulty with group situations
Difficulty remembering rules
Forgetting important information

Emotional Regulation Challenges
Intense emotional responses
Difficulty controlling emotions
Difficulty reacting in "the right way"

Poor planning & organization
Unprepared for social events
Misses important details
Unaware how their behaviour affects others

There are ways we can help children and youth with ADHD have positive relationships at home and school:

- **Help them practice social problem-solving strategies.** Help them act out different situations, practicing what they will say and do. Practice at least a few times.
- **Help children and youth learn to look for social cues.** For example, when watching TV, ask questions, such as, "What do you think that character is feeling? How do you know that? When have you felt that way before?"
- **Help them predict when problems are most likely to happen, and find ways to prevent those situations.** For example, if a student is having social challenges at recess, they may help out in the kindergarten room or be a part of a structured 'games club' with peers during that time of day.
- **Help the student advocate for their social needs** by talking with their friends or peers' parents. For example, "JC can't always think before speaking. That is why she sometimes say things that are upsetting."

DID YOU KNOW?

Fast facts about ADHD

- Five percent of the world's population has ADHD - it is the most common neuro-developmental disorder!
 - ADHD occurs in all genders and all ethnicities. ADHD is passed down through family genes, and it is comparable to how height is inherited in a family (approximately 75 percent!)
 - Although ADHD looks different for every individual, most people with ADHD have difficulty regulating their emotions and/or actions.
 - ADHD is treated using a combination of school/workplace supports, behaviour therapy and family coaching, medication, and maintaining healthy habits (sleep, exercise, routine).
 - ADHD is NOT caused by parenting or teaching styles, vaccinations, or diet. It is related to differences in the brain structure, typically seen from birth.
 - People with ADHD are often 'out of the box', creative thinkers. With proper treatment, people with ADHD can thrive and be leaders in their school, community, and workplace.
- Online ADHD Resources:**
- [How to ADHD YouTube channel](#) (for caregivers and students)
 - [Understood.org](#) and the [Wunder app](#) (for caregivers)
 - [Additude Mag](#) (for caregivers)

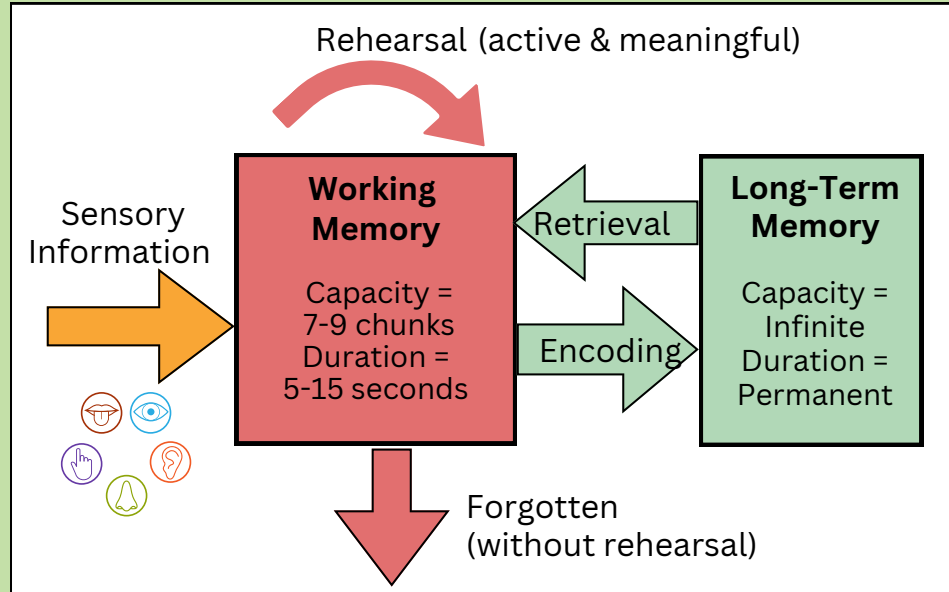
DID YOU KNOW?

