

# Board of Education

School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)  
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*Chair: Jordan Watters, Vice-Chair: Ann Whiteaker  
Trustees: Nicole Duncan, Tom Ferris, Angie Hentze,  
Elaine Leonard, Diane McNally, Ryan Painter, Rob Paynter*

August 28, 2020

Via email: [educ.minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:educ.minister@gov.bc.ca)

The Honourable Rob Fleming  
Minister of Education  
PO Box 9045,  
STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fleming:

The Greater Victoria School District recognizes and appreciates the important work being done by the Ministry of Education and the Provincial Health Office to guide a safe return to school in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The Board shares the Ministry's initiative to have all of our students back in our schools as soon as families feel comfortable. The Board is pleased with your recent announcement supporting School Boards in creating hybrid options for families who do not feel comfortable returning to full time in class instruction at this time.

Our Board is keenly aware that parents and staff have different levels of comfort and anxiety during these times. Many students and staff have health issues not identified in the high-risk category. Many families live in extended family units which include elders and other immune compromised individuals. These families rely on each other for child and elder care, companionship and emotional support. During these times it is critically important to maintain these family support systems.

While we are able to provide a hybrid option until families feel comfortable transitioning to full time face to face schooling, within our current budget, we are not able to develop an online learning option to meet the needs of our families that do not feel safe returning to school full or part time. Further, many families found the online model worked well for their children and family. We learned that some students who struggled in person actually thrived online. To that

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*The Greater Victoria School District wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories, we live, we learn, and we do our work.*

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end our Board carried the following motion at its special open Board meeting on Monday, August 24<sup>th</sup>:

*That the Board of Education of School District No.61 (Greater Victoria) write to the Minister of Education advocating for the full funding and flexibility to create an online learning option for families which allows students to remain connected to their school community through the COVID-19 pandemic.*

We see this crisis as an opportunity to provide new ways of delivering education. Here in B.C. we have amazing teachers who have demonstrated innovative and engaging online learning. There is a wealth of untapped skill that would greatly benefit students. Building the capacity of online learning programs now will create diverse and meaningful learning opportunities for students that will support them in reaching their goals with more flexibility, choice and control over their school schedules and lives. Embracing technology in education is imperative to preparing our students to thrive in the world, and in the lives they will lead after graduation.

We respectfully request that you consider additional funding to enable School Boards to develop online options that can meet the needs and expectations of the communities we serve.

Yours sincerely,



Jordan Watters  
Chair, Board of Education

Cc: Board of Education, School District No. 61  
Shelley Green, Superintendent/CEO  
Kim Morris, Secretary-Treasurer  
BCSTA

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