



## ComKids – Trustee Update

**To:** Program and School Services Committee

**Date:** 3 June, 2020

**Report No.:** 06-20-3896

### Strategic Directions

- Transform Student Learning
- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students
- Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being

### Recommendation

It is recommended that this update regarding the TDSB's progress to date with The Merry Go Round Children's Foundation ComKids Program be received.

### Context

The ComKids program (formerly Kids, Cops and Computers) is a program offered by Merry Go Round Children's Foundation, a not for profit charity that has provided new computers, free of charge, to select students in the TDSB for the past 20 years.

In addition to receiving a computer students are provided *Lead and Learn Sessions* with a Police Officer from Toronto Police Service. These sessions include such topics and learnings as, Tech Literacy, Community Engagement , Online Safety , PowerPoint Creation and ComKids Give Back Fundraiser.

During the 2018 – 2019 school year, for the first time, one of the *Lead and Learn Sessions* included an assignment where students created a blog about themselves.

While students and their families signed a waiver form related to the importance of student privacy when on-line, this assignment required students to post some personal information which included their name, date of birth and other information such as the school attended.

After a concern was raised about student privacy being breached as a result of this assignment, the TDSB took immediate steps to ensure that a similar privacy breach would not happen again. Additionally, staff worked closely with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario to address and contain any breach of privacy which may have occurred. Protecting student privacy is of utmost importance and is one way in which the TDSB ensures student safety.

Since this privacy breach Board staff has been working with the Merry Go Round Children's Foundation to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place through a formalized agreement that details the roles, responsibilities and expectations of all parties. The ComKids Program will not proceed until an agreement between the parties has been finalized and agreed upon.

While the parties are still finalizing this agreement some basic principles include, but are not limited to the following:

- That the parties will, each and every school year that the program is being implemented in the TDSB, meet prior to the start of the school year to discuss and review the previous year's program. This discussion will include the challenges and areas of improvement for the program prior to the new program year
- That the parties agree to review and approve all program material (Lead and Learn Sessions) together prior to the beginning of a new program year
- That the parties agree to reach an understanding regarding the roles, responsibilities and expectations for all staff (TDSB and outside program support persons) involved in the delivery of the program each new program year
- That any assignment required for the completion of the ComKids program be vetted by the teacher volunteer prior to being sent to Foundation. Further, these assignments will only be shared with the Foundation through a closed loop "private" method, such as direct emails to the foundation, or the posting of the assignments on a secure website; under no circumstance will any student assignment be required to be posted in a public on-line forum.
- That the TDSB will put forth a list of appropriate schools for the ComKids program

- That the program agreement be reviewed each and every year that the program is being implemented in the TDSB

## **Action Plan and Associated Timeline**

The TDSB will continue to work closely with members of the Merry Go Round Children's Foundation to finalize the agreement between the parties prior to the start of the 2020 – 2021 school year. The TDSB values the relationship with ComKids and appreciates the support offered to thousands of students over the 20 years the program has been in operation TDSB schools.

While the *Lead and Learn Sessions* occur at the lunch break of the selected schools, the program relies on the school Principal/Vice-Principal and a lead teacher at the school to ensure its success. While there is no financial cost to the school, the program relies heavily on the lead teacher who is a volunteer to assist in organizing and being present at each Lead and Learn session. Moving forward, this role for school based staff will include professional learning related understanding human rights and equity, student well-being related to technology and student privacy concerns.

## **Communications Considerations**

- To be determined once the agreement is finalized

## **Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)**

- Educational Programming Partnerships (P.024)
- Equity (P.037)
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (P.094)

## **Appendices**

Nil

## **From**

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