

September 3, 2020

Board of Trustees  
Toronto Catholic District School Board

Dear Trustees:

**Re: TCDSB Reopening Action Plan**

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I am a parent writing to request updates and action from the Board on the following items:

### **1. Masks for Elementary**

Please do not revisit mandatory masks (subject to usual exemptions) for JK- Gr 3 for a third time when it was unanimously carried the first time. Toronto Public Health supports this mandate. The science supports this mandate, which is especially important where physical distancing cannot be achieved. There is already a face shield option. And the Board has directed no discipline for non-compliance. Please focus on the outstanding issues for a safe September.

### **2. Physical Distancing Analysis**

A ward-by-ward analysis and assessment identifying which schools do not have physical capacity to support distancing was to be shared with the Board by August 20. Can this report be shared with parents?

Data on how much distancing is achievable in each class is necessary both for staff and parent awareness, but also for advocacy, as Sick Kids<sup>1</sup>, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health<sup>2</sup>, and the Minister of Labour<sup>3</sup> have signalled that safety guidance will be dependant on actual size and orientation of individual classrooms.

### **3. Smaller Class Sizes for Hot Spots (in the 5th quintile).**

The Board at its August 14 meeting directed \$17.3M towards smaller cohorts. The federal funding gives the Board \$2.6 M for additional teachers plus \$3.9M for school

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thestar.com/amp/news/gta/2020/08/07/class-sizes-vital-to-curbing-spread-of-covid-19-in-schools-sick-kids-experts-say.html>: "When pressed about what is considered a safe number of elementary students in a class, Cohn and Allen would not provide a specific cut off, emphasizing that the size and orientation of individual classrooms would determine physical distancing needs. "This is where we need to listen to the school boards and the teachers," Cohn said. "If they say, 'If we don't reduce class sizes, then we are also not able to maintain physical distancing and other things, and then I do think this needs to be revisited.'"

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=27&v=sLlssl\\_nYFA&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=27&v=sLlssl_nYFA&feature=emb_title) at 13:50. The Chief MOH questioned whether crowded classes rooms would exist. Emphasizing that where there would be crowding is an "IF" scenario. He said he had heard of a classroom of 30 but it would be accommodated in the gymnasium.

<sup>3</sup> <https://twitter.com/MonteMcNaughton/status/1300497005211512832/photo/1>

reopening. However, despite the Toronto Public Health hot spot map being published by the CBC, many parents (and principals) in 5<sup>th</sup> quintile schools have not received confirmation of resources to allow for safe distancing and other measures.

Smaller class sizes is a big factor in determining whether to stay with the decision to attend in person. When will parents get this information?

**4. Splitting kindergarten classes into two cohorts with OCT for 1/2 the class and DECE plus itinerant OCT for other 1/2.<sup>4</sup>**

What is the status of this initiative? Parents need to be assured that cohorts will be 15 students or less per classroom in order to be confident in in-class instruction.

**5. What is the status of the motion to have a Professional Engineer look at, assess, and address the windows, allowing them to open to 12”?**

**6. What is the status of the ventilation index per school that is to be published on the TCDSB website?**

**7. What is the status of the provision of portable air purifiers for those schools with no ventilation?**

**8. Cohorts**

The TPH guidance<sup>5</sup> for cohorts is that “the size of a student’s cohort is limited to approximately 50 in elementary and 100 direct or indirect contacts in secondary schools”. Is this guidance being followed? In elementary for example, a cohort/class could have 29 students, 1 OCT, 1 DECE, 3 itinerant teachers, 2 lunch supervisors, 14 before and after school kids and staff, which totals to 50. Add to that up to 72 per bus, times the number of busses per school, and supply teachers and it is well over 50. Are measures being taken to limit contacts as between groups, and to achieve true cohorts?

Thank you,

Michelle Wong

Parent of SK student, St. Norbert Catholic Elementary School

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<sup>4</sup> Page 6 of the Plan states that “kindergarten cohorts will be considered with opportunities to work in smaller groupings with DECE's [sic], classroom and itinerant staff to further enhance safety and distancing measures”.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-reopening-recovery-rebuild/covid-19-reopening-guidelines-for-businesses-organizations/covid-19-guidance-elementary-secondary-schools/>.