

Delegation 3.1 Miriam Rabkin and Marianne Ariganello- For Our Kids - Ottawa/Gatineau

Environmentally-responsible Personal Protective Equipment - PPE: What are the current plans for the use of PPE? Will staff be using masks while in the classroom? Will the school be providing masks for students? Or only for students that become ill at school? We would like to propose that schools choose masks that are reusable (cloth masks) or at the very least disposable masks that are biodegradable. The typical disposable masks are made from non woven polypropylene or similar polymer and will not break down in our landfills. Since Ottawa public health has approved the use of cotton masks as acceptable options, there is less need to choose disposable plastic masks.

2) Alternative transportation: We ask that the OCDSB support and promote active transportation and public transportation. Given that physical distancing is difficult in school buses and expanding the existing bus fleet would add significant cost to transportation budgets, we propose that the existing program, Walking School Bus, be expanded to allow for safe, low-cost, equitable and active transport for children across the OCDSB. This is also in better alignment with an equal start as many students from lower socio-economic backgrounds may not have the means to travel to school outside of a school bus or walking/biking. Given the multitude of benefits to active transportation, including greater focus and improved mental health, there are many reasons that this should be promoted. Ottawa City Councillor Riley Brockington has submitted a motion to increase the safety around schools to increase active transportation for both walking and biking so that the promotion of active transportation can be done safely. Active transportation is also aligned with the statement to the Minister of Education from the Ontario Active Student Travel Council. We would also like you to consider expanding the walking school bus to include ways that students can travel to school via scooter or bike. Young children may not be able to walk far, but many can easily use a scooter. This would thus expand the capacity of the program. As an active promoter of biking, we are certain Envirocentre would be willing to provide support and guidance on how to expand or add a “rolling” school bus program to the existing programs. How much money is already being committed to the walking school bus for this year? Are there currently any plans to increase this amount due to the restrictions for the school buses? If so, by how much?

We would also like to inquire about the Green Climate Fund. It was approved in June 2019 and launched in early 2020. How many applications were submitted? What were the proposed projects and estimated budgets for those projects? What schools participated in the submission of a project? What were the criteria used to determine which projects were funded?

Lastly, we encourage as much outdoor time as possible in the context of learning for the coming year - for the wellbeing of teachers and students, physical and mental, with a bonus that it will connect our children to nature and make even stronger ties for the future. We are happy to work together with the district and educators to identify ways that this could happen to complement the curriculum.

We look forward to working with the OCDSB in the future when the COVID pandemic starts winding down, to build a future for our children that is not only sustainable but also provides opportunities for environmental learning and leadership.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Miriam Rabkin
Marianne Ariganello

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Background material:

Masks

- For mandatory mask wearing, Ottawa public health provides information on cloth masks in their Q&As: <https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/masks.aspx>

Active Transportation

- A motion was passed by Riley Brockington to support a greater focus on active transportation: <http://rileybrockington.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/N-Motion-Brockington-Active-Transportation-School.pdf>
- Ontario Active School Travel council statement: <https://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Council-Statement-and-Guidelines-for-School-Reopening-Combined-Final-18-June-2020.docx.pdf>