



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

# MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

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STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION

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## Special Points of Interest

ISP Staff Training

Supporting ISP Training

Diversity in the Classroom

Transitioning from SEA to Form One

Mental Health at the Workplace

Case Management

Spotlight - School Experience with the SSSD

SSSD Calendar Events

## Special Thanks to the Editorial Committee:

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# SSSD INSIDER

*Term I – Academic Year 2022/2023*



For parenting tips for the return to face-to-face schooling, see SSSD Insider Volume 2 Issue 2 for further details:

[SSSD-Insider-Volume-2-Issue-2-2.pdf \(moe.gov.tt\)](https://moe.gov.tt/SSSD-Insider-Volume-2-Issue-2-2.pdf)



## Inclusive Schools Project Staff Training

A key pillar of the Inclusive Schools Project (ISP) is the professional development of staff at all its schools/centres. The ISP's professional development plan, guided by contributions from Professor Dennis Conrad, Ms. Mary Bastien (GO II), and Ms. Jenny Garcia (SET II), was approved and ready for implementation. While the first unit of training for administrators began prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the subsequent closure of schools made it challenging to engage in the training of teaching staff during the period.



With the reopening of schools/centres, it was important to reconnect with all ISP schools/centres, identify their major challenges, and finally, offer and schedule our second training unit. The Developmental Assessment and Intervention Unit (DAIU) was poised and eager to initiate the formal training of staff on the ISP. The lead on the ISP, Ms. Shirma Swan, allocated one day to each district, and on that day, visited all schools/centres on the ISP in that district. Sincerest thanks to Mrs Irma Bailey-Reyes (DAIU Lead) and Mr Allick Delancy (Behavioural Specialist) of the Developmental Assessment and Intervention Unit (DAIU) for accompanying the ISP lead on each of those visits. The support was greatly appreciated.

### Visiting and Planning Training Sessions

Months ago, the ISP lead visited all twenty-eight institutions across the seven education districts in Trinidad. While their major issues revolved around the need for infrastructural repairs and the lack of resources, the ISP lead was impressed with the recognition administrators gave to the training offered by the DAIU. This resulted in all schools/centres on the ISP in Trinidad, except for one, feverishly scheduling dates for professional developments at their schools/centres. All administrators agreed that the topics being covered were both timely and necessary.

In unit two, the DAIU covered understanding classroom behaviours; the importance of record keeping; classroom management, and de-escalating challenging behaviours. Those topics were delivered over three two-hour sessions or one professional development day. Many thanks to the Chief Education Officer, Division of School Supervision, and the ECCE Division for their support in facilitating requests from administrators to provide the training sessions. Supporter include Ciyah Fletcher (CP), O'shanna Drakes (SP), Kimberly Campbell (BS), Timothy Charran (SP), Sonya Sandy (SP), Kennisha Romain-Sammy (CP), Cleojenny Severin (SP), and Kathyann Ali (SP). We offer special thanks to Mr Allick Delancy (BS) for his unwavering support towards this training.

While we have scheduled unit two training in Trinidad for almost every weekday throughout September and October 2022, we look forward, once approved, to visiting the Tobago ISP schools/centres to identify challenges and implement unit two training also. It should be noted that unit three will follow simultaneously and cover topics presented by our School Social Work Unit. All schools /centres on the ISP can continue to expect ongoing training opportunities focused on engaging in the process of inclusive education.



## Supporting Inclusive Education in Schools in Trinidad

According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), "Inclusive education means all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools. It means real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded..."



A study published in the International Journal of Inclusive Education, titled "Fostering Inclusive Education: Principals' Perspectives in Trinidad and Tobago", explored the readiness of schools to provide inclusive education throughout the country (Conrad & Brown, 2011). The results showed a strong willingness on the part of educational administrators to transform their schools into inclusive educational institutions. Although many challenges to inclusive education exist (Conrad & Brown, 2011; Charran & Seetahal, 2018), such as inadequate ramps and lifts, efforts have been made and continue to be made to assist these schools. Not only are schools being outfitted to support students and staff with physical challenges, but direct assistance is being offered to students presenting with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Further, teachers are also receiving help through professional development training workshops.



