



**The Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)**  
**Special Board Meeting**  
**AGENDA**

Monday, August 24, 2020, 7:00 p.m.

Broadcasted via YouTube

<https://bit.ly/3czx8bA>

**Pages**

**A. Commencement of Meeting** 7:00 PM

*This meeting is being audio and video recorded. The video can be viewed on the District website.*

**B. Acknowledgement of Traditional Territories**

*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.*

**C. Approval of the Agenda**

Recommended Motion:

"That the August 24, 2020 Special Board Meeting agenda be approved"

**D. Public Presentations (3 minutes per presentation)** 7:05 PM

D.1 Valerie Irvine

D.2 Adriana Condello

D.3 Kimberley Curry

D.4 Omdrea Walker

D.5 Julie McCracken

D.6 Tracy Humphreys

D.7 Jennifer Turnbull

D.8 Myra James

E. COVID 19 Advocacy

7:35 PM

Recommended Motion:

*"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 hub option for families which allows students to remain connected to their school community through the COVID 19 pandemic."*

F. Adjournment

Recommended Motion:

"That the meeting be adjourned"

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Aug 21 board meeting  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 19, 2020 2:42:19 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Hello to all whom this concerns ,

I am deeply outraged that there is no plan in place to be able to teach the immune compromised or mentally and emotionally unstable during any outbreaks of covid.i am the mother and Grandmother of immune compromised family members and i find this absolutely appalling that you havent set up a zoom classroom or what have you in place for these extremely vulnerable students and families. These children matter and should be included in the plans to return to school. So many of the systems in place at moment are ludicrous and not thought through properly. I am apposed to this decision and find you all to be quite uneducated in this area that needs to be addressed more thoroughly please for the sake of my children.

Thank you for allowing me voice!!

Sincerly and deeply outraged

Adele McNeil

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Back to School  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 19, 2020 9:17:13 AM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

> Good Morning.

>

> I am writing to share my concerns with our full time return to school. I have a child heading into High school and a child in Middle school.

> My hope is that parents and teachers will continue to come forward with their thoughts and ideas and that we see a fall plan that will work for everyone.

> When I was in Middle school in the 80's we had a smoke pit right outside the back door. Staff were allowed to smoke in the staff room. We would all be horrified at this behaviour now as we understand the effects and risks. It took years and years of data to make changes around smoking and our health. Now we are faced with a virus that we have only known for seven months. What will we look back at and be horrified we did? Sending our teachers and kids back full time? That we did not give options to families that have health issues, families that are scared, families that want to protect their children? I just don't think we know enough about the health risks long term.

> Please help find alternative ways that kids can get back to learning without sending them full time in regular class sizes.

>

> Thank you.

> Amber

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** SD61 board meeting  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 9:58:10 AM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

I would like clarification on masking protocols. As per the ministry of health and education, any child who can not tolerate a mask does not need to wear one. As per dr Henry, young children will touch their faces more and are not advised to wear a mask. The teachers and district need to support these guidelines without coercion, segregation or bullying tactics.

Additionally, under the orders of the emergency protection act and health act our children can be identified as infectious agents and taken for medical treatment without our consent. This is deeply concerning. Please clarify how our child's rights are being kept intact with these sweeping EPA powers whole in school.

Amy Newhook

Sent from my iPhone

Board of Education  
School District No.61 (Greater Victoria)

Dear Board Members:

We are very concerned parents of two young children (Kindergarten and Grade 2) in SD61. During these unprecedented times, we were shocked to learn that there is no option for students to learn remotely, while staying enrolled in their public school.

As parents we are faced with the impossible decision of either exposing our children to what we feel is an unacceptable level of risk, or forfeiting our connection to our beloved school community, and potentially jeopardizing our future enrollment. This model fails on so many levels. Students are isolated from their teachers and school communities, schools lose funding/teachers, and there are no contingencies in place to support uninterrupted learning during individual illness or second and third waves.

The last few weeks have seen a surge in new COVID-19 cases in BC. Not only does the province now have its highest ever number of active cases, but Saturday (August 15) also marked the highest one-day total of new cases since the pandemic began, with 100 recorded. There is still so much we don't know about COVID 19, including the transmission rates among children, and the long term impacts of the virus.

According to [the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children's Hospital Association](#) there has been a 90% increase in the number of COVID-19 cases among children in the United States over the last four weeks. It isn't accurate to say that this virus is completely benign in children. Dr. Henry reminds us that when we see more infections in the general population, we're going to see more infections in children. Given our rising case numbers and what we are seeing around the world, we all have to take this virus seriously, including taking care of our children.

There is still time and opportunity to take into account the concerns of parents, students and teachers to determine how we move forward together. We need to establish and maintain the strong community connections schools deliver for everyone, while honouring the right every parent has to protect the health and safety of their children.

We are looking to SD61 to back us up as parents, voters and tax payers, by advocating that the Ministry of Education provides better options for families who want to learn remotely while staying connected to and enrolled in their brick and mortar school.

Our children deserve a safe and flexible plan.

Respectfully,

Andrew and Cailey Hopkins

[aporter@sd61.bc.ca](mailto:aporter@sd61.bc.ca)

August 18th, 2020

Greater Victoria Board of Education

Re: Mandated back to school policy

Dear Representatives,

s

I am writing this letter on behalf of my family and all the other families in similar situations to express our concern over the mandated back to school policy. We understand that during these unprecedented times, it is difficult to proceed with policies and procedures carried out in the past. However, my family, like many families, have worked hard to remain isolated so as not to risk infection for those with underlying health conditions. We have been kind, calm and, most importantly safe, as instructed by the Provincial health authority. Return to school poses a serious risk to those families with elderly and/or underlying health conditions. Students in these situations should not be punished by their circumstances by losing their spot in their catchment or French immersion class. Therefore, what we ask of you, is flexibility. Specifically, the flexibility to accommodate those students who deem it necessary to protect their loved ones by choosing to abide by the guidance of the provincial government of keeping their bubble small. While solutions to this may be challenging, they are, indeed, workable. I have spoken with other parents in similar situations who are willing to work hard with teachers and administrators to ensure that no students suffer as a result of this pandemic. I believe working together we can bridge the gap until the time arrives when students can safely return to school.

Thank you for your understanding,

Andrew Leitch

Student Parent in School District 61

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Special Board Meeting - Submission for Covid Continuity Planning  
**Date:** Thursday, August 20, 2020 8:38:07 AM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Hello,

I am unable to speak at the meeting but wanted to convey my concerns in writing. I am a working parent of two children, one in elementary and the other in middle school. I also work full time and have lived with type 1 diabetes for 30 years. Throughout all of this, we have worked together as a family to limit our bubble to keep us safe as there are many unknowns of the long term effects of covid19. However, it is very clear that it can be fatal for the elderly and immunocompromised. We also have a grandmother in our bubble. We did not send out children in June and we are very concerned about the mandated school roll out in September being full time, in classroom. The learning cohort is substantially larger than what most people have been maintaining since March and the inability of school staff to ensure physical distancing negates the concept of learning cohorts to maintain a school bubble. With the covid numbers on the rise, why would we put ourselves, our communities and our children at risk? I advocate for the option to continue my children's education from home but require the supports for online learning as both of us work full time from home. Families in these circumstances should not be penalized due to this pandemic, should have the flexibility to continue education, stay attached to the school community, work with teachers and feel confident they are safe, healthy and functioning as a family. This would be a temporary measure until it is safe for children to return to school.

