

I am here today to request that the TCDSB take a more proactive vs. reactive approach to Mental Health. While I appreciate all the support the TCDSB is providing to students who are experiencing mental health challenges I believe more can and should be done to prevent it.

Ontario has now moved passed stage 3 and have significantly reduced the number of COVID 19 restrictions yet the secondary schools where most students are vaccinated are lagging. Kids are s not able to use their lockers, eat with their friends, or participate in many activities that promote socialization and human interaction. When the weather was nice, kids could meet their friends outside, however, that is no longer practical. This is detrimental to students. My daughters attend Notre Dame, and their friends are not local. School is really the only place that they can see their friends in person easily, yet there are locked away in their 2<sup>nd</sup> person class forced to eat lunch separated from their friends. My daughters are in grade 12 and have not really had a high school experience, while the past 18 months needed to cohort and limit interaction to keep kids safe that is no longer the case.

If you draw parallel with what is happening outside of the school system, kids who are vaccinated should be able to eat in common areas with their friends. Kids should not have to sit in cold classrooms. Kids should be able to use their lockers. Kids should be able to start getting back to normal.

I know you will say we are following TPH guidelines, but I think the school board should be advocating, and challenging on behalf the students. It is our responsibility to make sure that students are all given the same tools and have the same opportunities to be successful regardless of income. Covid does not discriminate. As a parent, I am very concerned with what I am seeing, the science does not support the restrictions that are still in place, and they need to change.

You may also argue that not everyone is vaccinated. My answer, why punish everyone for a few kids that aren't vaccinated? That's a choice and I respect that choice, but it should not impact people that have chosen too. Further, regardless, the school and the school board could make more effort to come up with innovative solutions they are there you just need to look.

I am hopeful, that the school board will start to look forward. I don't want any excuses on why they can't plan in-person graduations and other important events that make high school fun. High school is more than academics, and right now all the fun is sucked out.

I will leave you with this. “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”. Continue to focus on treatment but shift your energy to prevention and show the kids you care and have their backs.