Fast facts about Learning Disabilities (LD)

Working Memory: What You Need to Remember!

Working Memory is the ability to hold information in your mind for a short period of time, while also working with that information. Working memory takes new information that a person sees or hears, and makes connections to information they already know. Working memory is essential for learning!

A Model of Working Memory



- People with LD's are smart! To have a learning disability, a person needs to have average to above average intelligence, but they struggle to demonstrate all of their skills and knowledge effectively.

- LD's sometimes go by different names, like Learning Disorders, dyslexia, dysgraphia, or dyscalculia. No matter the title, it is important to understand the strengths and specific needs for that person, so we can give the right support!

- LD's tend to run in the family, similar to ADHD. It is usually first identified in elementary school, when academic achievement is impacted.

- Kids with LD's are not lazy or unmotivated. Their brains process information in different and sometimes less effective ways compared to other students.

- With proper support, people with LD's can lead successful and passion-driven lives. Support can include teaching, test-taking and/or environmental accommodations, assistive technology, and parent and student counselling.

What do working memory challenges look like?

- Difficulty solving multi-step problems or following steps
- Difficulty doing mental math
- Trouble with organizing and sequencing written ideas
- Difficulty staying on track when doing homework or chores
- Difficulty following along with new lessons
- Takes longer to respond out loud or answer test questions
- Choppy reading pace despite good decoding skills
- Trouble remembering academic vocabulary
- Losing track of information or materials

People with Learning Disabilities and/or ADHD often have working memory challenges. The good news is that using specific memory strategies can really help students improve and activate their working memory:



Play card games like Uno or Crazy 8's to help enhance skills



Chunk instructions or activities into smaller parts



Use mnemonics or acronyms to remember facts



Use visualizations like "memory palace" to recall complex information



Review new information at home - see it, do it, talk about it, repeat it!



Learn more about working memory strategies for students

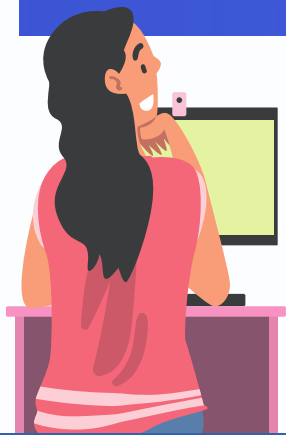
Online LD Resources:

- [LD@HOME](#) (for caregivers)
- [Handbook on LD's](#) (for caregivers)
- [Seeing LD's through a child's eyes](#) (videos for caregivers and students)

COMMUNITY CORNER

PARENTS & CAREGIVERS
as PARTNERS
Affirming, Belonging, Connecting
 Hybrid Conference 2022

Save the Date for the 'Parents & Caregivers as Partners' Conference!
 In partnership with the City of Toronto and the TDSB Outdoor Education team, in-person sessions will be taking place all over our beautiful city! (Please note, registration is required). The conference will be live (virtually) on **October 22-23, 2022**. See you there!



Virtual Drop-in Hours for Caregivers!
 Every Wednesday
 7-8 p.m.

Connect with TDSB Professional Support Services to discuss questions and concerns about your child and/or families mental health & well-being.



Parents/Caregivers of Students with Special/Complex Needs:
Virtual Drop-in Hours

Join our Virtual Drop-ins
 Wednesdays 7 p.m. – 8 p.m.
www.tdsb.on.ca/virtualsupport

Connect with our Professional Support Services staff to talk about taking care of yourself as a caregiver and other ideas related to your child's mental health and well-being



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 Wednesdays* | 7 p.m. – 8 p.m.
www.tdsb.on.ca/virtualsupport
*check the website for specific dates offered

Connect with Professional Support Services staff to explore ideas related to your child's mental health and well-being



Centre for ADHD Awareness

CADDAC

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

LD@home

Culturally Responsive Virtual Lounges & Resources

Mental Health Toolkits & Choice Boards