

Dear TCDSB Trustees,

My name is Derik Chica and I am a guidance counsellor, community advocate, education activist, and a parent of an awesome 3 year old. Years ago, for a few years, I was also an active member of the TCDSB Partners in Motion, the TCDSB Hispanic Heritage Month Planning Committee, and the TCDSB Advisory Committee for Spanish Speaking Communities representing the Latin American Education Network (LAEN).

Next year my partner and I have a decision to make. Where will our child be going to public school? Being an educator, I know the benefit of school stability as much as possible in a student's life so this is a big decision. Do we send our child to the Toronto District School Board or the Toronto Catholic District School Board?

Being a Guidance Counsellor, it is unfortunately common for students to come out as members of 2SLGBTQ+ communities to me first, and not their parents. These students feel that a huge part of **who they are** will not be accepted by their parents or religious communities. Sadly, sometimes, they are right.

As you see in your own recommendation report for the proclamation of Pride Month, 35% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, or other, students have considered suicide! This is partially because these identities are not welcomed, included, and/or integrated in our schools, in our boards, and in our society. We must do better.

No parent wants their child considering suicide. I certainly don't.

If the very identity my child embraces is being debated by school board leaders, **that school board is not a safe space for my child.**

Unfortunately we live in a homophobic and transphobic world. Our schools NEED to be an "inclusive learning community" (TCDSB Mission). To combat homophobia and transphobia, our schools need to proudly declare that all identities are welcome and 2sLGBTQ+ students should have Pride in their identity. To combat homophobia and transphobia, a single simple step would be to proclaim June as Pride Month and proudly fly the Pride flag at all your schools.

I ask that as you read this letter, then head into the May 6 meeting for "debate", you consider that to take Pride in your identity is not a debate. It is a Human Right. Every word against the recommendations of this report is doing unjust harm on our children.

I am available for a conversation at any time.

Sincerely,
Derik Chica
A Concerned Parent