

Standing Committee on Student Achievement

Delegation – Alba Sandre Taylor

October 8 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I am here to ask that this Committee ask the Board to **help us stop the classroom reorganizations** currently underway. Classroom reorganizations now threaten what little safety and stability cohorts may have finally established. They introduce more risk and uncertainty and stress on our kids. They are not safe. Not now.

My son attends Father Serra Catholic School in Etobicoke. Last year Father Serra was a ‘hot spot’ school and set up smaller class sizes and plexiglass desk dividers on top of all the other pandemic public health requirements. These measures worked to keep kids safe and Father Serra had about 3 covid cases over the school year.

As of September 26, 2021 Father Serra has had 5 covid cases resulting in 4 classes and 1 school bus in isolation. That’s 5 cases in the 4 weeks since schools opened – **affecting at least 120+ kids and their families** – or 20% of the student population. All while the kids have been cohorting and not participating in extracurricular activities. But classes are back up to regular size, and plexiglass dividers are not consistently in use.

Now we have been told a **significant classroom reorganization** is underway – threatening the stability of existing cohorts, expanding class sizes, and throwing learning continuity into the lurch. Ironically the current caseload has granted us a temporary reprieve until Friday -just in time for Thanksgiving. Yet another family event we’ll have to miss to keep our kids safe.

As of the date of this statement, **we have not been provided with any information on current enrollment, class sizes, how many kids will be affected, and in what grades.**

We as parents have no ability to assess this risk and its impact to our kids mental and physical health. We also apparently have no say in the process.

Why isn’t there more transparency? And why can’t we stop this now? We’re told these reorganizations happen every year. But this is not like every year. It’s not even like last year!

Everywhere we ask about this we are redirected. The school says they must complete the reorgs. The Board says there’s no funding for more teachers. The Province says we gave the Board funding. The Board’s budget was set in June but that was well before the Delta variant now threatening our unvaccinated kids.

We’re told enrollment is very low – changing dramatically in August/September. No wonder with rates going up at that time, and no additional safety measures, many parents changed their mind. But for those of us who stuck it out the plan is to make school even more unsafe. Even more uncertain. And to what end? To push us online or to the private system? To further erode enrollment going forward?

Why can't we work together to make this stop, to reassess, to consider risks and community contexts, and put a pause on more change and uncertainty for our kids – the ones we can't protect with vaccines just yet.

Please help us support existing cohorts, help us support certainty and stability for our kids for the school year. Help us protect our kids mental and physical health and wellbeing. And help us protect student achievement based on continuity for the rest of this year.