Thank you for your consideration,

[REDACTED]  
SD61 Parent





**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Written Submission - Special Board of Education Meeting on Aug 24  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 18, 2020 10:55:06 PM

---

**CAUTION:** External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Hi there.

Enclosed below is a letter I have sent to the Minister of Education requesting a change to policy allowing for expansion of permissible options and support for distance learning through Victoria schools.

I would like this communication to be entered into record of School Board policy inputs and for consideration during this forum (Special Board of Education Meeting on Aug 24).

Thank you.

---

**From:** Bartosh Michalik [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, August 07, 2020 1:16 PM  
**To:** '[EDUC.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:EDUC.Minister@gov.bc.ca)'  
**Subject:** Learning Options for High Risk Children in BC (Sept 2020)

Dear Robert,

I recently learned that BC Ministry of Education plans to mandate return of children from Grade 1 – 8 to school in September. I am a parent of two boys with an underlying condition that makes them vulnerable to severe complications or death from the COVID-19 infection. In fact, while most kids endure colds and flus, my boys often end up in the Emergency Department on dexamethasone, prednisone and oxygen. It's a horrible experience for parents and children, especially when most of us are used to enduring with common infections.

With the recent direction from the Ministry of Education, I am gravely concerned that sending my children to school in the midst of the pandemic will put them at risk of infection, or death. Every September we see a significant spike in sickness in children as they come back from holidays and begin to interact in the school environment. One can only imagine how the current pandemic situation can quickly exacerbate and impact not only our children, but also their parents. My wife and I both suffer from asthma, and infection of anyone in our family could have a disastrous impact on all of us.

Up to this point, we have both fortunate and lucky to avoid infection. Our school, Selkirk Montessori was able to provide distance learning immediately after the Spring Break and to continue with this model of delivery through the end of the school year. The teachers are trained and experienced in delivery of distance learning and have processes and systems in place to do it. We have been lucky to have our kids at Selkirk Montessori and to be able to have an option to keep our kids safe and at home. I want to make sure that we have the same option in September, and that the health and safety of our children is not jeopardized because distant learning isn't an option from a policy

perspective.

We have been assured by the management of Selkirk Montessori that they would be ready to provide this option if permitted, and we, like many other parents, would like take an opportunity from this option. I don't expect this to be a pattern for the long term, but it makes perfect sense for the near term until we understand how this pandemic profiles when children return from holidays in September. There are too many unknowns about COVID-19, and neither children nor their parents are safe until solution is found.

I hope you understand my concerns and reflect this option in your policy for September. If you'd like, I'd be happy to meet with you and the management of Selkirk Montessori to discuss their methods, experiences, and options going forward. Perhaps other schools could learn from their advances in this area.

Sincerely,



Bartosh Michalik

---

**Bartosh Michalik**

Senior IT Consultant  
PRISM Inc.



**Confidentiality Notice:**

This electronic transmission, and any documents attached to it, may contain confidential information belonging to the sender. This information is intended solely for the use of the individual or entity named above. If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any disclosure, copying, distribution or the taking of any action in reliance upon the contents of this information is prohibited. If you have received this transmission in error, please notify the sender immediately and delete the message and all documents.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Submission for meeting on Aug 24  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 10:42:51 AM

---

**CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.**

---

Dear SD61,

When my children were young and terrified of being left at a preschool I made them my one and only promise – I will never leave them in a place that I don't feel is safe. I take that promise into consideration with every school option I have to make. Now in this time of the unknown I have to think about safety not just today but likely every school day for the next year and maybe beyond that as well. The anxiety that comes along with that for my children and my family certainly can be brought way down with the right decision to offer online options to the families of SD61. I very much appreciate that this district is considering offering online learning and that independent decisions like this are being made.

Online learning at the start of the year will give us the following:

- Immediately class sizes will be smaller
- Immediately cohorts become smaller
- Immediately the stress levels for teachers will decrease
- Immediately the stress levels for students will decrease
- Immediately the stress levels of parents will decrease
- Children with health issues can find safety with their choice
- Families with health issues can find safety with their choice
- Children can continue to see their grandparents
- Online learning will be organized and working by the time you have to offer it to everyone

Online learning works well for 10 of thousands of children in BC already. There are great benefits to online learning.

If socializing is the biggest concern about offering online learning then encourage or help organize learning pods at home, at the school or at recreation centres. Have the schools invite the online learners to attend outdoor activities a couple of times a week. Open up the gyms, the science labs, the wood working shops to small groups throughout the day and evening. Yes there are costs to consider and the ability to keep up with the cleaning, but these are challenges that can be overcome. The ideas are endless and there are teachers, custodians and parents willing to think outside the box and make this work.

If this pandemic has taught us anything is that we all have to learn to be flexible and the future will not look like the past. Change is here is now whether we want it or not. Schools need to change. SD61 needs to change.

Give us choices and give us the options to be safe.

Thank you,  
Brenda Kovitz



This email has been checked for viruses by Avast antivirus software.  
[www.avast.com](http://www.avast.com)

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Special Board Meeting August 24th  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 10:58:24 AM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Dear Trustees,

I am writing to voice my support for the following motion:

*"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 hub option for families which allows students to remain connected to their school community through the COVID 19 pandemic."*

During the uncertainty of a pandemic, parents need options in order to ensure that they can feel confident and secure that their children's educational needs are being met without feeling as though they are compromising their family's safety. Offering the option of an online learning hub would allow families the option to make a choice based on the social-emotional and academic needs of their children during these unique times.

The current option of either attending in-person school or Distance Learning/homeschool does not offer families much choice or flexibility given that a choice to enrol in a DL program or homeschool means severing ties with a child's current school and giving up their spot in that school. In a time where maintaining a sense of connectedness and community is all the more important, forcing families who are uncomfortable with in-person schooling to make this decision could cause greater harm and further trauma. An online learning hub option would allow children the ability to stay connected with their current school, which is undoubtedly beneficial for their mental health and wellbeing. Children who feel disconnected from their school may struggle not only emotionally but also academically. Further, offering an online learning hub option would increase safety for all, as it would reduce overall numbers in school buildings, thereby making physical distancing easier, without students withdrawing from their school which would sacrifice funding and resources.

Personally, my family would benefit greatly from the option of an online learning hub being offered. I do not currently feel safe sending my children to school in-person, but feel as though I have no other option right now as cutting ties with their current school would be devastating and traumatic for them. Our school is a familiar place of safety and security, and my children have fostered many positive connections and relationships with both peers and staff members.

