



SEAC SOUNDBYTES

Raising awareness of the Special Education process at HCDSB

December 2016

Students with Special Needs and the Christmas Holidays

Christmas and winter break can be fun, busy, and exciting – and the excitement and change in routine can also be chaotic for many students, especially those with special needs.

As much as educators do their best to maintain structure for students, the excitement of the holidays, the many special events and activities, and the time off school can be overwhelming. The change in routine can take a child out of their comfort zone and be difficult to cope with.

Here are some tips to help parents, caregivers and educators get through these challenging times.

School Events

- ✓ Prepare your child in advance for changes in the typical school schedule and special events.
- ✓ If possible, have pictures or social stories about what your child can expect.
- ✓ Practice and rehearse what is going to happen, especially if your child will be part of a presentation.
- ✓ Talk to staff about how your child is going to participate; confirm that supports are in place to help them succeed.
- ✓ Plan for a quieter evening after the event, so your child has a chance to decompress.

Social interactions

- ✓ Use visuals to help your child understand what is going to happen
- ✓ Count down the days before school ends and then starts back up again. This makes your child aware that there will be a change in schedules.
- ✓ A daily calendar can be very helpful during the break, especially to help your child anticipate parties or family gatherings.
- ✓ Start adjusting back to your regular routine (bedtimes, naptimes, and the overall schedule) a few days before school starts back up in January, to facilitate a smoother transition.
- ✓ Consider hosting friends and family rather than visiting in a place that is unfamiliar to the child.

Holidays can be a wonderful and memorable time for children, and it is important that they feel included and excited about the experiences during this time. Hopefully some of these ideas will provide ways to create special memories for everyone.