

## Justice for Learners: The TDSB Case

In March of 2024, Canada's largest public-school boards filed a nearly \$3 Billion lawsuit against TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB), Peel District School Board (PDSB), Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB), and Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) announced that they were suing the social media companies over the negative impacts that their products have had on adolescent students and their ability to learn.

In a public statement about the "mental health crisis" ignited by social media, the school boards claimed that these major tech companies designed apps that "have rewired the way children think, behave and learn." Not only were social media platforms described as severe distractions, but the school boards also flagged how teenagers' prolonged use of these apps can lead to severe depression and anxiety.

These Ontarian school boards are not alone in this position; there were 33 districts in the United States that sued Meta (the company that owns Instagram and Facebook) in 2023. Snapchat, however, did argue against the claim that their platform is harmful to young users; instead, they highlighted how the app was intentionally designed differently than others with more addicting features. Snapchat argued that since their platform opens to a user's phone camera - rather than a stream of shared content designed to hook and hypnotize the user - that it has less of a detrimental effect on younger users.

### Sources:

Al Jazeera. (2024, March 28). Canadian school boards sue social media giants over effects on students. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/28/canadian-school-boards-sue-social-media-giants-over-effects-on-students>

Schools for Social Media Change. (2024, March 28). Ontario's largest school boards sue social media giants for disrupting students' fundamental right to education. *Schools for Social Media Change*. <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/ontario-s-largest-school-boards-sue-social-media-giants-for-disrupting-students-fundamental-right-to-education-841267917.html>