



February 2022

Special Points of Interest

- **Tips for Assisting Students**
- **SEA Tips for Parents and Students**
- **Returning to Face-to-Face School**
- **Mental Health Literacy**
- **Children and Social Media**
- **Career Fairs**

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SSSD INSIDER

Term II – Academic Year 2021/2022

Message from the CEO - Mrs. Lisa Henry-David

Happy New Year and best wishes for the new academic term!

As the Ministry of Education continues to navigate the choppy waters arising from the global pandemic, I wish to commend the officers of the Student Support Services Division as they provide yeoman service to the students and parents of Trinidad and Tobago.

Globally, it has been recognized that the deviations from normal routines brought about by lockdowns and cessation of face-to-face classes have resulted in increased levels of stress and anxiety among both our student and adult populations. In response to the increasing demands, the staff of Student Support Services Division have converted their services to virtual and online modalities and have operationalized call centers to provide students with the support needed. Officers have gone beyond the call to provide services to colleagues in education in times of sorrow and bereavement.

As we continue to wrestle with these unprecedented conditions, I wish to signal my deep appreciation for the hard work and innovativeness demonstrated by these officers.

If the world had more people like you, it would be a better place!



Best wishes as we transition into the new academic term. May all your hard work and dedication be rewarded!

Cheers to 2022!

Tips for Assisting our Students

Hey students! You are now in secondary school. Congratulations! As you continue to adjust and make the best of this opportunity, please remember the following:

S	<p>Seek Assistance</p> <p>Seek assistance from your teachers if you are having difficulty understanding new concepts taught. Teachers are ready and willing to help.</p> <p>The school social worker and guidance officer are also at your school to assist with any personal, social, academic or career concerns you may have.</p> <p>Know how you learn best. Your guidance officer will assist you in understanding and using your learning style to promote academic success.</p>
T	<p>Time Management</p> <p>You are now doing new subjects and many more than you did in primary school; this means you have to manage your time more efficiently. Prioritise tasks and avoid procrastination! Prepare a weekly and daily schedule to stay on task.</p>
A	<p>Attend</p> <p>Attend all of your classes. Irregular attendance and chronic absenteeism can create gaps in your learning and make it difficult for you to “keep up” with the class.</p> <p>Be attentive in class at all times. Pay close attention to what is being taught and participate in the discussions/activities.</p>
R	<p>Read and Review Everyday</p> <p>Get into the habit of reading or learning new words every day. What are your hobbies? Cooking, art and craft, sports or dancing? Whatever it may be, read or learn new words related to that hobby daily.</p> <p>Review, Review, Review!</p> <p>Review all classwork daily. This will help you retain all that was taught and strengthen previous learning.</p>

Remember:

- Each of us is unique.
- We all learn differently and at a different pace.
- Not only do we have intellectual capacity, but we are also intelligent in other ways, such as musically and interpersonally (Howard Gardner, 1983).
- Use all of the resources provided by your school and be determined to succeed because you are all capable of learning and lifelong success.



You've got this!

SEA Preparation Tips for Parents and Students

The examination you have been preparing for is almost here - Thursday 31st March, 2022. As it draws closer, emotions will most likely be high. Amidst this torrent of emotions, it is a good idea to remind yourself of your goal, which is not just to pass for a 'good' school, but to be on a career path to a job that suits you. When you focus on this, you understand that every school can be a 'good' school because any school can help you on your career journey by giving you the opportunity to get a good education.

There are three main areas you should be mindful of as you prepare for examination:

1. Effective studying
2. Managing your anxiety
3. What to do on the day of the exam

Here are some tips to help you in each of these areas:

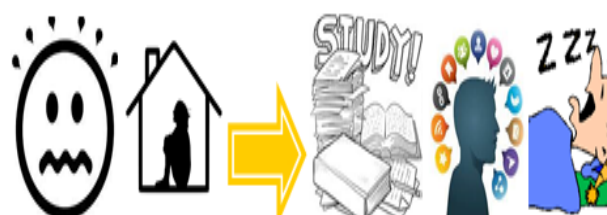


Study Tips:

- Have a time management plan - allocate times for studying and practice tests.
- Do as many practice tests as possible - many question formats are repeated and this will help you in becoming familiarized with the questions.
- Utilize different learning strategies. You can try:
 - ⇒ Highlighting important information using a fun colour
 - ⇒ Recording yourself reading your notes and then listening to it after
 - ⇒ Doing activities (such as walking) while learning
 - ⇒ Having a study group or study partner
 - ⇒ Using pictures or diagrams where applicable
 - ⇒ Using flash cards
 - ⇒ Teaching the work to someone else

Anxiety Management Tips:

- Use deep breathing exercises. Breath in and out slowly using a five-second count.
- Try replacing anxiety-rooted thoughts with positive thoughts. Say positive and hopeful things to yourself.
- Keep motivated. Look for motivational videos or speak to motivational people.
- Laugh. Look at a funny clip or share jokes with family and friends.



