



Sensory Program

Guelph Community Christian School is focused on its mission to “nurture, educate, and inspire students in Christ-centred learning and serving.” We nurture students in understanding themselves as learners and members of a community.



We understand that each student is unique and there may be different approaches that can help our students learn to the best of their abilities. Sensory integration plays a significant role in the life of a student. Sensory integration is a process in the brain that allows people to take information from their senses, organize it, and respond appropriately. The ability to regulate one’s mind and body allows people to feel better about their person and less concerned with things that are hindering them.

We are creating three new Sensory Program Options: a Sensory Path, a Fitness Release and a Therapy Dog. These will help students to feel able and confident in their learning, increase their self-awareness, and improve their ability to self-advocate. Along with these new options, our classrooms are also set up with a variety of tools to assist students with sensory integration.

Sensory-based movements are proven to assist students in the following areas:

- increasing focus and attention
- developing fine and large motor control of muscles
- improving brain processing and coordinated movements
- increasing stability
- gaining emotional regulation skills
- decreasing frustrations
- improving behaviors
- improving (or increasing) attendance



Sensory Program Options



SENSORY PATH

A Sensory Path is a guided course that leads students through a variety of purposeful movement. It is installed on the hallway floor for simple access. Students can take a short break, utilize muscle groups, and re-enter the classroom ready to learn within minutes.

A Sensory Path can strengthen a student's attention by stimulating the vestibular system (a sensory system in the inner ear that regulates balance).

Vestibular activities for children address a variety of motor activities such as:

- eye-movement control
- balance
- body-movement functions, such as coordination and motor-planning



FITNESS RELEASE

A Fitness Release opportunity assists students with self-regulation and anger management issues, as well as students with neurological differences, such as autism. The school has a Treadmill, posters, and tools for heavy work and cool down techniques. The room continues to be developed as tools are sourced.

The concept allows for students to come at set times each day, such as after recess when they are having trouble settling down. Other visits (with supervision) are also hosted whenever possible.

Physical exercise has been shown to:

- optimize the brain's ability to learn
- improve motivation
- result in a decrease in discipline problems



THERAPY DOG

A Therapy Dog is an interactive dog trained to work for a Handler to provide service and comfort to people.

The presence of a Therapy Dog can decrease anxiety and provide a level of comfort that enables students to work through a variety of challenging issues. A Therapy Dog works to provide psychological or physiological therapy to people who come in contact with it.

Therapy Dogs are involved in work that may generate the following outcomes:

- greater social engagement
- stress relief and distraction from anxiety
- comfort and calming
- improved self-confidence and esteem
- improved academic performance within a reading program
- improved school culture discipline problems



ENDORSEMENTS FOR A SENSORY PROGRAM AT GCCS

Children experience a variety of emotions throughout their school day. Learning to identify these feelings and what to do with them is the foundation of emotional intelligence and building resilience for children. Guelph Community Christian School has designed a Sensory Program that has options suitable to assist a variety of students as they build emotional regulation skills. These regulation skills have the potential to become a part of their self-care toolbox for years to come.

ANDREA GROENEWALD | Registered Psychotherapist
Founder & CEO Five Star Relationships, Certified TAIS Consultant, Certified Birkman Consultant

As educators and as a whole school community, we desire to see all our students grow and flourish. In my work with Christian schools, I am aware of the present and increasing concerns related to supporting students beyond the typical classroom experience. In addition to the complicated reality of living with a disability, unfortunately, mental health challenges can also disorient a student, creating a barrier in learning. The Christian School Foundation is honoured to offer a Belonging Bursary to help Guelph Community Christian students access supports that allow them to return or remain in the classroom, confident and able to learn and grow.

SARA POT | *Communities of Belonging Liaison*
Christian School Foundation, Edvance Christian Schools Association

It is wonderful and exciting to see a school looking seriously at the benefits of having a therapy dog as part of the school environment.... A warm look, a gentle nuzzle and the unconditional love of a dog goes a long way to supporting children to be encouraged to learn and to become kind and gentle human beings. I believe that Guelph Community Christian School is embarking on an exciting and innovative way to learning through the development of a therapy dog program. I would be eager to be involved in this program as it is being implemented and as it grows.

DIANE MYERS | *Guelph Team Leader, Director at Large*
Therapeutic Paws of Canada