

Amy Nickerson - Planning for Return to School – 9 July 2020

My name is Amy Nickerson. I am a mother of four school-aged children in the OCDSB who will be going into grades 4, 1 and JK in September. I am also a fulltime employee of a federal government agency that is working heavily on the impact of COVID on the Canadian economy. During the period from March-June I worked at home while attempting to homeschool my children using the online resources provided by their teachers. I became a glorified administrative assistant for my children; my responsibilities included connecting them to their zoom calls, motivating them to participate in their school work and administering login information for 22 different learning platforms. I also tried to maintain my job responsibilities. After eight weeks, the mental health of my children deteriorated so greatly that I took temporary leave from my job leaving my team members to cover for my absence. Based on my previous experience with online learning it is extremely difficult to engage young children using these methods. My children's mental health continues to suffer due to being unable to engage in real life social connections and fear of the unknown.

In the event a hybrid (two day in person) school week is adopted by the school board, I will have no choice but to permanently resign from my job or to place the children into alternate care arrangements during the days they do not attend school in person. As my children are varying ages it is likely that more than one caregiving arrangement will be required. In this case, the COVID exposure to my family, and ultimately to my children's classmates and teachers will be far greater than if they are all kept in their individual classrooms with exposure only to their fellow classmates and teachers.

Please do not minimize the impact that a hybrid school model will have on children's mental health and education. In addition, please consider that women/mothers disproportionately bear the brunt of assuming responsibility for providing childcare/assistance with online education.

In my opinion there is no feasible option but to RETURN TO SCHOOL FIVE DAYS PER WEEK in September. Please feel free to contact me should you wish to discuss my comments.

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