

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the TCDSB regarding the change in admission policy which denies students a priority right to attend a TCDSB school where they have siblings currently attending. I am writing, on behalf of my family, to strongly urge you to reconsider your ill-advised decision and place siblings in-catchment in the highest priority ahead of other in-catchment students. For the reasons stated below, our family strongly believe that this is in the best interests of Toronto's community of Catholic students and for the TCDSB in general.

We have a family of three girls, with two currently attending OLPH and our third planning to attend next year for junior kindergarten. The idea that our youngest daughter may not attend the same school as her big sisters is shocking and distressing to both my wife and I and to each of our three daughters. How could we possibly explain this to any of our children while also advocating how important family values are to the Catholic faith? The decision is nothing short of a stunning rejection of the core principles of Catholicism and a sad reflection of the board's willingness to (in part) appease the demands of non-Catholic parents wishing to shop for the best school regardless of their religious beliefs. It must be reversed.

I would like the opportunity to explain our particular situation to you, not in an effort obtain any special accommodations but rather to possibly highlight some (but not all) of the injustices and inequities created by the decision - a decision which we firmly believe is diametrically opposed to the importance which the Catholic faith places in family values, family cohesiveness and strong communities and neighborhoods.

We currently live directly next to OLPH where we (literally) share a fence with the school. We have long found it to be a happy relationship where we gladly allow the staff and parents to use our garden equipment for spring clean or to put their leaves out at the end of our driveway in the fall. We put up with parents clogging our street at drop-off and pick-up without a fuss and even countenance the odd harried parent who blocks our driveway to run a student into class. We contribute to silent auctions, to fund-raising efforts and neighbourhood clean-ups. Frankly, we do whatever the school asks of us. We do this because being a supportive parent and a good neighbour is what good Catholics do.

For some time now, we have found it curious at best and completely illogical at worst, that our Catholic children have no right to attend the school that we are situated directly right next to; but we also understand the logistical impediments of ranking priority according to actual proximity. However, the results of an admission policy that ignores relative in-catchment proximity AND sibling affiliation creates absurd results for those that believe that schools are an important part of their local community or that family involvement in a school is important. We are now faced with a situation where, two girls are at the Catholic school directly next to us and our third is attending the non-Catholic at the far end of our neighbourhood. Because of our strong belief that children should be raised in their home community, we have no intention of sending our youngest on a bus to another Catholic School while the other two skip across the yard to OLPH. We bought the home that we live in on the assumption that our children would attend school together in our own neighbourhood. In fact, rather than having two kids at a Catholic school in our neighbourhood and one at another school that she buses to, we would pull all three from the Catholic system altogether and send them to the same non-Catholic school. We would do this for the following reasons:

1. Siblings work together at school, they guide each other, help each other, give each other advice. They work together as a family in a way that helps them grow individually and as a family.
2. We want our children to feel as though they belong to a school, a neighbourhood and a community.

3. We as parents want to dedicate our time and resources to one school, allowing for a much more significant impact on the school and our children.
4. We want a consistent teaching approach for our children - particularly in the field of religious studies.
5. Parents benefit from the logistical elements of one school for one family - getting to know the teachers, one single drop-off and pick-up.

The decision to deny siblings the right to go to school together must be reconsidered and over-turned.
Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours truly
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