

## Ruth Thompson– Planning for Return to School – 9 July 2020

I am a single mother who worked full time from home from the 16th March 2020 until the end of the 2019/2020 school year. 73 business days where I juggled a very high intensity job sometimes requiring 50 hour work weeks, whilst home schooling my 6 year old son all by myself. My job requires me to be on the phone for at least 3 - 4 hours a day. During these times I cannot do anything but be on the phone. During the other 3-4 hours I have administrative work that is usually time sensitive and requires my full attention. I tried to login to google classroom as much as I could, but there were days that my schedule did not allow it. There were many days that I relied on a screen of some sort (TV, tablet etc) to entertain my son so that I could work. Before all this, my son was not allowed screen time from Monday to Friday; in contrast during those 73 days, he was in front of a screen for sometimes up to 6 hours a day. Yes, there were days that this meant I was able to do my job successfully but on these days my mental health suffered because of the guilt and pressure I put on myself to ensure I was being both a good mom and a good employee. After 73 days of attempting to balance both, the conclusion I came to was that it's impossible. In my personal circumstances, I can either parent, or work – not both.

If the current schedule of 2 days in school, 3 days out of school goes ahead as planned in September 2020, I will have two options:

1. Pulling my son out of his OCDSB school and pooling with a group of parents locally and homeschooling together full time Monday to Friday.
2. My son attends school 2 days a week, and on the 3 days he is out of school, I would be putting him in a home daycare. This would mean he is mingling with a whole other group of children creating more risk to all involved. I would imagine most other parents who work full time will need to consider daycare as well, meaning all those children are mixing with kids outside of their school potentially. There is also the cost of all this to consider. We all have mortgages and bills to pay, paying an additional \$150 - \$200 a week in childcare fees during the school year would result in an extra \$7,800 - \$10,400 annually I need to find as a single mother, on top of everything else. There will be some in my situation that will not be able to afford daycare and who will also not be able to work without childcare. Please do not assume that every child's home situation involves two parents who can juggle these activities around their Monday to Friday 9-5 office hours.

In the [Sick Kids article](#) recently published, experts suggested that “the risks of infection and transmission in children, which appear to be minimal, need to be balanced with the harms of school closure which is impacting their physical and mental health. On balance, it is recommended that children return to school and that the messaging around this clearly articulate the rationale for the recommendations outlined in this document in order to help reduce the fear and anxiety in parents, children and school staff. In our view, a daily school model is best as it allows for consistency, stability and equity regardless of the region in which children live.”

Covid-19 isn't going away anytime soon, I think we can all agree on that, if we set the expectation now that we only allow children in school 2 days a week, when will it ever be ok for children to be in school full time again? There are many families other than me and my son, who will suffer both mentally and financially if full time school is not an option in September 2020.

Thanks for your time.