One of my daughters is asthmatic, and during cold and flu season typically has lingering symptoms of illness. At times, she can have a persistent cough which lasts for weeks. With the current plan for in-person learning, I am deeply concerned that she will be absent for a significant portion of the year as I cannot send her to school if she is exhibiting these symptoms. Learning from home with an online learning hub option would maintain continuity of her education without the added concern of necessary absence due to illness. We also live with an elderly family member and simply cannot take the risk of bringing Covid-19 into our home. Up until now, we have purposefully kept our interactions with others outside of our

household to an absolute minimum, and a return to school where my children are faced with possibly having interactions with up to 60 individuals each seems as though it would invalidate the sacrifices we have made thus far and also feels like a risk not worth taking.

An online learning hub would offer continuity of education to both of my children, allowing them to learn from home while maintaining the positive and secure connections they have to their current school. This would surely have positive long-term outcomes for both for their academic education as well as their social-emotional wellbeing. Our family would benefit tremendously from this option being offered, and I am certain we are not alone in this. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Caitlin Baker  
Parent of two Torquay Elementary students

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Cc:** [Watters, Jordan](#); [McNally, Diane](#); [Duncan, Nicole](#); [Ferris, Tom](#); [Hentze, Angie](#); [Leonard, Elaine](#); [Paynter, Rob](#); [Painter, Ryan](#); [Whiteaker, Ann](#)  
**Subject:** Special Board Meeting Aug. 24th  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 11:57:51 AM

---

Dear trustees,

I am writing today to voice my concerns from the perspective of an elementary school prep teacher. I am a full-time teacher-librarian, music, and technology teacher at Torquay Elementary. I am deeply concerned about the lack of consideration for prep time and specialist teachers in the current Ministry of Education Restart Plan.

The Provincial Covid-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 settings states that: "Schools should minimize the number of staff who interact with learning groups they are not a part of as much as possible while continuing to support learning and a positive, healthy and safe environment. As such, school districts and schools should, where possible, assign staff to a specific learning group to help minimize the number of interactions between students and staff, while continuing to support students who may need special assistance." Unfortunately, with respect to elementary school prep time coverage for teachers, it is virtually impossible to assign prep teachers to a single learning group. In some larger schools, exposure can be limited as there are multiple prep teachers amongst whom learning groups can be distributed, but this is not ideal as prep teachers are still required to move between multiple learning groups. Further, providing a quality program while maintaining physical distance from all students is virtually impossible in an elementary setting, given both the young age of students and the size of classrooms. The Provincial Health and Safety Guidelines indicate that if physical distancing is not possible, staff must wear a non-medical mask or face covering. However, while this may be effective at protecting students, if students are not also required to wear masks this does not protect staff from aerosolized droplets and potential exposure to Covid-19. In addition, prep schedules do not typically offer any transition time between classes, which does not leave any additional time for cleaning between learning groups accessing the same space such as a music classroom or library.

Currently, elementary teachers are entitled to 110 minutes of prep time coverage per week. If this is divided by five, it works out to 22 minutes per school day. As schools have been given permission to modify existing school schedules under current pandemic guidelines, a viable option for ensuring teachers receive their prep time coverage would be to modify timetables and accommodate these 22 minutes per day through a later start time and/or early end to the school day. Music, library, and other programs could still continue by way of virtual services, and/or these specialist teachers could rotate so that they are included as a member of one single learning group at a time.

Finally, I am deeply concerned by the oversight which omits school libraries from Provincial Government planning guidelines and documents. I would encourage the board to advocate to the Ministry of Education that school libraries be given clearer direction on standardized practices and procedures to follow. School libraries and their programming are a vital component to successful learning in our schools, and require specific protocol, particularly as it is paramount that library services be accessible to the entire school community.



I thank you for your time, and look forward to hearing the Board's response to addressing the issues I have outlined.

**Caitlin Baker**

Teacher-Librarian, Music & Technology Teacher, Torquay Elementary

Greater Victoria School District No. 61

Ph: 250-477-9511

@torquaylibrary @MrsBakery55

 [www.sd61.bc.ca](http://www.sd61.bc.ca) |   @sd61schools



Carrie Smart

21<sup>th</sup> August, 2020

**To: the School Board Trustees and Staff at SD61**

**SUBJECT: Remote Learning Motion**

As a parent of two children in SD61 in middle and high school, I applaud and support your motion for a remote learning option.

My children both went back to school in June, but one of my children did not feel safe at school and returned home to school remotely. This option was a very positive experience that allowed for French Immersion Learning to continue. I believe that we need to afford our children the same respect we are giving to adults with regards to their mental health. Forcing our children back to school when they are not comfortable is unfair. I understand that distance learning does not currently have French Immersion. This option also provides us with flexibility as the pandemic continues to develop.

Thank you for your efforts in this challenging time.

Sincerely,

Carrie Smart Architect AIBC

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Written submission for Special Board meeting discussing COVID  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 18, 2020 5:59:31 PM

---

**CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.**

---

*The Board will be debating the following motion: "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 hub option for families which allows students to remain connected to their school community through the COVID 19 pandemic."*

I would like to submit the following for consideration at the meeting:

Given that there are many families concerned about sending their children back to physical school, and many teachers equally concerned or unable to work in physical schools due to increased vulnerability to Covid, I propose a solution to both problems.

Teachers and TOCs who do not wish to, or cannot, work in physical schools should be allowed to apply for temporary 'online teaching only' jobs for the year, while retaining their original contracts. Families could then be given the option of signing their child up to an online only class for the year (maybe High Schools could be done one semester at a time). This way the teachers who are unable to work in physical buildings would take full responsibility for a class of online students for the year.

By doing this, schools would have fewer students which would make them safer, and families who wish their children to stay out of physical schools would have a stable and well organised online teaching experience for the year delivered by someone who has chosen to teach in this way.

As a teacher and a parent, I believe there are many valid reasons for some families and staff to choose not to return to physical buildings this year. The worst possible world is students who are attached to a physical class and teacher but not attending physically, this is incredibly difficult to manage from a teaching point of view and I believe leads to an often unsatisfactory learning experience all around, as staff are being asked to do 2 jobs at once, while teachers who are unable to work in buildings are not teaching at all.

Thank you for your consideration,

Charlotte Dorion  
Central Middle School

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Re: student learning hub August 24th meeting  
**Date:** Thursday, August 20, 2020 8:50:21 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Dear Mr. Porter,

I am a concerned parent of a child attending tillicum elementary school entering grade 1. We live with my husband's grand parents who are in their 90's. They raised him and are as surrogate parents. I believe we should be able to keep our children connected to their physical school while keeping them home and doing online learning if we choose to do so. As it stands, most registered distance learning is full.

Cheland Lee

August 21, 2020

Cidalia Alvernaz

Teacher SD61

Dear Board of Education of School District No.61,

I am writing to emphasize the importance of online learning that is connected to our local school communities for all participants.

