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REPORT TO **REGULAR BOARD**

STAFF RESPONSE TO CPIC MOTIONS FROM JULY 23 SPECIAL BOARD

"May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed." Psalm 20:4

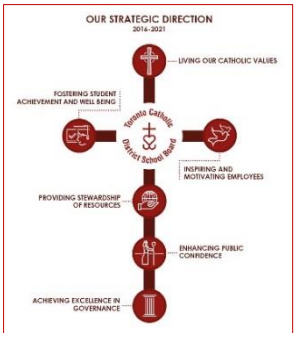
Created, Draft	First Tabling	Review
August 11, 2020	August 20, 2020	Click here to enter a date.

John Wujek, Superintendent Student Achievement and Well Being (Area 5), Parent Engagement
Linda Maselli-Jackman, Superintendent of Education, Special Services
Lori DiMarco, Superintendent Curriculum Leadership & Innovation; and Academic Information & Communications Technology

INFORMATION REPORT

Vision:
At Toronto Catholic we transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.

Mission:
The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.
We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.



Rory McGuckin
Director of Education

D. Koenig
Associate Director
of Academic Affairs

L. Noronha
Associate Director of Facilities, Business and Community Development, and
Chief Financial Officer

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At Special Board on July 23, 2020, CPIC brought forward two motions to the Board from their June 11, 2020 CPIC meeting. The Board of Trustees received and referred to staff asking them to provide a report in response to these two motions.

Staff response to these motions is contained in this report. Staff appreciates the ongoing comment and input from CPIC as a voice representative of many parents and understand the times and context by which these questions are asked.

The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 12 hours

B. PURPOSE

1. The Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (CPIC) meets monthly and minutes from these meetings receive approval at the next regularly scheduled CPIC meeting along with any sanctioned motions. These minutes and bylaws typically appear on the subsequent Regular Board Order Paper for separate consideration.

2. At the July 23, 2020 Special Board meeting, two motions from their June 11 meeting were placed on the Special Board Meeting Agenda.

3. Following consideration from the Board of Trustees, the two motions were directed back to staff for a response through report. The content of this report addresses this directive.

C. BACKGROUND

During Mental Health Awareness Week (May 4-10, 2020), the Board's Mental Health Department posted resources through their portal. (Since the closure of schools, the use and posting of online resources has been offered beyond Mental Health Awareness Week.) One of the links through a resource offered a meme activity designed to help students understand expression of feelings. Memes are facial expressions that are used most often in social media to emphasize an emotion. One of the examples in the link displayed inappropriate memes that were not indicative of the healthy mental health exercise in which students were asked to

participate. As a result these concerns were brought to the CPIC table and brought forward to Special Board through a motion: (Appendix A)

Motion 1 – YouTube link for Mental Health Wellness Week

1. As to how this inappropriate content made it to our website especially during the focus of mental health awareness wellness week.

2. That memes be incorporated into cyber bully teaching of the health curriculum and students are made aware how bad things start with a simple picture and comment.

3. That the Mental Wellness suggestion of using electronic devices as a mental break especially in a time in our society where the mental break required is from the electronic device.

A second motion was presented by CPIC in recognition of the ongoing use and necessity of on-line learning for all students and the importance of ensuring that there is equity of access for all students. As well the motion asked for metrics associated with accountability and metrics associated with the Board's Distance Learning implementation in spring of 2020: (Appendix A)

Motion 2 – Distance Learning

1. A report be requested from the Director of Education documenting all metrics captured during distance learning:
   a. the tools, programs, techniques, synchronous, asynchronous teaching, etc. used;
   b. the percentage of educators using these techniques;
   c. how all educators have been kept accountable during distance learning;
   d. how equitable and consistent delivery of learning opportunities was provided by all our schools across the TCDSB.

2. Using this report, to prepare to do this again in the fall; better and more efficient and give all our educators all the necessary tools and protections so that our students can get the education they rightly deserve.

D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

Staff Response to Motion 1 – Mental Health and Use of Memes:

The YouTube video in question was shared with parents through our May Mental Health newsletter, during Mental Health Awareness week (May 4-8, 2020).

Regarding the contents of the May newsletter and all other newsletters created by the Mental Health Team, it has always been the team's hope that parents review the content shared in the newsletters and choose which aspects will be shared with their children.

The mental health team chose to offer memes with the intent to offer a light-hearted activity during Mental Health Awareness Week, with no intent to cause harm to anyone's self-concept. When used appropriately, memes are images meant to create laughter about a situation that is not meant to be offensive to anybody.

Regarding the concern about memes being misused or engaged with inappropriately, staff understand that unfortunately any medium could potentially be used inappropriately. It is true that anything that has a positive side or outcome could also (whether intentionally or inadvertently) be used to realize entirely opposite outcomes.

