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**Fwd: Email to SD93/CSFCB Trustees re concerns BC return to school plan**

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**De :** Marie-Pierre Lavoie <mariepierre\_lavoie@csf.bc.ca> ven., 11 sept. 2020 13:16  
**Objet :** Fwd: Email to SD93/CSFCB Trustees re concerns BC return to school plan   
**À :** Coralie Mpoyo <coralie\_mpoyo@csf.bc.ca>

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**De:** "Jennifer Fielding" <jafiending72@gmail.com>  
**À:** "Marie-Pierre Lavoie" <mariepierre\_lavoie@csf.bc.ca>, "Annie Bedard" <annie\_bedard@csf.bc.ca>, "Patrick Gatien" <patrick\_gatien@csf.bc.ca>, "Robert Filion" <robert\_filion@csf.bc.ca>, "Marie-Christine Claveau" <mc\_claveau@csf.bc.ca>, "Roger Lagasse" <roger\_lagasse@csf.bc.ca>, "Annette Azar-Diehl" <annette\_azardiehl@csf.bc.ca>  
**Envoyé:** Dimanche 16 Août 2020 18:08:28  
**Objet:** Email to SD93/CSFCB Trustees re concerns BC return to school plan

Good evening SD93/CSFCB Trustees,

I'm writing this email to convey my grave concerns with the BC school restart plan and ask for your advocacy in improving it as soon as possible.

As I'm sure you're already aware, the plan was put forward before appropriate consultation and input could be achieved. I know that on the face of it, "all stakeholders were at the table", but I also know that the government made last-minute changes to the plan before announcing it, catching parents and teachers off guard. I'm also aware that other signatories to the letter of support did not seek the buy-in of their members, including possibly many of you, unfortunately, before endorsing the plan, and I was very sorry to hear that. The process was not off to a good start on many levels, but I am asking you now to please help correct the course by joining your voices to parents' to be heard so that we can move ahead with additional measures to ensure a safer return to school.

Our only real option under this plan is a 100% full-time mandatory return to class. We are told that other "options" are distance learning and homeschooling. The reality is that most distance learning programs were already full before the pandemic started

and that many parents do not have the resources or the ability to homeschool their children. Many parents simply must go to work outside the home. There is much more flexibility that could be built into this plan. There is no reason that students should have to lose their space in their school because they and/or their parents do not feel they will be safe there under the current circumstances.

The fact in many or most BC classrooms is that physical distancing will not be possible without reducing class sizes, and because masks are not being mandated in the classroom, everyone in that classroom and everyone with whom they come into contact will be at risk.

We have been told for months now that we are not supposed to gather in large groups, that we are to keep 2 metres away from others who are not in our bubble, that we are to wear a mask when we cannot physically distance, etc., yet we are told that sending students back to class without those safeguards is perfectly fine, even as BC case numbers have shot up and more and more community exposure events are occurring. Does that make sense? No, it does not, and we still have a ways to go until September.

The narrative underpinning the plan is that children who contract COVID-19 experience a milder form of illness than adults. However, there is more evidence emerging all the time that this is not always the case and that 10-19-year-olds often have illness similar to that of adults. The fact is that many children are asymptomatic, that not a lot of children have been tested for COVID-19 or antibodies, and that there are young children right here in BC suspected of having MIS-C post-COVID syndrome. It is also known that children are very efficient in spreading the virus. The bottom line is that we do not yet know enough about this virus, especially how it affects children, especially in the long term, and we do not have a vaccine. That alone should compel health and education authorities to do everything in their power and take every precaution to keep children safe, and by extension, their families and contacts as well.

As it stands, government still expects teachers and staff to return to school on 8 September and students to return on 10 September. That is absolutely not enough time to take into account the reality of BC classrooms and schools today and make changes to benefit the safety of students, teachers, staff and their contacts.

Here are the things I would like to see in an updated restart plan:

- Delay the return to school date by at least 2 weeks;
- Make physical return to school voluntary/optional;
- Allow for greater flexibility of school hours/scheduling (not full-time);
- Implement mandatory physical distancing/reduce class sizes;

- Implement mandatory masking where physical distancing cannot be maintained, including if in the classroom;
- Include options for virtual learning from home; and
- Include options for students to retain their space at their school until parents feel it is safe for their child to return.

Many other provinces and jurisdictions are handling the return to school a lot differently than BC and are adjusting their plans ahead of time based on the input of teachers and parents. We do not need to reinvent the wheel on this. We also have an incredibly well-educated, intelligent, innovative and caring group of educational professionals in this province who are happy to share ideas about what a safe return to school might look like. We can listen to teachers, make changes now and restore parents' and students' confidence in our public education system. Here is just one idea for a plan: <https://www.vancouverite.com/teacher-heres-a-plan-thatd-work-for-back-to-school/>

I know that greater funding is needed in order to make this work and I am asking you to please advocate for this with the Ministers and Premier. Here is the funding formula we need:

<https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/EducationFundingBrief2021.pdf>

It greatly saddens me that I may have to make the decision to keep my child(ren) home this year because I can't assure their safety if the BC return to school plan stands. Being away from school these past several months has taken a real toll on their mental health and on the mental health of our family and has significantly compromised their learning. However, even the most heartwrenching moments we've had pale in comparison with the knowledge that we could be exposing them to lifelong health issues or death by sending them to school. We also cannot subject our child(ren) to the torment of knowing they brought the virus home to family members with underlying health conditions and caused their sickness or death. Unfair is not a strong enough word to describe this. It is not acceptable for government to put the onus on families to make these impossible decisions and live with the consequences. Please help us fix this return to school plan now.

Jennifer A. Fielding, M.A.  
Concerned SD93/CSFCB parent  
Victoria, B.C.

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