Our new BC Curriculum was designed with Universal Design for Learning principles (UDL). The “Big Ideas” for UDL fall under 3 principles:

- Multiple means of representation
- Multiple means of engagement
- Multiple means of expression

The principles listed above tie in with our BC Core Competencies in all domains, especially with having multiple choices and providing inclusion for all students, parents and teachers:

- Personal values and choice
- Personal strengths and abilities
- Valuing diversity

Online learning provides one very important aspect of choice using technology that meets UDL and Core Competencies. It allows for different choices and preferences that provide access to content for many students that struggle with paper and pencil tasks, who are shy, who have social emotional difficulties, who are currently afraid of catching a deadly virus.

Accessibility and inclusion is embedded into our provincial policies and new curriculum so excluding online learning through technology for individuals, who are currently asking and needing it, would make our “educational beliefs” in BC, moot and without relevance.

There does not seem to be a practical reason to decide against providing online, local community educational options for any family in any grade in BC.

We are in a PANDEMIC with a highly infectious disease. The most recent research coming out of USA and Germany after school openings debunks the myth that younger children do not get infected, only have mild infections and are unlikely to transmit the virus to others and, therefore, do not need to physically distance. There is simply no proof for these statements. In fact, the most current studies are proving otherwise. This myth is shameful in an educational environment. What if I taught my students curriculum based on assumptions and opinions?

Not only do we believe in online learning as a viable option or alternative in BC, during this pandemic it would solve most of the problems we are facing with reopening school plans that at least 50 % of parents and teachers think is a terrible one.

If there is a choice and even just 25% of students chose learning online, that would reduce class sizes in by 5 to 10 students depending on the grade. A class of 21 could be 15 or 16 and provide room for physical distancing with the youngest students that have difficulty doing this. A class of older students could be around 20 instead of 28. This would make some difference for safety and reduce the spread of the virus.

Teachers that need to be accommodated could provide the online learning and these classes could have full enrolment. Yes, some TTOCs would have to be hired but teachers are going to stay at home when they have cold/flu symptoms even if it is not COVID, just in case, so TTOCs will be hired more anyway but this will also facilitate the spread of the virus when they are going into different classrooms rather than just be hired for teaching a smaller classroom with safer measures in place. Students also may be absent more so both teachers and students lose continuity of learning during the model being propose with no online option. This is a very important to consider.

Lastly, if the rise of covid forces schools to shutter completely, the online learning would already be in place and up and running. It would not be chaos as it was in the spring and those teachers and students that were already online will have the experience to further support the system and the new teachers and students jumping in later.

Teachers, parents and students want and need options. I hope you can understand that all the reasons to provide an online option are far superior to any that have opposed it.

Respectfully,

Cidalia Alvernaz

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** There is no such thing as one size fits all, especially in schools!  
**Date:** Thursday, August 20, 2020 2:13:21 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Sd61 school board members,

I am the mother of two children in elementary and I am very concerned for the lack of options presented to us from the province and the school district. It's ridiculous to have a one size fits all approach during these times. For 6 months we have been told to keep our bubbles small to stay home when possible and avoid any indoor activities with large groups.... now we are being told to send our kids to school? In groups of 60... indoors?!?!?

I see the school board has socially distance meetings and government officials aren't meeting in groups yet?

I basically feel like I'm having to choose between my children's education and my family. Many families will be unable to visit with grandparents if they decide to go to school?

And for many of us homeschool seems like our only option but it puts us in a difficult position with the potential that when all this has cleared up we won't be able to get back into our schools? That doesn't seem fair. To me it makes sense that if families are able to keep their kids home that will take some pressure off the kids that have to go into school. Hopefully helping the province keep our covid numbers manageable. I don't say this often but Alberta has is right, they are giving families and students options, we need options and not just for immune compromised people but for ALL families.

Please make options available for everyone there is no such thing as one size fits all, especially in schools!

Thank you

Cynthia Nelson

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Submission for Special Board of Education Meeting August 24  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 11:25:15 AM

---

**CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.**

---

August 21, 2020

Dear Trustees Watters, McNally, Duncan, Ferris, Hentze, Leonard, Painter, Paynter and Whiteaker:

I am writing to you in support of the motion you will be discussing at the Monday, August 24<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting:

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

As a family physician, I actively support families with their school attendance. I know how imperative it is for children to have in-person contact with and connection to their peers, teachers and school communities.

This being said, families need different support during this global pandemic. They need to feel that they can make decisions that are right for their children and their families. These decisions have a direct impact on their emotional wellness at a time when other stressors are incredibly high.

I am hearing from many families who are supportive of distance online learning. There are innumerable benefits in providing families the option of online learning hubs.

Firstly, offering children and families the option of online learning by distance will result in smaller and safer in person classes with appropriate social distancing.

Secondly, learning hubs may, as in other jurisdictions, allow these children to remain connected with a teacher and schoolmates from their catchment school and/or neighbourhood. It is very important that these children not lose their space in catchment schools where they have connections to classmates and staff as they transition back to in-person instruction. It is imperative that we plan ahead in order to support children with the trauma that they experience as a result of the pandemic.

Thirdly, in the event that a child tests positive for Covid-19 but is asymptomatic or experiences mild symptoms, learning hubs could provide children continuity of learning and connection to the school



community during their absence from school.

I understand that losing students to other distance learning programs has the potential to have a dramatic impact on funding for the school district and individual schools, and that this would also have a negative impact on school staffing. Notably, we are at a time of teacher shortage, so learning hubs would also support teachers who qualify for health-related accommodations or those who might otherwise choose early retirement.

Thank you for reading my submission and for your service to the School District, to the students, their families and our community.

With gratitude,

Dr. David Harrison

Dr. David Harrison, BSc, MSc, MSc, MD, CCFP  
Co-Founder MedConnect  
Past Chair South Island Division of Family Practice  
Past Family Physicians of BC Doctors of BC RA member  
UBC Clinical Associate Professor

To whom it may concern,

I am a parent of a SD61 child entering grade 1. I have just finished treatment for lymphoma (cancer). This type of cancer significantly impacts my ability to fight infections. My doctors have advised us to keep our children home from school and preschool due to the risks associated with COVID-19.

Our child will be able to return to school when I have approval from my doctors that my immune system has recovered. We want to maintain her spot in her local school in the community we rely on and who has supported us through this journey. We ask that the government allow school districts the flexibility to make exceptions for families that cannot attend in person due to immunocompromise or any circumstance related to COVID-19. We do not want to lose her placement in her district school.

Our family is willing to do the vast majority of the work to continue educating our children while unable to attend in person but would like to have access to resources and online engagement with a teacher and possibly some peers to decrease our feelings of isolation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

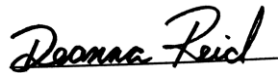
Sincerely,  
Dawn Macdonald

Aug. 19, 2020

Dear Greater Victoria Board of Education,

I am writing to you to share my support for providing an online learning hub option to students in September. First, I would like to thank you very much for meeting to discuss this important issue. I have been teaching with the Greater Victoria School District for the past seven years and have thoroughly enjoyed my experience. Parents are facing an impossible decision as to whether they should send their children back to school in September. With so much uncertainty and concern, I believe it is important for the Greater Victoria School District to do everything we can to lessen this burden for parents. By providing families and our students with multiple options for how they would like to receive their education right now. I had more than half of my class choose to continue with online learning when students were welcomed back to school in June. Many of these students found online learning to be a positive experience. I also enjoyed the opportunity to learn new skills and provide a variety of modes of learning for my class. This is why I am in full support of providing our students with an online learning hub options when classes start in September.