The TCDSB Mental Health Team is not aware of memes having been created or used in inappropriate ways, as a consequence of this video. However, there is zero tolerance for inappropriate behaviours engaged upon related to the use of memes. If any inappropriate behaviours come to staff's attention, they will be addressed immediately in accordance with our Board's Safe School policy.

In any event, despite the vetting that staff had done in the preparation of the content for our mental health awareness week, it regrettably did not notice any inappropriate content around the screenshots in the YouTube video. We apologize for this oversight and will ensure a more thorough vetting of YouTube content is made before sharing in future.

The YouTube video has since been removed from our May Mental Health newsletter.

Staff wish to uphold that TCDSB endorses a zero tolerance regarding bullying. Any student engaging in such behaviour will be subject to progressive discipline. We also encourage any student recipient of inappropriate material to report that to an adult whom they trust such as their parent or staff member.

Hindsight provides us with many benefits. With regard to using technology as a way to distract ourselves from the stress that we are all undoubtedly feeling, the meme tool had been only one suggestion for engaging in mental wellbeing activities provided in the May Mental Health Newsletter. Currently, we are infinitely more cognizant about the compounding level of fatigue regarding the use of electronic devices, tools, and resources as we engage more deeply with the Distance Learning environment; and that this is felt acutely by many of us. However, in April, when the May newsletter was prepared the novel and widespread use technology was being embraced as a creative way of engaging with tools and resources.

This is not to suggest that the value of our engagement with technology has been diminished with time. Rather, it is an acknowledgment that we need to - and intend to - continue to scrutinize and vet the tools and resources with which we engage to advance learning and well-being goals.

Staff Response to Motion 2 – Accountability and Equitable Response to Distance Learning

A - the tools, programs, techniques, synchronous, asynchronous teaching, etc. used

- TCDSB Supported Brightspace, Google Classroom, G Suite (docs, sheets, sites, meet, etc)
- Teachers were given the choice of tool, and could use other tools such as email, phone calls, etc.

B - the percentage of educators using these techniques

In the first 34 work days of distance learning (April 6-May 26):

- 1600 teachers using Brightspace (1537% increase)
- 10500 students using Brightspace (557% increase)
- 8000 active google classrooms (267% increase) (some teachers may have multiple classrooms)
- 16300 average weekly posts by teachers in Google (1449% increase)

- 2100 average weekly posts by students (502% increase)

Google meet was launched on Monday May 10, 2020.

- In 34 work days (May 10 - Jun 26)
- 27097 Google meet sessions

Online professional development for distance learning began on April 3, 2020 . In the 59 work days (April 3 - June 26)

- Number of PD Sessions given by 21C and Assistive Technology teams and the Curriculum/Student Success/Special Services divisional teams: 186
- Number of Participants in those online PD Sessions: over 7000

C - how all educators have been kept accountable during distance learning

Local school staff were kept accountable during the spring session. Information and expectations were made clear to them by the school principal through staff meetings shared professional collaborations. Interactions between parents and educators provided valuable feedback and better informed practices when it came to distance learning. Elevated parent concerns were addressed by school principals and in some cases by school superintendents.

Educators continued to be the valued and essential conduit by which our students learn. Their professional integrity is recognized and their continued participation in defining and participating in professional development contributes to overall capacity building across the system.

Throughout the spring of 2020, there were weekly meetings between teaching Union representatives and senior staff.

D. how equitable and consistent delivery of learning opportunities was provided by all our schools across the TCDSB.

Throughout April, May and June of 2020. Staff was able to respond to technology needs of students in order to ensure that distance learning would not disadvantage those who lacked resources. A platform was created for principals to request in real-time iPads or Chromebooks so that students could properly participate in online learning. The Information Technology department was able to work through buyers to secure bulk orders and were able to respond to needs. It should

also be noted that homes that did not have internet were given use of an iPad and in partnership with Rogers, internet access was provided for these families.

On June 18, 2020, staff brought forth a report at Special Board entitled "Computers for Students in Need".

Excerpts from that report are as follows:

- As of June 10, 10,565 have been requested and purchased for students. These devices include 6,203 Chromebooks and 4,362 iPads
- All iPads were enabled with cellular data service from Rogers until August 21, 2020.

"Approximately 11% of students requested a device from the TCDSB over the course of the last 2 months to help engage in distance learning. Of the students who requested devices from the TCDSB, most, but not all, live in lower income neighbourhoods throughout the city. However, the number of requests may have been higher than under normal conditions because of the competing demands for devices with many parents working from home. The following is a breakdown of device requests by ward". (page 126, Special Board, June 18, 2020, see Appendix B)

"Approximately 1.3% of students (1,254) indicated that they needed a device and internet services to access distance learning. To support students in need of internet service, the TCDSB provided these students with an Apple iPad enabled with LTE data services from Rogers free of charge until June 30th" (page 127, Report to Special Board, June 18, 2020, see Appendix B)

E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Motion #1- Mental Health and Use of Memes

The YouTube video has since been removed from our May Mental Health newsletter.

