

Good evening TCDSB Trustees and Staff. My name is Jennifer Di Francesco and I am here tonight speaking as a parent. You may also know that I am the CSPC chair at St. Eugene and the CPIC Vice-Chair and Ward 1 Rep.

Tonight I'll be speaking in regards to Policy A.29 Acceptable Use of Technology and the Social Media Guidelines. Parents are looking for clarity and want a Social Media Policy that will oversee behaviour. We have been asking for this since the guidelines were being creating, but our request and suggestions have fallen on deaf ears.

On April 28, 2021 there was a motion presented to have staff draft a Social Media Policy. Staff has come back with a rebuttal to the motion explaining that Trustees on January 29, 2021 approved an update to A.29 Acceptable Use of Technology to include social media guidelines. As of today staff has not presented the Trustees with a draft of a Social Media Policy, which they are required to do since the motion passed on April 28, 2021. I ask why has this not been done and why are staff circumventing the democratic process of the Board and its Trustees?

A Social Media Policy that governs online behaviour is vital at the TCDSB, which could include a guideline that allows more fluidity as social media applications evolve. But if you have a clear, concise, and enforceable policy there should be no need for guidelines, or the language should be incorporated in the policy. We have seen in the last year the damage and carnage that social media and those that abuse it has left behind in its wake. Simply having a guideline is not good enough as it seems some at the board and including those outside of it refuse to follow it. In the Acceptable Use of Technology which we have been told governs the use of school board technology and according to the Scope and Responsibility on page 2 of the document it also "applies to all use of external technology services such as applications, social media, online software, or other technology services used on behalf of the Board or in any capacity that may be reasonably perceived as acting on behalf of the Board". Yet it seems that this Policy is not being enforced and those that took an oath to this Board and the parents it serves, seem to have no regard for this Board, its policies or the parents because there are no consequences.

Here are a few examples from the Acceptable Use Policy that it seems are not being adhered to, enforced or given special treatment:

- Section 5: sub-section 5.2 "Users are expected to comply with relevant policies, procedures, codes of conduct, guidelines, legislation and collective agreements".

- Section 5: sub-section 5.3 “Users will not engage in inappropriate behaviours including, but not limited to cyber bullying, personal attacks, threats, harassment, hate motivated and discriminatory behaviours”.
- Section 5.5: sub-section b. “impede, interfere, impair, or otherwise cause harm to the activities of others”.
- Section 5.5: sub-section o. “suggest the Board’s endorsement of any political candidate or ballot initiative.
- Section 5.6: “Users are compelled to immediately report all breaches of this policy of which they are aware to the appropriate TCDSB authority.
- Section 6: sub-section 6.1 “Disciplinary action will take into account relevant policies, procedures, codes of conduct, guidelines, legislation and collective agreements”.

But what seems to be happening is nothing or at least that’s what it looks like from the outside. If consequences are being experienced there should be a process to advise the parents and students. That will also act as a deterrent for others. Section 5.7 of the Policy states “where necessary, as permitted by law, exceptions to this policy and its regulations may be granted on a case-by-case basis to be authorized by the Chief Information Officer”. Those situations should also be reported to ensure total transparency. There have been many cases that we are aware of where no disciplinary action has been taken, where it seems by those watching that an action should have taken place. Without a stricter, more coherent and concise Policy surrounding behaviour, we will all be left to our own devices and the Board will have no authority to compel users to adhere.

In closing, if people are not held accountable for their actions and words, how are we to truly be what we say we are as a Board and more importantly as a Catholic Board. The strides the board has made in the last while are welcome and encouraging, but you can’t tout equity, equality, diversity and inclusion when it seems those values are only for certain people or groups. Staff needs to follow through and commit to a Social Media Policy that governs behaviour of all Trustees, staff, children and parents.

Thank you.