Thank you very much for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deanna Reid". The script is cursive and fluid.

Deanna Reid

Grade 3/4 Teacher

George Jay Elementary School



Thursday, August 20, 2020

To: the Board of Education of School District 61 (Greater Victoria)

Re: Special Board Meeting on Monday, August 24, 2020

It is my understanding that I can speak to the motion as well as concerns about students going back to school in September.

It is unclear to me if the online learning hub option is open to all students or only students that 'cannot' return to the classroom, but I suspect it is not for all students. I don't have much to say about the motion as this is the first I've heard about it. Why does the School District need to ask for permission to create an online learning hub or is it more to do with asking for funding?

The BIG question on parents' minds these days is: are we sending our kid(s) back to school?? The decision is not an easy one.

Dr. Bonnie Henry says "Fewer faces, bigger spaces. No gatherings larger than 50 people."

Why is school an exception? It doesn't seem reasonable to have full-time, in-person schooling when a whole class (of say 20 to 25 students) cannot have desks that are physically distanced in the class room.

The Surrey school district is creating cohorts smaller than laid out by the Ministry of Education. I hope our educators are planning to have smaller class sizes.

Can there not be a combination of in-class and online learning for the back-to-school plan? In June, school was voluntary and families could choose the option that worked for them but for the long-term, it shouldn't be one option or the other. The social aspect of school is important but there should be a balance between education and safety. Less students in the classroom means better physical distancing. I understand that in June, in my daughter's elementary school, students couldn't seem to physically distance so the rule was No Touching others but the adults still had to physically distance – all the more reason to have smaller classes.

What about when/if the second wave of COVID-19 comes? Is there a plan for that? Wouldn't it be an easier transition to online learning if there is already a combination of in-class and online learning?

Why can't there be both classroom teachers as well as online teachers so that classroom teachers are not overwhelmed? In June, the online students in my daughter's class appeared to receive less attention. What about the teachers that are on-call? How will things work for them? Are they willing to substitute at many different schools just to be able to work?

Wouldn't it be reasonable for the start of school to be delayed for a couple of weeks past the Labour Day weekend to see what the COVID-19 numbers are? Or have the first couple of weeks at half-time to lower the risk if there is an increase in the numbers? I guess that would be too hard for parents that work and require child care.

My husband and I have concerns. Our two daughters (now age 10 and 14) did not go back to school in June. We wanted to see what the COVID-19 numbers for BC were like after the Victoria Day weekend and the first couple of weeks of school in June but we had to make a decision before the beginning of June.

I have always said that we need some bad germs in our bodies to help when we do get sick but my Mama instinct is telling me this pandemic is different. Listening to our gut instinct has its merits.

To do our part and in keeping with our comfort level, my family has a very small social bubble. We've hardly seen family and/or friends and when we do, it's up to two or three people we visit with, outdoors, physically distanced. One of us does the shopping and errands once or twice a week instead of four or five times a week. Months ago, it was a weekly trip out for groceries and errands.

Sending our kids to school full-time wouldn't just open up our social bubble more than we are comfortable with – it would explode! Some of our friends have bigger bubbles than we are comfortable with so we've limited in-person contact with them. Why should we choose school over our kids seeing their grandparents? And it's not just concern for our kids. What about the staff, teachers and EAs? Their health and safety is important too. They all have families to go home to.

Dr. Henry says that as things open up (like schools), an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases is expected but who wants to be that family? We don't.

There's much more I could say but I think you get the gist of our thoughts.

Education is important. The health and safety of everyone is important. We know that school will be different than before, just like the rest of our daily lives are.

Please find a solution that can work for everyone. Thank you for listening.

Yours truly,

Debbie Bowden

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

August 24, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept this written submission urging the Board of Education of SD61 to write to the Minister of Education advocating for funding and flexibility to create online learning opportunities to allow students to remain connected to their school community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are the parents of an incoming Grade 1 South Park student. Over the past year, our daughter has become fondly attached to South Park and its community. During her Kindergarten year, I (Tyler) and my mother in law (our daughter's grandmother) spent several hours each week volunteering in her class. We did this because of the commitment and sense of community we felt at South Park.

Despite these sentiments, during this unprecedented time of the COVID pandemic, we have become increasingly concerned about the safety of sending our daughter back to in-person schooling. Given our diligent health and safety precautions since March, it has been difficult for us to envision reconciling this with the unclear and unpredictable risk of sending her back to school. The result of this has been extreme cognitive dissonance; we love South Park and want our daughter to remain part of its treasured community, but it is a place we cannot confidently feel safe sending her. As a physician, I (Amanda) am sadly not convinced that it would not be a choice to place our daughter, vulnerable family members and school staff at risk.

Due to these concerns, we have begun desiring alternative options such that we can continue our level of pandemic precautions/distancing but still provide our daughter with the education and community she so desperately needs. We feel that providing adequate funding to the school board in order to allow kids to stay connected with their school community but to simultaneously maintain safety through physical distancing (for example, via online learning) is a safe, reasonable and essential solution for our family and many others.

Extraordinary circumstances call for flexible and creative solutions. We as parents are trying our best to provide our child with a supportive and consistent community but to also fulfill our civic duties as they relate to these unusual times. We believe that failing to provide funding as we have urged you to do would be to unfairly penalize us for these efforts.

Please consider our appeal. Thank you for reviewing this submission.

Warm regards,

Dr. Amanda Pitcher and Tyler Pitcher

August 19, 2020

To the Board of Education:

My name is Dr. Heidi Tiedemann Darroch, and I have been teaching at the college and university level for the last two decades; prior to that I did extensive tutoring and French language teaching with K-12 students, and my interests in education including equity, antiracism, and effective online learning.

I am writing to recommend that SD61 seek funding to invest in a Learning Management System such as D2L (which is based in Canada), Moodle (which is open source), or another option in order to support teachers and students. The current use of Google Classroom and similar technologies is not adequate for the current needs, which include accessibility and robust, intuitive design.

An LMS is not cheap: you may have read that UVic recently invested \$1.5 million in a five-year contract with D2L. Clearly, additional provincial funding would be required.

This fall we will be seeing a second wave of COVID. Historical precedent suggests it will be worse than the first wave, and that even if it is feasible to begin classes within bricks-and-mortar schools, K-12 education will likely need to shift to remote learning. In fact, colleges and universities across the province made the decision to anticipate this by choosing to have most of their programs run remotely this fall. I have been teaching fully online courses for the past four months for Camosun, and what has enabled me to be successful in the (virtual) classroom is the strong support of the College's Educational Technology and Instructional Design teams. These are not present in most of our school districts, and so there is also an urgent need to invest in staff members' professional development to ensure that online learning will be flexible, accessible, and universally available to the young people for whom SD61 is responsible.