The Developmental Assessment and Intervention Unit (DAIU), in support of the Inclusive School Project (ISP), has lent its expertise in the areas of school, clinical, and behavioural psychology to enhance teaching capabilities. Over 32 schools will receive training between the third term of the academic year 2021-2022 and the first term of 2022-2023. These schools range from Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres to primary and secondary schools.



As at July 2022, over 150 teachers have been afforded access to specialised training in the following areas:

- Understanding classroom behaviours
- Record keeping
- Classroom management
- De-escalating challenging behaviours

Some of the schools that have received training are:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Palo Seco Government Primary</li> <li>• Fyzabad ECCE</li> <li>• South Oropouche Government Primary</li> <li>• Chaguanas North Secondary</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vessigny Secondary</li> <li>• Orange Valley Government Primary</li> <li>• Roystonia ECCE</li> <li>• Tranquillity Government Primary</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

Through training, the psychologists are teaching the teachers practical, easy-to-use strategies and techniques while providing an avenue for engaging in collaborative practices.

## Diversity in the Classroom

Matthew performs well academically but feels excluded as he is a wheelchair user and cannot easily access many facilities/activities at school. Wayne is a 'natural athlete' who has always struggled with math and reading. His current teacher has little patience, believing that his poor academic performance is strictly due to a lack of interest. Melissa hails from a stigmatised neighbourhood and is teased relentlessly at school; as a result, she hates attending and plays truant every chance she gets. There is such diversity in the classroom, but not all students feel a sense of belonging!



Students of varying abilities, races, backgrounds, religions, and socioeconomic statuses sit side by side on their educational journey; however, some of those differences earn them unfair treatment and unequal access. Discriminatory and exclusionary practices in schools impact students' academic performance and mental health. We are **ALL** different, but according to Audre Lorde, "*It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognise, accept and celebrate those differences.*"

Research has shown that embracing diversity is beneficial as it promotes:

- *Better learning/academic outcomes.* ALL students in inclusive settings reportedly perform better and are more motivated and engaged.
- *Maturity, empathy and thus less discrimination.* Inclusive practices makes schools safer spaces and fosters tolerance and respect beyond the classroom, thereby making communities safer.
- *Improved problem solving, creativity, and critical thinking.* Diverse viewpoints provide alternative and fresh approaches to seeing the world and solving problems.

To achieve the above-mentioned, our classrooms should be safe, inclusive spaces.

### Differences

Race/ethnicity/  
background  
Class  
Interests/motivation  
Religion  
Abilities  
Appearance

### Examples of Different Learning Styles

Visual  
Auditory  
Kinesthetics  
Reading/Writing

### Examples of Different Learning Challenges

Dyslexia  
Dysgraphia  
Dyscalculia  
ADHD  
Autism  
Intellectual disability

### In an inclusive space:

- Teachers consider the learning needs of **all** students, not just the typical/average student, and have high expectations of **all** learners.
- Students of **all** backgrounds are encouraged to share their knowledge with their peers.
- The classroom and materials therein reflect diversity, and lesson contents are presented in multiple formats.
- Educators acknowledge diversity and engage students in discussions on the subject.


As Maya Angelou pointed out, it is important "*... to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.*" As such, adults must encourage respect for all groups of people/differences. This requires modelling the desired behaviours!



## Transitioning from SEA to Form One: Tips for Parents and Students


Students, here are five (5) tips to help you make your transition into secondary school easier:

**1.) Get ready to make new friends!**




Transitioning to a new school can make you anxious or even scared! Get ready to meet new students and teachers, and find new support at your school. Soon you will find your favourite teacher, guidance officer, and friend.

**4.) Understand the rules and consequences**



Similar to primary school, you are expected to follow all the rules of your school and instructions given by teachers. All choices have consequences so make good ones!


**2.) Know your schedule**



Write down all your subjects and subject teachers. Know when you have cases and assignments, and plan ahead.

