Miriam Padolsky– Planning for Return to School – 9 July 2020

I am a parent of two young children in OCDSB who need to be in school this fall. While I understand that the Board has to follow direction from the provincial government, I urge the Board to do everything in its power to advocate and plan for full time school, and to implement full time school if given that option.

School is essential for children's learning and development; it is not an optional afterthought that can be offered if it is convenient for adults. We need to consider all aspects of children's health, including physical health, mental health, well-being and safety. Part time school will be detrimental to children's health, and the most vulnerable children will likely experience the most severe negative impacts.

While there is some risk from the COVID-19 virus, the cost of closing schools is too high a price to pay to avoid that risk. Even considering only the risk of COVID-19 transmission, the model of part time schooling will increase contacts not decrease them. Many parents will have no choice but to put their children in some form of child care or with nannies or relatives, which will only further increase the risk of virus transmission, as compared to leaving students at school full time.

As well, remote learning should not be considered a viable replacement to in person learning. My experience with remote learning is that it is close to useless. Despite a significant time commitment on my part, my children learned only a fraction of what they would have learned in school. They were able to practice some skills they already had, but not to learn new skills. They need to be in a learning environment with a professional educator. As well, it is not realistic or feasible to ask parents who are working full time to also be responsible for learning at home.

I urge the Board to advocate to the province to allow full time schooling, and to implement the option of full time in person schooling if allowed to do so by the province.

Thank you for considering my input.