

Welcome to our Fall 2020 Family Issue

Connexions Resource Centre serves and promotes the health, well-being and vitality of the English-speaking population of the Outaouais. We encourage and appreciate your comments and questions. If you have any difficulties accessing the information in this newsletter or if you need assistance in finding information or services in English, please contact us at 819-777-3206 or info@centreconnexions.org. Make sure to visit our website at centreconnexions.org for upcoming news items and events and follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/ConnexionsResourceCentre.

WE WANT TO KNOW: "CAN YOU COME & PLAY?"

Our Itsy Bitsy Tots Playgroup Goes Virtual!

With so many playdates, parties and extra-curricular activities put on hold these past months, some of us are getting a little bit “antsy in our pantsies” to see each other. We just can’t wait to play with our friends again over here at the Itsy Bitsy Tots Playgroup. So. We’ve made a decision! We are reopening our playgroup, but this time we will meet online!

We are kicking off our activities on September 16th with a Live “Seasonal Celebration Series” to help us transition from Summer to Fall! Get right up close with autumn seeds, listen to harvest time stories, and make apple and leaf crafts with us this month! Virtual “show and tell days” and online “circle time songs” will also be part of our plan to get our kids connecting, laughing and sharing again this Fall.

Can you come and play with us? We hope so! Join us on our Itsy Bitsy Tots Playgroup Facebook Page at: bit.ly/38ukwAW



Tips & Tricks for Virtual Playgroup Fun!

Hoping to join us for some Itsy Bitsy Tots Playgroup fun? Here are some tips, tricks and advice to ensure everyone enjoys themselves:

Since this is often a new type of engagement for most young children, it might take a bit of time to get into the groove. **Model participation and listen with enthusiasm.** Don't be afraid to get silly, sing, dance and get in touch with your inner child.

Moving or wiggling bodies does not mean your child isn't listening or learning. **If your child needs to move around the room, play with a toy, or eat a snack during our virtual playgroup- that's fine!** Do what works for you and your child so you can both have fun.

We will be organizing virtual playgroup activities three times a week, but **there is no pressure to participate in every single event.** Do what makes sense for you and your family right now. Try a few classes and stick to those that you and your child enjoy the most.

It's totally ok to unplug and take a pause from the screen. Play is how children learn, and how they connect and bond with you, so make sure to take some extra special time playing, reading and enjoying the outdoors with your child.

Going virtual is new for our Itsy Bitsy Tots playgroup, so make sure to ask for what you need. **We would love to hear from you!** Whether you have some fun activity ideas or are looking for information on available health and social services within your area, we are here to help!

SCHOOL READINESS TOOLS IN YOUR KINDER KIT

Do You Have All the Tools You Need to Get Your Child Ready for Kindergarten?

What's included in our School Readiness Kits? We have crayons and scissors, a Kittycat & Friend story book and cookbook, as well as tip and information sheets on parenting, supporting speech and language development, healthy eating and available health and social services within the Outaouais. And it all comes in a cute backpack for your little one to carry around with them.

Created as a guide to help young children transition from home or daycare to school, these kits are being distributed during the first weeks of September for all children registered in a pre-k and kindergarten class with the Western Quebec School Board (WQSB). These Kits are made possible in partnership with the WQSB and Naître et Grandir, as well as with financial support from Centraide Outaouais.



Guess What? You Can Also Access Some of the Best Tools the Kit Has to Offer! Check Out These Four Incredibly Useful Digital Tools That are Just a Click Away.

First Words Speech and Language Modules

Help your preschooler develop their early communication skills by taking the Communications Check Up and watching this amazing series of webinars about how to develop language and literacy even before school starts.

bit.ly/2EMZxzs

Talk Box Monthly Preschool Language Activities

Each month, Talk Box offers seasonally relevant ways for parents to create language rich environments to support their child's early communication in preparation for school. bit.ly/3jyoBce

Free Hands-On Preschool Activities

Make a fairy potion, start a family gratitude jar, build a miniature catapult and begin a nature journal inspired by Jane Goodall. These are just some of the incredible activities available to you and your preschooler.

bit.ly/2YRoi4C

Nobody's Perfect Parenting Group

Feeling a little lost or maybe unsure of what to do? Yep. Us too! But it's ok. We're all in this together. Join this virtual group to get support, to realize that you're absolutely not alone, and to help remind you that actually you're doing just fine. bit.ly/3hMnMvZ

MARKERS, GLUE STICKS, SCHOOL BAGS - OH MY!