To stay safe during this pandemic, classes will be hybrid - mix of online and face-to-face learning. Ensure you have all you need: connectivity device, internet access, books etc.


**5.) Support is available!**



Your Guidance Officer, teachers, and parents are all here to help you. Reach out if you are having difficulty with online learning, specific subjects, making friends, or other challenges.

We are here to help you do your best!


**3.) Stay in touch**



Know how to contact all your teachers. Reach out to them by phone, email, or messages, if you have any questions or concerns.

Stay connected with other students to help build friendships. Share ideas, or study together.

**6.) Be confident. you're ready!**



It is ok if you feel nervous about starting secondary school. Adjusting to online learning and secondary school will take time.

Have patience and stay motivated.



Set goal that will propel you to success. Remember to be yourself and enjoy your secondary school experience.

### Parents, help your child Transition to Secondary School with these 5 tips

1.) Encourage open communication	2.) Reassure & Encourage Your Child	3.) Be Patient	4.) Do a walk (talk) through	5.) Seek support when needed
Talk openly with your child about what they can expect and what is expected of them at secondary school. Allow them to express how they feel. <b>LISTEN</b> to them.	It is normal for your child to feel anxious about this transition. Use positive phrases. Instead of 'if you don't figure this out, you will fail', say 'I know you can do this'. In this way, you help build their confidence.	Adjusting to secondary school within the new normal may be challenging for your child. It will take time for them to be efficient at online learning and meet the demands of secondary school. Be patient and give them the time and support to adapt.	Help your child establish a routine. Identify locations at home that provide a good learning environment. Talk through what a day might be like and some challenges they may face and how to overcome them.	If you need additional support for your child, reach out to their teachers or the guidance officer, who are ready and available to provide support.

**Healthy self-awareness** helps you succeed in life. Your ability to evaluate your thoughts, feelings, reactions, skills, and strengths helps you make positive changes, grow self-confidence, and increase your self-esteem.

Healthy self-awareness is required to help you adjust to positive changes. Let's check for limitations. **Accept** and then **edit** them as necessary.

CHECK  Read the list of Limitations below and see which describes you	ACCEPT Tick (✓) the Limitation that describes you	EDIT  Write positive ways you can improve your Limitation(s)
I engage in Negative Self-talk	✓	Engage in positive thoughts and feelings to keep thinking and acting positively so that I will not be judgemental or too hard on self and others.
I am Unable to Set Goals		
I Make Poor Choices		
I am Shy, Reserved and Lack Self-confidence		
I cannot Manage Time wisely		
I feel Unsupported and Alone		
I am Overly Stressed		
I Set Unattainable Goals		

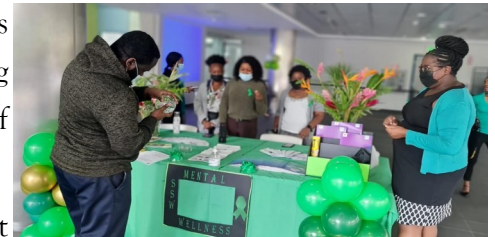
## Promoting Mental Health in the Workplace

World Mental Health day is October 10th. This day is aimed to raise awareness of mental health issues and mobilise support. The Student Support Services Division (SSSD) hosted a Mental Health Awareness Fair on May 27th, 2022, at the Ministry of Education Head Office in commemoration of Mental Health Month observed in May. The goal of Mental Health month is to raise awareness about the importance of mental health and its impact on the well-being of children, families, and communities. The fair was an opportunity for SSSD to underscore that mental health



is a priority and provide staff with opportunities to learn and practice a variety of adaptive coping skills.

The event welcomed staff members to various tables and activities themed around mental health. Activities included deep breathing, muscle relaxation, and guided meditation. There were stations where attendees were encouraged to create a stress ball, participate in a scavenger hunt, dance, jump rope, and engage in classic childhood games. Seats at the art therapy station were always occupied as participants sat and coloured while listening to relaxing music. There was also a station where persons assessed their level of burnout and were given feedback on managing their stress levels.



