

TIMED SPEECH AT 3 MINUTES...

Good evening and thank you kindly for the opportunity to let me speak this evening. My name is Kristina Beintner and I am a member of the Parent Council at St. Gregory School in Etobicoke. I am advocating on behalf of many parents at our school to stop this year's reorganization of students, teachers, and classes.

We as parents feel that in a covid year, in the midst of another wave of outbreaks, restructuring classes to nearly full capacity is unacceptable and quite contrary to our government's narrative of smaller class sizes and increased social distancing.

Many parents were never informed that a reorganization was a possibility in a Covid year. In fact, we were asked to follow a strict decision deadline of August 6 and as we understood, the deadline was specifically so that the board could avoid disrupting classes and cohorts. And so, it has come as quite a shock to many of us that, despite our commitment to this decision deadline, our children are subject to reorganization.

We continue to see our government and our school board tout mental health as a top priority when it comes to our children, but we will no doubt see their mental health affected by losing their teachers and friends well over a month into the school year. Our children have already dealt with so much uncertainty and change because of this pandemic, there should be no need for further disruption.

We have circumstances at our school where entire families are being disrupted by this reorg. My sons, for example are in a split class together. It was because of this split class and small cohort that we decided to send our children back to in-class learning. As a result of this reorg, however, we will be more than doubling our covid exposure and completely disrupting our children's learning experience. Another family in our class has 3 children that are in the exact same situation.

Eileen de Villa, Toronto's medical officer of health has now said this week that school-aged children from 4 to 11 have the highest COVID-19 case rate of any demographic, the first time this has happened during the pandemic. Now is not the time to increase their covid exposure and mix cohorts.

Through my advocacy for this cause in that last couple weeks, I've often heard the term 'right-sizing'. In a regular school year where our children's health is not at risk and mental-health pressures aren't already exasperated, I can understand the need for "right-sizing" in a traditional academic sense. But in a pandemic year, with our children now at most risk for covid infection and with no vaccine eligibility, I'd like to propose that the

“right size” for our children’s classes is the one where they stay in their current cohorts, with their current teachers and peers, and continue with their current academic journey. I implore you to **STOP** the reorganization this year. For the sake of physical health. For the sake of mental health. And for the sake of our children.

Thank you.