Last spring was challenging for teachers at all levels; few of us had extensive online facilitation experience. Unfortunately, this has not changed very much since March, and there is an urgent, immediate need to ensure that everyone who participates in K-12 education—staff, students, and parents, who are vital supports—has access to online learning resources that will ensure a productive school year.

Please let me know if I can be of any assistance in advocating for funding, supporting SD61's teachers, or in any other capacity.

With best wishes and thanks for your care for our kids.

Dr. Heidi Tiedemann Darroch

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area, with a smaller white rectangular cutout on the left side.

Dear Board Members of SD61,

I am a parent of three children in French Immersion in SD61 who are entering Grade 1 and Grade 4 at Marigold Elementary and Grade 6 at Shoreline Middle School. I am also a member of the Marigold PAC, serving for many years as a member-at-large and currently as Secretary.

I am writing in full support of your motion requesting 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 hub option for families which allows students to remain connected to their school community through the COVID 19 pandemic. In fact, I would like to request that the board push further with this request, asking for the Ministry to step up as an innovative leader and create an online learning system for the whole province, rather than relying on individual school boards to shoulder this financial and administrative burden.

COVID-19 will be impacting our lives potentially for years to come, and we have an obligation to our students, families, teachers, and administrators to provide a safe, functional, comprehensive and advanced online learning program. It is a fact that some families are not comfortable attending school with large cohorts or large numbers of COVID cases, potentially without a medical history allowing for a doctor's note to be released from in-person instruction, and it is a fact that COVID-19 cases will show up at our schools, requiring students and staff to quarantine for a period of time. Some people may be ill, but some may be self-isolating and still able to participate in schooling.

Students must be able to have the flexibility to move from in-person to online instruction easily. It must be straightforward, consistent from class to class within a school and streamlined to be simple for parents to assist. I understand that there are differences between teaching styles from teacher to teacher, and different needs for different grades. However, every effort should be made to create a system that manages these needs while creating a program that is user-friendly, especially for those families with multiple children. It must also provide equal resources for students in English and French. For the mental and physical health of students and families, and in order to continue to provide a high-quality education, we need to have an online program that can meet these needs. By asking the Ministry to create a unified system across the Province, they should be able to combine their resources to tackle these issues successfully.

The use of the word "community" in the motion is one that I feel is very important. My children have a very strong connection to their school and this has helped make school a safe, welcoming and fun place for them. They are comfortable with their teachers and administrators and have important friendships with their classmates – those personal connections are invaluable. As COVID numbers continue to rise in BC, my comfort with my children attending in-person instruction decreases. Distance learning options are waitlisted and if I homeschool my children, they will lose their spot in French Immersion and their connections with their peers and teachers. There must be an option for students in this situation so that if families need to switch to online instruction for a period of time, students do not lose their spot at their school (and in French Immersion), and this connection to school, community and friends is not lost.

We are a Province known for its innovative thinkers and we teach these skills to our children in school. I urge you to think bigger and bolder with your plan for online education to create a plan that meets the needs for all families, is flexible to accommodate changing circumstances surrounding COVID-19, and puts BC at the forefront for online education. It is an investment that will easily be repaid through the success of our students for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted,  
Emily Nagelbach

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** School reopening plans  
**Date:** Thursday, August 20, 2020 9:03:51 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Hello,

My daughter is a French immersion student in SD61. I'm writing to express my concerns with the school reopening plans outlined by the BC Ministry of Education and the overview of plans that was recently released by SD61.

I agree that having students engaged with the school is important and I appreciate the multiple competing demands and limited funds and options that you are working with, but I am concerned that solutions being offered in other school districts and jurisdictions are not being discussed, at least publicly.

First, I have not seen any publicly released consideration of allowing students to keep their placement with their school even if they do not attend in person this year. In my daughter's case, she was not able to attend our catchment French immersion school due to the lottery system but was able to get into a non-catchment school through the lottery and a waitlist. If we decide to have her not attend in person this year due to health considerations and her space isn't held, she would be at the bottom of the list for re-entry as she is out of catchment and would likely be unable to get back into the school she has been a part of for several years. I'm sure this type of disruption would also occur across numerous families in the school district.

Second, I appreciated seeing other school districts offer flexibility, such as Edmonton Public School District's approach of allowing families to choose each quarter whether their child/ren will attend in person or online. I understand that this is not an easy choice for families to make and also has logistical and cost considerations for school districts, but it demonstrates a commitment to thinking creatively in order to serve families (and could also support teachers with health conditions or vulnerable family members by having them teach remotely across numerous schools).

Third, I would like to see an emphasis on outdoor learning as part of SD61's plans. I understand that winters aren't necessarily pleasant here, but we have a unique and fortunate opportunity for outdoor learning to be feasible here more often than it is elsewhere in Canada. When outdoor learning is not possible, I would like to see as much ventilation and filtration as possible mandated.

I also have numerous concerns with the MOE's overall plans but I thought I would focus on the elements that I think the school district may have the most latitude on.

Thank you,  
Erin

## **Submission to School District 61 Board Meeting – 24 August, 2020**

21 August 2020

It had not been my intention to write a submission, feeling that my two prior communications with the board chair (dated 31 July and 15 August) had amply communicated my point that accommodations for covid-19 needed to provide options for children to learn from home that 1) do not jeopardize their future registration in their schools and programs and 2) are at the discretion of the parents/family, not constrained by outside determinations of risk and immune system status, particularly as it relates to the health of other household and family members. The existence of this board meeting also led me to feel that this message had got through (though I confess to some confusion about its futility given that it's 36 hours from when a plan needs to be released and is only an appeal to the Minister whose government has made it clear that the Province will not be varying its framework of offerings or funding, leaving it up to districts).

The letter from the superintendent, dated yesterday, has renewed my concerns and told me that the needs of families for more intermediate options between full attendance and full withdrawal have not been heard. The letter (understood to be preliminary, but also a strong signal of what is to come) provided no new options or information at the elementary level. The only thing that it did was reinforce or clarify the rigidity of the proposed accommodations, and spell out how narrowly risk is to be defined for a child (completely ignoring the rest of the household), with no discretion for the family (or even the doctor) outside the enumerated health conditions. The letter also moved from the vague but at least empathetic words about flexibility and empathy for how this affects families in previous correspondence, to musts and shalls and narrow definitions that can only leave a family with immunocompromised members (that do meet the definition of the term listed in the letter, apart from that they are not the enrolled child)<sup>1</sup> feeling trapped and scared. I also would have liked to see more information about controls in the learning environment (e.g. staggered start times, use of outside space in all weather, classroom spacing, ventilation) that may give more confidence about transmission.