Staff underline that TCDSB endorses a zero tolerance regarding bullying. Any student engaging in such behaviour will be subject to progressive discipline. We also encourage any student recipient of inappropriate material to report that to an adult whom they trust such as their parent or staff member.

The meme tool had been only one suggestion for engaging in mental wellbeing activities provided in the May Mental Health Newsletter. Currently, staff and the Mental Health Department in particular are infinitely more cognizant about the compounding level of fatigue regarding the use of electronic devices, tools, and resources. As we engage more deeply with the Distance Learning environment we need to - and intend to - continue to scrutinize and vet the tools and resources with which we engage to advance learning and well-being goals.

The TCDSB Special Services Mental Health Team continues to work collaboratively with TCDSB stakeholders as well as outside agencies to support the implementation of mental health and wellbeing strategies for students and staff. A wealth of information regarding the provision of mental wellbeing supports to the TCDSB community can be found on the TCDSB website Mental Health portal: https://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/mhs/Pages/Default.aspx.

Special Services Mental Health professionals continue to work closely with School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) regarding services and supports for mental wellbeing for both students and families. Resources specific to supporting student mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found at the TCDSB website: https://smho-smso.ca/covid-19/.

SMHO has just released their Mentally Healthy Return to School Toolkit which includes practical resources to promote and protect mental health at school and is relevant to various stakeholders within the TCDSB system:

- Role-specific resources supports for system and school leaders including presentations for educators, trustees, Mental Health leadership team, tip sheets for parents and families, etc.;
- learning tools to help educators and support staff to foster social emotional learning and mental health literacy skills within caring classroom environments, including lessons plans for the first 10 days of school and beyond; and
- tools to equip school mental health professionals with evidence-based learning related to effective prevention and intervention services.

Key messages contained within this toolkit remind TCDSB system leaders about the following principles:

1. Mental health and wellbeing is everyone's priority;
2. School and system staff lead with compassion and empathy;

3. Schools are an excellent place to promote and protect student mental health;
4. The TCDSB system has strong mental health foundations on which to build; and
5. All stakeholders need to work together.

Motion #2 - Accountability and Equitable Response to Distance Learning

Staff continues to offer professional development opportunities to teachers regarding aspects of distance learning. In particular, synchronous learning is a necessary component in elementary and secondary panels for families who choose distance learning. For the adaptive model in secondary, both asynchronous and synchronous learning is a documented component of the 300 minutes of instruction that our students will receive.

On August 13, 2020, the Ministry of Education released a Policy/Program Memorandum (164) entitled: "Requirements for Remote Learning". Staff are currently reviewing this PPM for guidance and use in its Distance Learning plan for the 2020-21 school year.

It will be expected that schools will continue to work collaboratively and professionally in response to student learning needs both in the areas of in-class and distance learning.

Chromebooks have remained in the hands of students over the course of the summer in households where students were returning to TCDSB schools. Staff remain committed to ensuring that Distance Learning needs are met across all families in our system.

In terms of next steps, the June 18 report from Special Board mentions some specific considerations:

- ***Staff are recommending that students keep loaner devices until the COVID-19 pandemic is over.*** While the COVID-19 pandemic is active, staff believe students will continue to need access to devices for learning at home opportunities. As such, devices should be kept by students until such time that TCDSB returns to a full-time face-to-face teaching model. Since the iPads are leased, staff are estimating an additional cost of approximately $525,000 to extend the lease for an additional year.

- ***Staff are recommending that current devices for student programs be continued in the Fall of 2020 for new students joining the TCDSB.*** New students joining the TCDSB in the fall of 2020 should be given the same opportunity as current students to access a device, if they truly need one. Since the TCDSB typically admits up to 7,000 new students per year, staff are estimating the need for approximately 800 additional devices (11%) purchased at an approximate cost of $320,000.

  (page 128, Report to Special Board, June 18, 2020, see Appendix B)

From public minutes of June 18 Meeting in response to "Computers for Students in Need Report". (see Appendix C).**The entire report was adopted as follows**:

17a) Computers for Students in Need:

1. That the Board of Trustees continue the current TCDSB student device loan program until September 2020;

2. That the Board of Trustees continue to support students who are identified as needing internet access, by covering the cost of Rogers Long Term Evolution (LTE) data services for loaned iPads at an estimated cost of $180,000 for at least 3 months (July, August, and September); and

3. That future device programs such as formal bring-your-own-device (BYOD) and low-income family device loan program be explored and presented to the Board of Trustees at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

F. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This report is for the consideration of the Board and acts a response to the CPIC Motions raised.