

Dear Trustee Angela Kennedy,

Please share this letter with your school director who can share it with other school staff.

Thank you for your work in supporting Ontario's children in returning to in-person school after the latest closure.

It has come to my attention that a number of School Boards, schools and individual teachers have implemented their own COVID mitigation measures above and beyond the guidance provided by the Ministry of Education. Many of these measures have unintended negative consequences on the well-being of our children, and must not continue.

Examples of measures that go beyond public health guidance include outdoor masking, "masks off voice off" policies during lunchtime, elimination of nutrition breaks, outdoor lunches or open windows in subzero temperatures, requiring medical documentation for mask exemptions, segregation of children with mask exemptions, or based on vaccination status, and punitive measures for children who have difficulties following these rules. Recently, I have seen letters from trustees and school boards to the Ministry of Education requesting additional measures such as mandatory vaccination of and N95 masks for students. Some boards are also dismissing cohorts with a positive case, despite guidance to the contrary.

Our Chief Medical Officer of Health has provided guidance for public health measures in schools via the guidance provided by the Ministry of Education to school boards. At this time, I ask that you refrain from developing additional protocols and instead use those provided by the Ministry of Education as endorsed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

It is my hope that as the imminent risk of COVID in Ontario diminishes, so too will the restrictions facing our children. I hope you will prioritise the recovery of our children by removing additional COVID mitigation protocols (and particularly those that are not supported by evidence), and reinstating those activities that are critical to the well-being of our children.

Sincerely,
Rayna Lerner
Toronto Catholic DSB