I find the listed table of options, and prior communication of same from the province, to be disingenuous given that it does not fully outline the implications of the choices provided.

- My understanding is that distance learning has been hopelessly full for months;
- Homeschooling cuts the parent loose entirely from any assistance;
- Both of the two above options sever the relationship with the school and all but guarantee that the child will not be able to re-enter (ever) any programs or school they had been enrolled in, unless it was their catchment school and it has space at that time.

On the third point above, I want to emphasize how great a cost this can be for a family in French Immersion. My son is starting grade 1. If we homeschool him because of family health risks that are not

---

<sup>1</sup> In these situations, the current information that younger children “seem to” be “less likely” to transmit the virus (despite the fact that they simultaneously “seem to” have equal or higher viral loads) is cold comfort for families who know that one or more among them is virtually guaranteed to die if exposed because of co-morbidities, for example.

his choice or in his control, there is a list of children waiting for the opportunity for grade 1 entry. His spot is gone, for the duration of his school career. We also lose the sibling priority access to the program for the next two children coming up behind him. This is not a failure to accommodate; it is punitive for a child/family based on factors outside their control.

I am not saying that the default option should not be full time school. I am not saying that individual teachers should have to juggle teaching across two platforms. I am not even saying that there needs to be a 'learning hub' option, as has been announced in several Alberta districts, although that would be ideal. All that I ask is that students who take the homeschool option because of the pandemic be allowed to resume their place in their schools and programs when this is over (either this surge, or the whole pandemic, preferably both).

Finally, I think that some time should be spent on the issue of mental health.

- Some children are terrified to go back to school because for six months they have been told that the rules they have to follow that are much tighter than their peers are to protect a family member they love. They have had the risks to that person explained to them. My six year old knows he doesn't get to see his friends because he is being a hero protecting grandma. Now they are being told to go back to school, and they KNOW that they could end up being the cause of the death of the person that they love. How are they to cope with that, either before or after?
- Being exposed to school will force families to make decisions that significantly affect their ability to cope, particularly excluding members of their support networks from their circles to protect them. Ours is that we will have to cut off all contact with grandparents despite their providing the bulk of our childcare, both after school and for children not yet school age. Parents have been running on empty for months, and now they will have to do all the childcare, school commutes etc. alone, on top of working and whatever other obligations they have. Programs to replace grandparents do not have openings or don't exist, and multiple kids in multiple programs only expands the risk. For our family this means that we are on our own with all of the above factors, one child in school, one not yet school age, and a newborn arriving just as school begins. We will be navigating all of this, without sleeping, while recovering from birth, and dealing with 3 kids undergoing major transitions, without any family support because we cannot put them at risk. Postpartum is a rocky time for mental health at the best of times. How are we to cope?
- Lack of options will also lead to other decisions with myriad impacts on families. Some will have to quit jobs because they lost family childcare. Some marriages will suffer because parents don't agree on the risk or one parent bears the brunt of the sacrifices. Some parents will resort to other coping mechanisms with material impacts on children (e.g. substance use). For us, the 'nuclear option' we have discussed, if we had a case count more like the Fraser Valley, would be to separate the family if we felt the risk of contact with school to the newborn (currently listed by CDC as more likely to have serious complications from covid, but not officially on the "at risk" list) was too high. We would send mom and baby to live with grandparents, and leave the older

kids with dad. For the foreseeable future. What does that do to mental health? Mom may get better support, but won't see older kids. Dad and siblings don't get to bond with the new child.

- And then, just fear and uncertainty. We'll all break down soon enough. Is the school system preparing for when families start to crumble around them?

Please provide options that allow families to make their own determinations of risk. Please provide options for students who have left school to protect someone they love to return to schools and programs that are important to them. Please make it clear what the implications of the options provided are so that parents can make informed decisions, including for the options not listed (i.e. we cannot provide option X because cost per student is Y; spots in special programs will be revoked under the following circumstances... etc.).

Regards,

Hilary Hop Wo

August 19, 2020

I am writing this letter as a parent who also happens to work within the public school system who is feeling extremely frustrated at what is happening around back to school plans for schools in our province.

I have two children. One has Autism Spectrum Disorder/Asperger Syndrome and has told us he flat out refuses to go back to school the way it's being presented. While as the parent I can force the issue, I am then inflicting my incredibly bright yet behaviourally challenged child on an already stressed school team and fellow students. Due to sensory issues, he also cannot wear a mask for any length of time. He already finds school incredibly stressful. Adding this to the mix can only have a detrimental effect on his learning outcomes. He is going into grade 11 where grades actually count for much. My other child is incredibly keen on school and loves going and she has also told us that she feels incredibly uncomfortable going back to her middle school as things stand. She really wants to go back, but not until she feels everyone there will be safe.

Neither of my children feel safe going back to school. One of the basic tenets of going to school is that it is a safe place to be. This doesn't even get into my feelings about it one way or another. I'm simply hearing what my children are telling me. They are scared and they don't feel safe.

They ask me every day – "Mom, why can't they do the remote learning thing again?" I have no answer for them that makes sense to them or to me. There is much talk around kids needing to be back in the social environment of school and the structured classroom setting. I have no issue with that and fully agree. I also agree that there should be an option for those children who are terrified of returning. The emotional and psychological impact of being forced to do something they feel is dangerous will be significant. They will no longer have trust in their parents, their schools or their government.

We're told that maybe Distance Education is an option. Then we hear that those are most likely already at capacity and that if you choose that route that your child will lose their attachment to their school. The only other option is home schooling, but not feasible for parents who work full time and can't afford a tutor.

I am shocked that there is no option for these children who feel like they should have a say in what risks they are willing to subject themselves to. Especially children with extra needs who are already finding daily life stressful in these uncertain times. This all or none approach is incredibly inflexible and leaves a great number of us scratching our heads and trying to figure out what to do.

I think about the significant number of TOC's and Temporary assignment teachers who will most likely find themselves without a lot of work. Why not employ them to do the remote teaching or the classroom teaching and leaving teachers to do the remote work. I see a lot of timetable changes, especially at the secondary level, which might open up some time for teachers to be available for remote teaching without having to essentially do their jobs twice every day. There are so many ways around this, but they require money. This government needs to assess its priorities and figure out where they can find that money and there is no doubt in my mind that they can if they really put their minds to it. Families run on tight budgets all the time and the priority is always the children.

This government needs to put our children first. Their physical health, emotional health and education need to be number one. I feel that balance can be struck by continuing the hybrid model that was deployed in June but properly funded via staffing so that teachers are not given unmanageable workloads and our teaching staff not on continuing assignments can benefit from regular employment. I think in that scenario everyone wins.

Meanwhile, I will continue to stress out trying to figure out how to balance the very real feelings of my children against this very inflexible return plan.

Sincerely,

Hollie Davis



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Online Learning Hub  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 18, 2020 7:24:58 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

To whomever it may concern,

I strongly believe that having an Online Learning Hub is a necessity during this global pandemic.