On the day of exams:

- Have a healthy breakfast. Do not try any new foods or food places on that day.
- Have all your materials. Be sure to pack backup materials just in case.
- Arrive early at the exam site. This also helps with managing anxiety.
- Read and follow all instructions/directions.
- Try not to discuss questions and answers during the break; this usually makes students extra nervous.
- Pray. This is always a good idea.



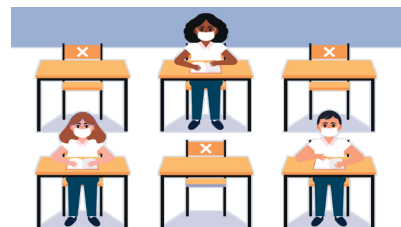
If you need additional support, members of SSSD are here to help. Believe in yourself! You've got this!

Returning to Face-to-Face School

Some of us are looking forward to face-to-face school, while others have reservations. We all accept that eventually, there will be a return to 'some' version of what was once normal; however, the requirements seem to be constantly changing. This ongoing adjustment can leave us feeling some anxiety and discomfort.

Amidst change, however, there are some things that you can do to help.

Here are some ideas for both parents and students.



Tips for Parents

- Relax. Your anxiety can be transferred to your child.
- Keep abreast of the news and use official sources (Ministry of Education, Health, news conferences, the school etc.) for your information.
- Ensure that your child has the necessary tools to return to school.
- Ensure that your child is groomed (e.g. hair and nails) in accordance with the school rules.
- Plan school transport where necessary.
- Talk to your child often about COVID-19 safety in and out of school.
- Make sure your child has masks to wear at school. It is a good idea to pack a backup in an airtight bag or container.
- Consult with your doctor about getting your child vaccinated as recommended by the Ministry of Health.
- Remind your child about the importance of education for his/her future career.

Tips for Students

- Return to school with an open mind and be willing to follow ALL protocols.
- Feel free to talk to your teacher, guidance officer or school social worker if you feel anxious or unsure about anything.
- Be sure to pack your bags beforehand with all the materials required for school, including two (2) face masks - one to be worn at all times and another as "backup".
- Acquaint/reacquaint yourself with the school rules, ensuring that you have the proper uniform. This includes personal grooming.
- Know the safety rules for COVID-19: stand six (6) feet apart, wash/sanitise hands, and avoid touching ears, nose, and mouth.
- Walk with sanitiser if you can afford it.
- Do not share food, snacks, and drinks with others.



Remember to follow all health protocols:

Wash your hands. Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. Avoid contact with people who have flu-like symptoms. Wear your mask at all times and social distance.

Mental Health Literacy

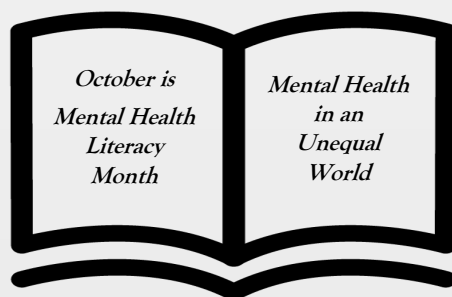
Jorm et al. (1997) introduced the term ‘mental health literacy’ and have defined it as “knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aid their recognition, management or prevention”. Mental health literacy consists of several components, including:

- The ability to recognize specific disorders or different types of psychological distress
- Knowledge and beliefs about risk factors and causes
- Knowledge and beliefs about self-help interventions
- Knowledge and beliefs about professional help available
- Attitudes which facilitate recognition and appropriate help-seeking
- Knowledge of how to seek mental health information

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) stated that “there is no health without mental health”, highlighting the association between mental and physical health. The current COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on the mental health of millions of people worldwide. Unfortunately, the WHO also revealed that one in four young people experience a mental health condition. In Trinidad and Tobago, the Ministry of Education, through the Developmental Assessment and Intervention Unit (DAIU), an arm of Student Support Services Division (SSSD), plays a significant role in addressing students’ mental health challenges.

The DAIU ensures that psycho-educational and psycho-social services are provided to students who require additional attention. This proactive approach to early intervention and the dissemination of information on mental health awareness, via the Student Learning Management System (SLMS) Platform, are measured to combat mental health issues among our students. Moreover, the DAIU launched the Promoting Mental Health in Education (PMHE): A Post COVID-19 Initiative, which targeted students, parents, and teachers to increase awareness of mental health and augment their ability to adequately manage mental health challenges.

On a national level, our nation joined the international community to campaign for increasing mental health awareness by commemorating World Mental Health Day on Sunday 10th October under the theme ‘**Mental Health in an Unequal World**’. World Mental Health Day is usually a collaborative effort among stakeholders, inclusive of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. As we strive to make mental health literacy a reality for persons at home, school, and in the wider community, we must collaborate with institutions and stakeholders to remove the stigma associated with mental health and ensure that timely interventions and support systems are made available and accessible to all.



