

Appendix A- Parent Letter

April 17, 2018

Hello,

my name is Bojana Bartulovic, and I am a proud mother of a 6 year old child with type 1 Diabetes. My daughter Nikolina Bartulovic was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in June 2016. I would like to share with you our experiences in school so far and also our frustration with the lack of support and education from the TCDSB.

Nikolina was only 4.5 years old when she was diagnosed. Her diagnosis come from nowhere and hit us really hard. But learning the news no parent should ever learn was not the hardest part; it was sending her to school and putting our trust in someone who never had any experience with this disease. Nikolina was in JK and was not able to take care of her Diabetes by herself. Her school, Nativity of our Lord Catholic Elementary school, had little previous experience with type 1 diabetes, and to this day never took it seriously. We provided the school many times with information from Sick Kids and Trillium hospital, protocols to follow, explanations of symptoms of low and high blood sugars, we had nurses and other diabetes educators and advocates visiting school and teaching them about type 1 diabetes, but all our efforts would fail as soon as we end the meeting.

Nikolina was in danger on numerous occasions in school; we had days where her sugar was very low and school staff did not recognize the symptoms, but they called home and complained of her "difficult behavior". They also told her to get up and walk to find a juice box, when she was unable to get up. We also had many occasions where her sugar was extremely high, above 20 mmls, and school also called and complained. We had many days when staff in school let Nikolina eat all of her snacks at once and when her sugar goes up they would call and complain. They wanted to suspend Nikolina more than once for her behaviours when her sugar was over 15mmls. We were exposed to a lot of stress in the last 22 months; Nikolina had to stay at home for full weeks at the time and miss school because school was not providing a safe environment for her. We were also forced by the school to have 2 developmental assessments done on Nikolina because her teacher insisted that Nikolina had ADHD and needed to be on medication. The assessments proved them wrong. I also prove them wrong by providing written evidence that her bad days at school are the days her sugar is very high. The problem we run into for last 22 months is that school staff does not have experience with type 1 diabetes and they do not have education about it.

The lack of education about type 1 diabetes in schools makes it very stressful for us to send Nikolina to school and I have to trust people who don't know much about her medical condition. Its a very stressful situation for everyone, but mostly for Nikolina. She is growing resentment towards school because she doesn't feel comfortable.

After all our attempts to get the school on board failed, our only hope is a policy about type 1 diabetes in schools. We are aware that school principal or the board can not force teachers to do anything for our child, as we were told on many occasions by the teachers that their job is only to teach. We understand that the decision has to come from somewhere else, and we put all our hopes that it will happen very soon.

Thank you for taking the time to read our letter.

Sincerely,

Bojana Bartulovic