Making Learning Fun at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School (PETES)

Connexions collaborated with staff at PETES to put together 25 Readiness School Kits for students. Each kit was filled with all of the school materials they'll need, including workbooks, pencils and markers, highlighters and rulers, pencil cases and a school bag.

This special project also included the distribution of 12 Sensory Kits for teachers and their classrooms. The Kits included stretchy string, play-doh, a liquid motion bubbler and a marble fidget toy.

A special thank you to Cary O'Brien, President of Connexions' Board of Directors, and his wife Susan O'Brien for putting these kits together and delivering them to families.



CHILDHOOD ANXIETY CAUSING CONFLICT & MAJOR MELTDOWNS?

Let an Emotions Coach be Your Guide as You Help Your Child Through their Big Emotions

In this two-part series, Joanne Doucette, MSW, RSW, Registered Social Worker at the Child Adolescent and Family Centre of Ottawa (CAFCO) will provide parents with therapeutic skills associated with the Emotion Coaching approach.

Use these techniques to soothe and support your child by reducing their anxiety, de-escalating conflict at home or school, spending more quality time together and approaching problems as a team.

Don't miss this chance to start the school year off on the right foot! Register now for our Zoom webinar with Joanne on the evening of September 29th where she will introduce you and your family to the Emotion Coaching approach.



Once you've had some time to apply these skills in your own home or at school, you can reconnect with Joanne during a virtual interactive Q&A session on the evening of October 13th. Let Joanne answer any questions you may have about how best to apply these skills in your own unique family and/or school context!

To participate in the Zoom Webinar and Q&A, please contact us at 819-777-3206 or info@centreconnexions.org

Supporting Your Child & Youth with Going Back to School During COVID-19

It can be especially stressful for both our children and ourselves now that we are returning to school during COVID-19. Here are a few tips to help you plan a successful school year for your child or youth:

Encourage your child to stay connected with their school peers and friends. This could involve connecting outside in safe ways, meeting virtually or even becoming pen pals.

As you gradually get into the school routine, **make sure your child gets enough sleep.** Set a bed and waketime that allows for 9-11 hours for children 5 to 13 years old and 8-10 hours for youth 14 to 17 years old.

Pause the screen an hour before bedtime. Staring at a phone, computer or television screen can interfere with a good night's sleep. Here's some useful PAUSE strategies: bit.ly/3ITLd9s.

Consider posting a family calendar with your school-year schedule that includes their wakeup, departure time, when they get back home, homework time, supper, free-time, "downtime" and bedtime.

Make sure to normalize mask-wearing by buying a child-friendly mask or, if making the mask, using a pattern of their choice. Ask them to wear a mask when they are distracted (watching television or playing a video game) or doing their favourite activity (listening to music or reading a book).

For children who are anxious about starting school during COVID-19, **practice calming strategies** like deep breathing exercises (bit.ly/3b9ptkX), going outside or even colouring quietly. You can also offer your child some calming tools such as stretchy string or lavender scented playdough.

To further help your child cope with back-to-school, **make sure to stay connected with them.** Spend quality time together, listen to what worries them most and make sure to validate and empathize with their myriad feelings.

Let your child or youth **see you model healthy coping strategies during this time and to attach positive meaning to the pandemic despite the difficulties it has posed.** More time at home with parents and siblings and valuing a simpler life have had benefits for many busy families.

Make sure you to stay on top of the latest back-to-school information published by the Government of Québec (bit.ly/2YMN85p) and the WQSB (westernquebec.ca). You can also visit our COVID-19 webpage for the most up-to-date Government of Québec reminders and directives: bit.ly/3hLCfz8.