Seats at the art therapy station were always occupied as participants sat and coloured while listening to relaxing music. There was also a station where persons assessed their level of burnout and were given feedback on managing their stress levels.

The aim was to set up a fun, invigorating space for people to connect and create a sense of community while highlighting that mental health should not be feared but rather managed. This event was rewarding for the organisers and attendees.

There was a large turnout of staff and copious requests for similar events. Initial results from a feedback survey showed that more than 50% of respondents felt the event improved their knowledge about mental health and wellness strategies.

Here are some comments from attendees in response to the prompt: "My commitment to my mental health is to..."

- ◇ *"Learn to respect my boundaries and say no when I need self-love."*
- ◇ *"Hope Liverpool beat Real Madrid in Champions League."*
- ◇ *"Sing along to my favourite songs and dance."*

*Thank you*

*We thank those who attended and participated in the activities.*

Special thanks also to the various departments that supported with organising to make this event a successful one.

If you or someone you know is experiencing challenges with stress or mental health, here are a few places you can get help:

- [www.findcarett.com](http://www.findcarett.com)
- National Family Services- 800-2619
- EAP services for staff- 226-4325



## In the Know: School Social Work (SSW) and Case Management

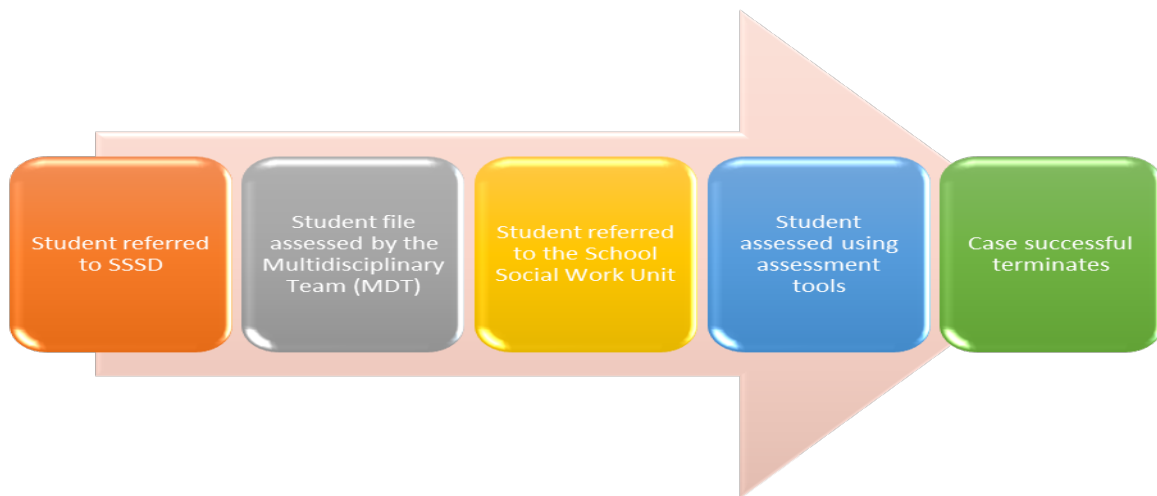
### What is case management?

It is the process through which school social workers deliver professional services based on the need of clients and their families. This case-by-case approach involves the use of assessment tools, consultations, counselling, treatment plans, and networking.

### Why is case management important to SSW?

Case management gives social workers the advantage in assessing the clients' individual needs; it also tracks the progress of these persons, facilitating monitoring and evaluation of services provided. Case management is important for targeted intervention; it eliminates reduplication of services offered so that strategies and solutions have a greater impact on the clients' lives.

