



REPORT TO

REGULAR BOARD

ONLINE ACTIVITY AND SCHOOL CHALLENGES

Does not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you. – Ephesians 4:29

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INFORMATION REPORT

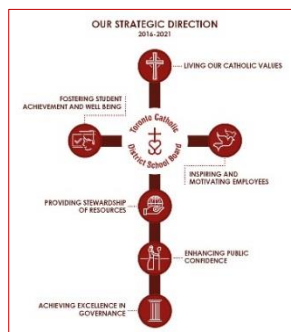
Vision:

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.



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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is in response to a motion passed at the Regular Board meeting held on November 18, 2021 requesting social media platforms to remove online school/student challenges, staff to investigate and address actions that can be implemented to shut down posts, staff to identify ramifications of students participating inappropriately on social media, and plans to monitor inappropriate posts.

The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 6 hours.

B. PURPOSE

1. Following a Board of Trustees approved motion, this report provides a summary of steps taken to date to address inappropriate online student activity and identifies the ramifications of students who participate inappropriately on social media.

2. For ease of reference, below is the Board approved motion:

WHEREAS: Some secondary students are issuing, participating and executing TikTok and SnapChat challenges; **WHEREAS:** Challenges include Slap the Teacher, fake sexual assault; vandalism of toilet stalls, late for class; prank calls; loitering, etc; **WHEREAS:** TCDSB high schools have been dealing with these TikTok and SnapChat challenges all year; **WHEREAS:** Almost every week TikTok allows posts of school challenges that in some cases has prompted kids to do and act inappropriately; **WHEREAS:** TCDSB administrators frequently spend great amounts of time to address many inappropriate posts such as sexual orientation/racist/sexist actions and behaviours by students in high schools on TikTok and SnapChat platforms; **WHEREAS:** This is a particularly concerning trend impacting TCDSB secondary schools, staff and administration; **WHEREAS:** Tik Tok is allowing these challenges to be posted; **WHEREAS:** These challenges encourage and advance inappropriate behaviour by students; **WHEREAS:** Intervention is required as these challenges will continue and may get worse if action is not taken now; **WHEREAS:** Community guidelines of diversity, safety, and inclusion are not adhered to by TikTok and SnapChat as it relates to the challenges and posts; and **WHEREAS:** TikTok and SnapChat will remove any content – including video, audio, livestream, images, comments, and text that violates Community Guidelines if reported.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT: TCDSB request TikTok and SnapChat to remove school student challenges; **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:** A report be prepared to investigate and address the actions that can be implemented to shut down these posts; **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:** Staff be requested to report on the ramifications of students participating inappropriately on social media posts; and **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:** Staff report on a plan that includes centrally monitoring these unfitting posts on TikTok and SnapChat.

C. BACKGROUND

1. Over the course of any given school year, social media challenges and inappropriate online activity by students are brought to our attention. Schools are supported by the Communications Department, Safe Schools and other applicable central staff.
2. Support includes steps to report inappropriate online content and requests for content/fake account removal, as each social media application has unique reporting features and steps; and consultation with applicable staff to investigate inappropriate online student behaviour, involvement of Toronto Police, where appropriate, and progressive discipline advice/measures as needed.
3. The Communications Department has contacted several social media platforms (ie. TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram) to address concerns around content that violates TCDSB social media guidelines as well as social media community guidelines.
4. Each social media platform has created their own set of Community Guidelines. These guidelines include behaviour that would constitute a violation and result in content being removed or an account being disabled.
5. Social media platforms utilize Content Moderators who regularly review and investigate social media posts to ensure they comply with the platforms' community guidelines, and laws of the country of registration, if applicable.
6. On October 5, 2021, TikTok Canada's Director of Public Policy and Governance provided the TCDSB with information about their Community Guidelines in light of "TikTok challenges" and reaffirmed that dangerous challenges and illegal behaviours are prohibited on TikTok and are actively removed by the platform.
7. In November 2021 and on an ongoing basis, communications staff engage Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat support teams regarding inappropriate student activity.

8. Applicable TCDSB policies include, but are not limited to: [Policy S.S.09 – Code of Conduct](#), [Policy S.S.10 – Progressive Discipline](#), [Policy S.S.01 – Suspension and Expulsion](#), [Policy A.29 - Acceptable Use of Technology](#) and the accompanying [Social Media Guidelines](#) for use when addressing students who are engaged in inappropriate online activity.
9. TCDSB's [Anonymous Alert App](#) is a reporting tool used to promote safe and positive school climates by empowering student to anonymously report inappropriate behaviour to school staff. This system allows for 1-way or 2-way anonymous encrypted communication between submitters (students/families) and school staff.
10. On an ongoing basis, schools are provided with information about concerning online challenges, online education and safety tips, best practices and applicable policies.
11. The Chief of Communications met with the student trustees and will be working with them through CSLIT to better inform students about positive ways to engage online, harms associated with improper social media use including progressive discipline, reminders about the AUP student contract, and promoting use of the Anonymous Alerts App to report inappropriate social media use by a student.

D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

1. Most social media platforms allow users to create anonymous accounts which makes it extremely difficult to determine the identity of an individual who creates a fake social media account and posts inappropriate content related to a school community.
2. Students can access social media applications using personal devices and the TCDSB does not have the ability to identify whether a user/author of inappropriate posts is a student.
3. There are instances (ie. threatening online activity targeting a school community/member or posts that are criminal in nature, etc.) when Toronto Police Services are contacted and may investigate.
4. When school staff, through their close relationships with the school community, are able to identify a student posting inappropriate content, TCDSB's Policy S.S.10 – Progressive Discipline would apply to the student.
5. Since September 2021 to January 2022, the Communications Department was successful in supporting schools with reporting/removing inappropriate content. Approximately 80% of accounts that were reported by the school or Communications staff were removed by social media platforms due to violations of their respective community guidelines. 20% of accounts reported

- were investigated by the social media app and were not removed as the content posted did not constitute a violation, according to the social media platform.
6. Centrally monitoring social media activity that affect TCDSB students is not feasible given the volume of online engagement, limited staff resources and the inability to identify students using alias names or personal devices.
 7. Classroom teachers will continue to be provided with resources and materials to support students with digital literacy and to reinforce the importance of maintaining a positive online presence.
 8. Schools will continue to share information about the Code of Conduct, Acceptable Use of Technology Policy, social media guidelines and bring your own device guidelines with students throughout the school year via assemblies, newsletters and within school agendas.
 9. Safe Schools has shared guidelines for Principals to use when addressing inappropriate student use of electronic devices and social media platforms. The document offers strategies to investigate, supports available to students engaged in inappropriate online conduct and supports for victims of online activity, and consideration of progressive discipline as appropriate. Note: in extreme cases, this could mean suspension.

E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. The Communications Department together with Safe Schools will continue to support schools when instances of inappropriate online student activity is known and staff will continue to engage social media platforms about their community guidelines and report inappropriate posts/challenges.
2. On a regular basis, information will be shared with staff, students and families to increase education and awareness amongst social media users including online safety tips and applicable policies.

F. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This report is for the information of the Board.