References:

- Jorm, A. F. (2000). Mental health literacy. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 177(5), 396–401. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.177.5.396>
- Student Support Services Division (SSSD) Insider. (2021, January). <https://www.moe.gov.tt/Wp-Content/Uploads/2021/01/Newsletter-2701-ADJUSTED.pdf>. Retrieved September 21, 2021.
- United Nations. (n.d.). *Youth Mental Health - United Nations Partnerships for sdgs platform*. United Nations. Retrieved September 21, 2021, from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=32943>.



Children and Social Media Use: Pros and Cons



Many parents are quite aware of the dark side of social media; however, those platforms (e.g. TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram) also have a bright side. The way social media is used determines the impact on users; therefore, children must be taught, both at home and school, healthy approaches to social media to reap the benefits and help stave off the adverse effects. Here are some pros and cons of social media use for children.

Bright Side of Social Media

- Today's children are digital natives, and social media (SM) allows them to participate in our technology-driven world.
- Children can access information, resources (e.g. support groups)
- Platforms present the opportunity for creative expression/ talent showcasing, entertainment/fun.
- SM enables youths to connect with family and friends, access timely support, and explore identity. It provides the opportunity to find like-minded people and achieve a sense of belonging.
- SM allows the socially anxious/introverted to hone social skills.
- Platforms expose youths to other cultures and different ways of doing things resulting in a broadened worldview.

Dark Side of Social Media

- Unregulated/excessive social media use can result in low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, poor academic performance etc.
- SM allows constant/unbridled exposure to inappropriate content, cyberbullying, unrealistic standards (e.g. beauty and success). Predators also have easy access to children via those sites.
- SM sites take children away from other vital activities. SM robs them of opportunities for face-to-face interactions and experiences in the offline world.
- Too much screen time can have harmful physical side effects, such as sleep problems, digital eye strain, neck/back pain, obesity due to inactivity.
- SM companies place profits way before the well-being of users.

Recommendations for Parents

- Set boundaries and guidelines for SM use. This may include time limits, hours of use, and what the child should/should not share online. Consider device-free times and zones.
- Monitor/supervise use. Keep privacy concerns top of mind. Use parental control apps where necessary/possible.
- Educate children on responsible social media use. Teach them to be discerning.
- Keep lines of communication open.
- Lead by example —model healthy SM habits!
- For balance, ensure children engage in offline activities.

National Virtual Career Fairs

What is the Career Fairs?

The National Virtual Career Fairs, an initiative of the Port of Spain and Environs District, is just one of the many ways in which guidance and counselling personnel provide ongoing career development to students. This project, which commenced on 6th October, 2021, themed “Promoting Your Dream Careers”, comprises a series of weekly presentations and panel discussions by relevant providers across careers (topics and dates listed below).

When and where does it take place?

Every Wednesday of the school term, between 3pm to 6pm, students of Forms three (3) to six (6) throughout all education districts are given the opportunity to explore available career options. This enables them to formulate their plans to successfully transition into postsecondary education and the world of work.

Follow the link to register and join in! <https://bit.ly/3Bfbw15>

What is learned at these sessions?

Students are introduced to the offerings of local/international colleges/universities, and they learn how to access scholarships, grants, and bursaries. This ongoing effort also teaches participants about the behaviours and skills that are necessary for lifelong career success.

DATE	TOPIC	Education District Coordinating
January 2022		
5 th	Careers in Oil & Gas	South Eastern
12 th	Careers in Construction	South Eastern
19 th	Careers in Art & Culture	South Eastern
26 th	Careers in Engineering	South Eastern
February 2022		
2 nd	Careers in Health	North Eastern
9 th	Careers in Music	North Eastern
16 th	Careers in Sports	North Eastern
23 rd	Careers in Entrepreneurship	North Eastern
March 2022		
2 nd	Colleges & Universities	St. George East
9 th	Careers in Food & Beverage	St. George East
16 th	Careers in Aviation	St. George East
23 rd	Accessing Scholarships /Grants Foreign Universities / Embassies - Student Visas	St. George East
April 2022		
20 th	Careers in Social Sciences	Victoria
27 th	Careers in Social Sciences	Victoria



CALL 622-2181

or EMAIL US!



Our Contact Information

The SSSD can be contacted via email at studentsupportservices@moe.gov.tt or at the following telephone numbers and email addresses specific to the various disciplines:

- Developmental Assessment and Intervention
- Guidance and Counselling
- School Social Work
- Diagnostic and Prescriptive Special Education Services

Unit	Email Contact	Telephone Ext.
Developmental Assessment & Intervention	daiu@moe.gov.tt	1052
Guidance and Counselling	cgc@moe.gov.tt	1035
School Social Work	SocialWorkUnit@moe.gov.tt	1036
Diagnostic and Prescriptive Special Education Services	specialeducationsssd@moe.gov.tt	1033
Administrative	studentsupportservices@moe.gov.tt	1034
Research	studentsupportservices@moe.gov.tt	1043

SSSD Calendar Events for Term II

February 2022

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					

March 2022

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

LEGEND

	Career Fairs
	Community Voices
	Social Work Week

Share your information or success stories with us!

Are you part of the SSSD and have information that you would like to share? Success story? Then, contact one of the editorial committee members to have your information featured!

It's all about information sharing!