FIVE WAYS TO HYGGE YOUR TIME AT HOME

Does Your Back to School Season Look a Bit More Like Back to Home? Maximize This Time with Your Child by Bringing Hygge Into Your Home.

Hygge is a Danish term that means coziness and conviviality as part of daily living. Since you have this time together, why not make it quality time that creates a sense of well-being and contentment for both you and your child or youth? Here are a few tips for bringing hygge to your homeschool, distance learning experience or even to supplement your learning experience during off-school hours:

First, don't try to do school at home: Woah there! Before you go out and buy that vintage desk and chalkboard, it's important to remember that your home is not a typical classroom. In the same way that you don't stop being their parent just because you are also teaching them, the typical school day routines and environment do not need to be replicated in your home for learning to happen. Recognize that learning can happen all over the home as well as on field trips. Moreover, studies can take place in smaller chunks of time than they would in a regular classroom since the teacher student ratio is so much smaller. This is true for homeschooling, distance learning with the WQSB, and learning at home when away from school.

Spend cozy time together: The key advantage to learning at home is having more quality time together. If lessons turn too frequently to tears of frustration, consider taking time to just cuddle up together on the couch and read a good book. Add candlelight and leg warmers and you have some serious hygge happening.

Learn outside: Alternatively, take learning outdoors to conquer distraction! Grab an apple and head to a local green space to settle down with the lessons in a new environment. Fresh air and change of scene may be all that your child needs to get back on task.

Houseplants: Keep workspaces uncluttered to encourage focus and effectiveness. Decorate with a houseplant or two and voila! You now have hygge in a pot of dirt as well as an inviting space to learn and grow.

Herbal Tea time: Afternoon tea is not just for the British! Homeschooling families have been gathering for 2pm tea time for many years. It offers a means to reconnect and check in on how the day is going! Try a different herbal tea each week, do a tea tasting, make tea with your youth, or host a tea party with your child's favourite stuffed animal friend to unwind after a busy day of study and adventure.



Three Key Differences Between Distance Learning & Homeschooling in Québec

Medical Exemption: Did you know that anyone in Québec can choose to homeschool their child at any time? In contrast, parents wanting their children to learn at a distance with the Western Québec School Board (WQSB) need to receive a certified medical exemption. This exemption must indicate that the student or a family member residing with the student is medically vulnerable to COVID-19.

Teacher: While homeschoolers are taught by their parents or guardians, distance learners will have access to a teacher connected to the WQSB.

Curriculum: Lessons and materials in the distance learning program are prepared and delivered by a teacher hired by the local school board or service center. This means that distance learning will closely follow the Québec Education Program. However, homeschoolers are free to select their own curricula and to deliver a variety of resources and lessons that are not limited to the Québec Education Program.

Looking for more detailed information?

The **WQSB** offers detailed information about the differences between homeschooling and distance learning at: bit.ly/2QFdQsc

Éducaloi offers legal information on homeschooling your child and youth at: bit.ly/2QE7DNr

AHOY, ME HEARTIES! WILL YE BE HELPIN' ME LOOK FOR BURIED TREASURE?

Let's Hunt for Treasure at the Grocery Store!

Grocery shopping with a young child might not be on your list of favourite things to do, but with these cute and simple Treasure Hunt Maps, that just might change.

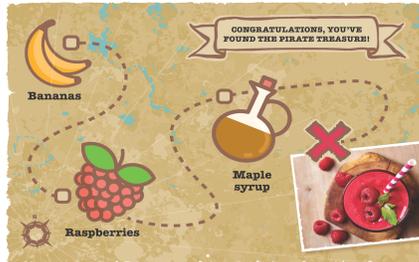
Instead, cross temper tantrums, constant requests and complaints of boredom off your grocery list! Plus, while you and your child have fun hunting for the ingredients on the map, your little one will learn new vocabulary and, with the aid of simple images, take pride in having found the treasure all by themselves.



Heading to the grocery store? Here are ten Grocery Store Treasure Hunt Maps!

