

February 7, 2018

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Mr. Rory McGuckin  
Director of Education, TCDSB.  
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Email: [Rory.McGuckin@tcdsb.org](mailto:Rory.McGuckin@tcdsb.org)

Dear Mr. McGuckin,

On October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the Ministry of Education (MOE) released a PPM 161 (Draft) – Supporting Children and Students with Prevalent Medical Conditions (Anaphylaxis, Asthma, Diabetes, and/or Epilepsy) in Schools. The PPM 161 requires school boards to develop much needed policies to support the aforementioned medical conditions. It describes what should be included in the policies, among other things, school boards are expected to detail the following:

- The roles and responsibilities of parents, school staff, principal, students, and school boards;
- How training and education for school staff will be maintained;
- What a student's Plan of Care should include;
- How daily management of the student's condition will be supported;
- How emergencies will be handled.

School boards are expected to have their policies on prevalent medical conditions implemented no later than September 1, 2018. In order to facilitate school boards achieving this expectation, the MOE recommends consulting with appropriate groups to guide the development of the aforementioned policies. It is in the spirit of collaboration regarding the development of your diabetes policy that we are making contact and introducing ourselves.

My name is Lisa Geelen. I am a parent of Anna Poth, a Grade 6 student at Our Lady of Sorrows Elementary School on Montgomery Road.

My name is Matt DeAbreu. I am a parent of Ethan DeAbreu, a Grade 4 student at St. Pius X Elementary School on Jane Street.

Both of our children have type 1 diabetes, a lifelong autoimmune disease where the pancreas no longer produces insulin. Depending on their age and ability, students may need help checking blood sugar, administering insulin, and so on. Without support, students are at risk of both short- and long-term health consequences. We have 11 years of combined experience managing our children's diabetes and countless hours advocating on behalf of all students managing this relentless disease.

As you can imagine, the introduction of PPM 161 is a big step forward and is extremely important to both of us. This is also great timing for the TCDSB because, as you may know prior work on this policy was initiated back in September of 2013 by then Superintendent of Special Services Frank Piddisi. Matt DeAbreu was invited by Mr. Piddisi to collaborate with him on the development of a new *Diabetes Policy and Procedure Guide* for the TCDSB. This draft policy was completed shortly after Frank's retirement but sadly was never formalized. On September 1<sup>st</sup> of 2016, after repeated attempts to learn the status of the draft diabetes policy, the Board communicating through Paul Matthews – Legal Counsel, Corporate Services, promised to consult with Matt DeAbreu once a draft of the policy had been completed by Board subject-matter expert staff. Mr. Matthews also stated the draft diabetes policy would likely be completed in late September or early October of 2016. (Please see appendix-A for details).

Unfortunately, during this time, as we were advocating for a diabetes policy on multiple fronts. Lisa's daughter Anna, then in grade 4 experienced a near fatal incident at Our Lady of Sorrow's school. This near fatal incident occurred because the regular classroom teacher did not follow a safety plan established at Our Lady of Sorrow's school. Anna's regular classroom teacher, rather than overseeing her blood sugar check and insulin dose in accordance with the safety plan, instead chose to leave Anna unattended *and* under the supervision of another 9-year-old girl to perform this medical procedure. Anna's blood sugar was dangerously low (2.2 mmol/L rather than safe 5.5 mmol/L) creating a potentially deadly outcome, as Anna prepared to dose herself with rapid acting insulin. It was only the frantic screams through Anna's phone that caused the other 9-year-old girl to alert a different teacher down the hall saving Anna. (Please see appendix-B for details of this incident).

I'm sure you can appreciate the importance and timing of PPM161. It is imperative that the TCDSB develop a diabetes policy as stated in the PPM (attached as appendix-C for your reference) for the following reasons:

- Eliminate the chance of another incident like this occurring;
- Support teachers and school staff with the education and tools required to adapt to this type of teaching condition;
- And so, we don't end up giving Sabrina and Ryan's Law company with an Anna's Law.

As a next step, we are available and offer our help as consultants (pro-bono) as the TCDSB develops a diabetes policy in accordance with PPM 161. We are committed to maintain and foster a culture of collaborative professionalism as we work with you to meet the ministry deadline of September 1, 2018. In order to initiate this effort our three asks are as follows:

1. We would like to review the current draft of the TCDSB diabetes policy. This way we can align it to the requirements as set out in PPM 161 to ensure there are no gap areas. We can also provide links and summaries of best practice diabetes policy examples to be leveraged and strengthen a TCDSB policy beyond simply minimum requirements.
2. We offer our assistance in the formalization of the TCDSB diabetes policy and the creation of required supporting processes (for example, individual Plan of Care, escalation / emergency procedures and reporting). We also offer to represent other parents of type one children to ensure the TCDSB diabetes policy covers a variety of test cases.

3. A meeting within the next 30 days with you and the relevant team members required to develop, formalize and implement this policy so we can develop an aggressive plan that will meet MOE deadline of September 1, 2018.

We are excited to work with you given your 33 years of experience working in various capacities within the MSSB/TCDSB especially as Superintendent of Human Resources and Labour Relations, and as head of the Safe Schools Department, overseeing governance and policy development.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,



Lisa Geelen



Matt Debreu

Cc: Douglas Yack, Ann Andrachuk, John Wujek, Barbara Poplawski, Cristina Fernandes