

Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth  
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June 22, 2020

Re. Concern about impacts of partial education on children's development

Dear Dr. Charlesworth,

We are writing as the Parents' Association of the Beausoleil school in Victoria, and on behalf of our community of parents and caregivers of 90 primary school students in the French public school system [K to 3].

We are grateful for your advocacy role and invite a discussion on the rights of our children to quality education in a post-pandemic new world. Our hope is that you can help government and educational leaders to put some attention to a few important theoretical and principled policy questions on pedagogy and the future of education. Addressing the impacts on child developmental and learning needs is paramount.

Context

As you know, the lives of children have been affected by the pandemic in many challenging ways. Our schools, recreation facilities, and opportunities for growing and socializing have been seriously curtailed or eliminated altogether. We have appreciated the proactive, flexible and skilled leadership of our school Principal and staff to offer hybrid schooling part Zoom part in-person learning. However, they can only do so much under government directives to properly meet the learning needs of our children.

Above and beyond the critical public health measures in place, as parents we are deeply concerned about the developmental, cognitive and social impacts on our -- and all -- primary-school children who are just at the beginning stages of critical brain pathways and behavioural capacities as they "learn to learn".

Our Parents' Association is putting a voice to the interests, needs and rights of our children. All children's right to an education flow from a number of guiding sources, including the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) which Canada ratified in 1989, namely articles 28 and 29 (see attachment). The [British Columbia School Act](#) also reflects our commitment to the principles to enable children to become literate, to develop their abilities to their fullest potential, and to be personally fulfilled.

The Provincial government Ministry of Education has recently indicated that the return to school in the fall will very likely continue the post-quarantine "hybrid" to combine a couple of days of in-class learning with some online instruction. We know it is a moving landscape, yet this is the time to think through future impacts because short-term fixes usually end up shaping the long term and can raise new and bigger problems later such as socio-economic potential, competitiveness, quality of life and so on.

## Parent, Caregiver and Children's Concerns

### **1. How is, or will, B.C. be meeting minimum standards for quality education at the primary level?**

As parents and caregivers of Beausoleil students, we are concerned that this new hybrid method of education delivery might not be enough to ensure that our children's learning and developmental needs will be met. Not to mention the impact on families and households who now must take responsibility for teaching at home, with or without required training, skills and resources.

We wonder:

Is part-time face to face instruction enough to ensure that children are literate, personally fulfilled, and have the opportunities to develop their skills to their fullest potential? How will this work for the majority of children who can not (and should not) sit still with hands on laps all day?

What limits and risks are posed for an increase in digital learning for the at-home days on Zoom etc, especially for children who require other methods and/or develop new challenges with too much virtual media stimulation?

What supports will be offered for parents as defacto home-instructors?

Can more months of instruction be considered, allowing more days for in-class instruction with safe distancing? What options can be considered for children to learn during the summer months?

Are there any less disruptive measures that might be taken (masks, tutors/facilitators, year-long instruction)? For example, In the UK a [Tutoring Fund](#) will help kids catch up. Toronto Sick Kids [recommends masks](#) for full return. [Taiwan](#) has experienced little or no disruption to their education as the government requires all children to wear masks to school. Montreal will offer [full-time](#).

How is or will British Columbia's education policy be updated to ensure the minimum standards, which primary education should provide for our children? Will part-time face-to-face instruction meet these minimum standards?

### **2. How is, or will, B.C. ensure equity and equality of access to schooling for all children?**

As we understand the evolving situation, the Province has introduced a post-quarantine [tiered system](#) of classification for parents' priority to send children to classes, which is determined by their employment status. It appears that some children of Tier 1 essential workers have [access to full-time in-person education](#), while the children of Tier 2 essential workers, and all other children under Tier 3, are only allowed two days per week of face-to-face instruction. The tiering of children, by virtue of their parents' occupation, is therefore likely to exacerbate pre-existing social inequalities insofar as realizing equality and having equal opportunity depends greatly on the education that one receives.

This raises the potential for discrimination against children of non-essential workers (Tier 1 and Tier 2). Tier 1 essential workers tend to have higher incomes, and include doctors, nurses, and emergency responders – careers which represent a small minority of the population, and are also commonly over-represented by

white anglophone professionals. Our French community is the most culturally and ethnically diverse in B.C. schools.

The silent introduction of a tier system, temporary or not, as it attaches to children by virtue of their parents' employment status, is reminiscent of a caste system – one where children's rights are no longer their own. Instead, adults have rights to have their children access certain kinds of education (or other social resources), depending on their employment status – and this indicates a serious erosion of children's basic human rights to be as considered full persons in their own right.

Keeping in mind that the rights of children to an education are guaranteed in provincial legislation and in international conventions that Canada has ratified (as well as federally for Francophone children), and that children's rights are their own (i.e. they are not rights that tenuously depend on their parents' employment status), we wonder:

Will the classification of children into Tiers by virtue of their parents' occupation (or lack thereof in the case of some Tier 3 children) continue?

How will a Tiered system potentially erode all children's basic rights to a quality education? How will the Tiered system impact the fundamental human right of all children to be as considered full persons in their own right? Will the Tiered system differentially impact the rights of marginalized children?

These issues are serious and more needs to be done to analyze these questions and advocate to minimize the detrimental impacts on all children. We hope you can help create a working group to address these matters, and to explore emerging best practices related to education during pandemics.

Please feel free to contact us anytime to discuss, or to redirect our questions elsewhere. You may reach us by email at [beausoleil.victoria@gmail.com](mailto:beausoleil.victoria@gmail.com) or call Denelle Lambert at 250-797-5412

On behalf of our parent community of Beausoleil school, we thank you for your consideration and any actions to advance these concerns.

Sincerely,

*Rebecca Mellett*

Rebecca Mellett  
President & Parent Beausoleil Grade 2 student  
cell: 604-353-1967

*Denelle Lambert*

Denelle Lambert  
Parent, Beausoleil Kindergarten & Grade 2 student  
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Association de parents de l'école Beausoleil  
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### UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

<https://www.unicef.ca/en/policy-advocacy-for-children/about-the-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child>

#### Article 28

1. States Parties recognize the right of the **child** to **education** and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

- (a) Make **primary education** compulsory and available free to all;
- (b) Encourage the **development** of different forms of **secondary education**, including general and **vocational education**, make them available and accessible to every **child** and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of **free education** and offering financial **assistance** in case of need;
- (c) Make **higher education** accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
- (d) Make educational and vocational **information** and guidance available and accessible to all **children** ;
- (e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of **drop-out rates**.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that **school discipline** is administered in a manner consistent with the **child** 's human **dignity** and in conformity with the present Convention.

3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to **education**, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of **ignorance** and **illiteracy** throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and **modern teaching methods**. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of **developing countries**.

#### Article 29

1. States Parties agree that the **education** of the **child** shall be directed to:

- (a) The **development** of the **child** 's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- (b) The **development** of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
- (c) The **development** of respect for the **child** 's **parents**, his or her own cultural **identity**, **language** and values, for the national values of the country in which the **child** is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
- (d) The preparation of the **child** for responsible **life** in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
- (e) The **development** of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct **educational institutions**, subject always to the observance of the principle set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the **education** given in such **institutions** shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.