- 🍓 Berry Smoothie: adobe.ly/3gQIASQ
- 🍪 Energy Balls: adobe.ly/2YVkmjg
- 🥭 Mango Dip: adobe.ly/3gNKi6v
- 🍗 Chicken Chop Suey: adobe.ly/31MWMqE
- 🧛 Witch's Brew: adobe.ly/3IGZHJC
- 🍰 Carrot Cake: adobe.ly/2YTSHz8
- 🍪 Jam-Filled Heart Cookies: adobe.ly/2ENimCP
- 🥧 Not Your Average Shepherd's Pie: adobe.ly/3hKFIqZ
- 🐰 The Easter Bunny's Favourite Muffins: adobe.ly/2QLof5P
- 🥕 Winter Vegetable Soup: adobe.ly/3gPY2h1

A special thank you to the Township's Association and La Constellation du Granit for translating these fun resource, developed by the PRÉE project.



KIDS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN! IN THE KITCHEN...

Following Instructions, Measuring Ingredients & Eating Healthy!

Those are just a few of the skills your child or youth can learn when planning and cooking a meal. Here are some fun and age-appropriate ideas to help your child succeed in the kitchen.

2 to 3 Years Old

- Count ingredients.
- Add ingredients to a bowl.
- Wash veggies and fruit.

3 to 4 Years Old

- Help gather ingredients.
- Mix ingredients in a bowl.
- Pour from measuring cups.
- Help make a sandwich/pizza.
- Mash sweet potatoes/bananas.

4 to 6 Years Old

- Set the table.
- Stir ingredients together.
- Use a children's knife to slice tofu/soft fruits/cooked veggies

6 to 8 Years Old

- Crack and beat an egg.
- Toss foods together in a bowl.
- Make their own easy breakfast.
- Use basic kitchen equipment such as a blender or can opener.

8 to 11 years Old

- Use a knife to cut tofu/bread/cooked meat/easy-to-grip veggies and fruit.
- Make/pack school lunch.
- Use microwave/stove, with help.
- Prepare fresh veggie/fruit platter.

Pre-Teens & Teens

- Follow more complex recipes.
- Assemble/mix most ingredients.
- Be in charge of making meals.

Check-out Canada's Food Guide for more healthy eating tips for children and youth at: bit.ly/3IHqg16

ASKING FOR HELP IS HARD, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO FACE THINGS ALONE

Take a Peek at these Resources & Support Services to Help You Reach Out!

Crisis Services for Parents & Youth

If you are in crisis or have suicidal thoughts:

- Call 911 or go to a hospital emergency room.
- Call the suicide prevention line at 1-866-APPELLE (277-3553).
- Call Info-Social at 811, press option 2 to speak with a social worker 24/7.
- Call the Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region 24/7 at 613-238-3311.



Non-Crisis Helplines for Parents

If you need emotional support, or are feeling low or sad:

- Talk to someone you trust, like your spouse, a family member or a friend.
- Call the LigneParents helpline at 1-800-361-5085.
- See your doctor to discuss your options for support.

You can also visit our website to find mental health resources and tools for women (bit.ly/32Coi9x), men (bit.ly/31DiB4b) and young families (bit.ly/3b9ptkX)

Non-Crisis Helplines for Youth

If you need emotional support, or are feeling low or sad:

- Talk to someone you trust, like a family member, friend or a guidance counsellor.
- Call the Tel-jeunes Helpline at 1-800-263-2266 or text 514-600-1002.
- Call the Kid's Help Phone (ages 5-20) at 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868.
- See your doctor to discuss your options for support.

You can also visit our website to find mental health resources and tools for youth (bit.ly/2Dy3cAH).

Know Your Legal Rights & Responsibilities? Find Out with Éducaloi!

Éducaloi has several online legal information guides and resources for parents, youth and even teachers. Here are a few examples:

- Legal Information Specific to Youth: bit.ly/32zYHhK
- Bullying and The Law - What You Need to Know: bit.ly/3baqGZ8
- Sexual Assaults - Reporting, Getting Help, Remedies: bit.ly/2YML3vo
- Teens in Trouble With the Law: What You Need to Know: bit.ly/2QE0exs
- LGBTQ+: bit.ly/2EI9ldU
- Women's Health Guide: bit.ly/34K7pwp