### Case Management Process



### Step by Step Process:

1. Confidential files are created for the students referred to SSSD
2. Students referred to SSW are assessed via the school social work assessment tools. The students are interviewed with their parents or guardians; then, the intervention begins based on the presenting concern of the case and the information gathered from said interviews. Treatment plans and strategies are developed as the school social worker conceptualizes the case.
3. SSW services are provided to clients based on their individual needs. The process is guided by the treatment plan, which is also approved by the parents/guardians. Services are monitored and evaluated for their efficacy.
4. During this process, the student's file may be returned to the multidisciplinary team to be reassigned or gain the support of another discipline at the SSSD (supporting unit). If the case is reassigned, another discipline will be charged with the responsibility. Supporting units can provide expertise to assist in successfully managing the case.
5. In some instances, case management leads to school social workers making external referrals to agencies that can offer the best assistance to the client.
6. The end goal of case management is always the client's empowerment and successful termination of the case.



## **Spotlight:** **Orange Valley Government Primary Experience with SSSD**



The Orange Valley Government Primary School is located in the fishing village of Orange Valley. At this school, our philosophy of education promotes and encourages the policy of inclusive education. We believe that it is every individual's right to receive equitable access to education in a learning environment that caters to the needs of all pupils.

This journey comes with many difficulties. We have had, and to an extent still have, pupils with varying challenges, such as visual impairment, ADHD, autism and behavioural issues. However, thanks to the support from the Student Support Services Division (SSSD) of the Ministry of Education, we have been able to successfully overcome these challenges. Through the coordinated efforts of Ms. Shirma Swan, Inclusive Special Education Specialist; Mrs. Camille Boodoo-Samaroo, Diagnostic Specialist MOE; and Mrs. Julie Martin, Special Needs (Caroni), we have been able to navigate and effectively treat with all our special needs cases. They have always been readily available to render assistance and advice. There was never any hesitation to listen and assist wherever they could when the need arose.

The SSSD has provided us with much-needed assistance. We have always received trained and committed aides for our pupils, whether visually impaired or autistic, in a timely manner. The SSSD has been instrumental in facilitating a visually impaired pupil to receive an operation at the Mt. Hope Hospital. SSSD also helped a pupil diagnosed with ADHD get medications as the child's parents were not financially able to do so.

Other notable achievements resulting from the unwavering support from the SSSD include the provision of timely feedback on referrals for pupils and assistance granted to parents seeking a diagnosis for pupils suspected of having special needs, such as autism and ADHD.

At the Orange Valley Government Primary School, we are fortunate to always have professional, dedicated, and caring guidance officers (Ms. Marvingale-Taylor) and school social workers (Ms. Ancilla Nicholas). They tirelessly plan and implement sessions to effectively deal with behavioural problems and help with issues of indiscipline displayed by some pupils. They have been patient and understanding. Their dedication is also exhibited when they conduct home visits to ensure that problems are treated holistically by engaging the family.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the guidance officer and school social worker maintained their commitment by having virtual sessions with pupils individually and in groups. Additionally, they have conducted informative sessions with parents, giving sound and practical advice on effective parenting skills specifically geared to each child's issues. Our school has also been graciously chosen to be a part of the Inclusive Schools Project, and as such all teachers have benefitted from recent training and sensitization sessions that proved useful.

All in all, the tremendous support we have received from the SSSD has equipped and enabled us, a school entity and as professionals in the field of education, to become more knowledgeable in creating an inclusive and welcoming learning environment that caters to the needs of all pupils.

## SSSD Calendar Events

September 2022

Su	Mo	Tue	We	Thu	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	

October 2022

Su	Mo	Tue	We	Thu	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					

November 2022

Su	Mo	Tue	We	Thu	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			

### List of SSSD Major Events:

- On-going ISP training (DAI and SSW collaboration) - September and October
- Ongoing orientation training and workshops for Special Education Staff - August and September
- SSSD-ECCE staff and parent sensitization training on early intervention - Sep 14th

### List of Events:

- Start of Term 1 - Sep 5th
- World Suicide Prevention Day - Sep 10th
- International Day of Sign Languages - Sep 23rd
- Cerebral Palsy Day - Oct 6th
- World Mental Health Day - Oct 10th

### Share your information or success stories with us!

Do you have success stories, or did a major event occur in your district? Please share it with us by contacting one of our editorial committee members to have your information featured. Let's sensitize our MOE team and stakeholders on the happenings at SSSD!