First, cases in BC continue to be on the rise and our leaders in health have already warned that there will likely be a second wave of the illness coming in the fall. This means many students may be unable to attend in-person school. It's also possible that in-person school may be closed to everyone during this time.

Second, many families have personal and/or health reasons for being unwilling/unable to send students to in-person schooling. This group of folks will likely grow over the course of the pandemic as rates of illness rise.

Third, it's expected that the pandemic will continue well into 2021 and likely into 2022. It is important to be proactive about alternative options given the expected duration of the pandemic.

I sincerely hope the district invests an appropriate amount of time, money and effort into proactively creating an Online Learning Hub to support students throughout the next few years, and even beyond this pandemic.

Sincerely,

Jaclyn Sadler

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** To whom it may concern,  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 19, 2020 11:27:53 AM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you in regards to the upcoming board meeting on Aug 21.

I am very concerned with the return to school plan set for our district in September. I know our school board has our best intentions in mind, however I think many aspects have been forgotten in their planning.

There are many children who are chronic health designated. My child being one of them, and ends up in the hospital (and even ICU) with the common head cold. With the current plan in place our options are to send him or to pull him from the district in order to do home schooling. I have been told there is no separate plan in place for the chronic health kids. This doesn't seem right to me when they are likely to be the most effected if someone in their cohort gets ill.

There is also talk about the social need for the children to be in school and the damaging aspects of them missing it. I agree that the social needs of the children are extremely important, but do they outweigh the social and emotional needs they receive from their family. I know of multiple children that will have to be cut off from visiting their grandparents or close family members who are at high risk, for the entire school year. Family is extremely important in the development and well being of children, and I think this would be very hard for many many families. What would it do emotionally to the children to know they passed something on to one of these family members?

Also speaking from a personal note, I fall into many of the high risk categories, does that mean it is more important socially for my children to be with their peers then to be with me?

In opening their bubble to the 60 children we also expose their bubble to that 60 children's bubbles. With the current plan I know of families that are going to be exposed to 300-500 people.. and then they expose their 60 to that. The numbers just don't work!

I hope the board will take into consideration the many effects this could have on family situations. Which children could be exposed, which children have health that cannot handle exposure, and Who the children are coming home to. Families need to have to have options so they can do what is comfortable for them not what fits the mass majority.

And lastly, how can you even consider sending our children back, when our prisoners have

been released and are parliament won't even return... they are our future and their value should be held in the highest regard.

We have seen what's happening with the return to schools around the world, and especially in the USA. Let's not follow suit! By offering families who want and need it the chance to school from home you also lower the exposure for the children that have to be in the building.... Let's do the right thing so we don't look back when the numbers climb in the fall and wish we had done more!

Sincerely,

The Talbot's

Sent from my iPhone



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Submission for Aug 24th Special Board Meeting  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 19, 2020 2:44:18 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

--

Dear SD61 Trustees and District Staff,

I am writing today to voice my significant concerns about the BC Education plans to have students return to in-person instruction this fall.

I have three children in elementary school and a husband who is immune compromised. In addition, my oldest child has ADHD, meaning he is more impulsive than other children and will likely struggle to follow strict safety rules consistently. In looking ahead to school this fall, we are extremely concerned that:

- 1) classrooms are too small to ensure physical distancing with full student attendance
- 2) masks or other barriers are not mandated at the elementary level
- 3) ventilation in many schools is poor
- 4) learning group cohorts of 60 contacts are too large, especially with families with children in multiple schools and/or classrooms
- 5) students with disabilities and behavioural challenges are going to struggle even more than usual this year, creating unique barriers to inclusion and equity

We feel that these factors will put our family at high risk of contracting COVID19, endangering my husband's health and that of our vulnerable extended family as well, including my mother, who has developed a heart condition in recent months.

We are disappointed to realize that, according to the Ministry of Education, we really only have two choices: 1) attend in person with all the risk that entails, or 2) withdraw from our beloved school and enroll in distributed learning or homeschool. Crucially, there is unprecedented demand for distributed learning this year that is likely to outstrip spaces in these programs. These programs are already largely full or with extensive wait lists. So really, for many families still unsure about how to proceed, it's either risk your health or go it alone.

In addition, the provincial policy of "per head funding" requires us to show up in person at

school before the end of September to be counted and funded in order to maintain our spots at school and keep the teachers employed. This policy is completely inappropriate in a pandemic and, if unchanged, will force families into unsafe buildings simply to maintain enrollment. A new emergency policy must be put in place as soon as possible to allow families to stay away from schools if they see the need, without risking their children's right to education.

It's unbelievable to us that there is no third option for families like ours who wish to stay enrolled in our school but have some flexibility to stay away from the school building to protect our health during a global pandemic. There are many high risk families in our position and many families who simply wish to have a "play it by ear" approach where they can choose to stay out of the classroom for health reasons without risking their children's school placement, their school's class configuration, and their beloved teacher's jobs. Every family should have the ability to choose what works for them and their needs to best protect their health. The two current options are unnecessarily limited and unacceptable.

I'm asking you today to use your voice as a school district to advocate for robust and flexible distance learning supported by and connected to our brick and mortar schools, not separated from them or requiring withdrawal from them in order to be accessed. My kids need to stay connected to their school community *and* have home learning options. They need the reassurance that they will be welcome back at their school once it's safe for them to go back. And it's a workable solution: vulnerable teachers could be hired for temporary distance learning roles and matched with vulnerable families who wish to access that.

Distance learning also needs to be flexible, because -- even for children who *do* attend school this fall -- what about illness? Having any cold & flu symptoms will be cause to be sent home for extended periods of time. There needs to be temporary and accessible home learning support in place to ensure these kids aren't missing huge chunks of their education due to every sniffle and cough. Education must continue throughout the year for all students and be supported *even if the student does not attend school in person due to reasons related to the pandemic*.

The fact that these common scenarios weren't anticipated (or valued?) by the Ministry of Education is a huge disappointment and is outright baffling. It's obvious to parents that we need more options beyond risking our health or winging homeschool with zero support. The options families are facing now will lead many to feel like they have no real choice but to send their children into school buildings, increasing the physical contacts and density in classrooms, and increasing the COVID19 risk to everyone in the process.

As parents, we know our district and school administrators are working tirelessly to come up with a plan that is as safe as possible for students and staff. But it's also true that you've been handed an untenable plan by the Ministry of Education. There are too many students and not enough physical space. Established distributed learning programs are scarce and home learning options in general have not been adequately prioritized. And with the province calling for 100% in person attendance, it seems like a disaster waiting to happen. COVID19 cases are rising fast; we need options to protect vulnerable students and students with vulnerable families. We need robust educational programs for all families.

I hope my plea to you today moves you to use your position as trustees to ensure flexible and safe learning options for all students in our district this fall.

Thank you,  
Jana O'Connor

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Written feedback for the Special Board of Education Meeting on August 24th  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 8:12:08 AM

---

**CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.**

---

Hello Board of Education,

I am writing in strong support of the motion *"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 hub option for families which allows students to remain connected to their school community through the COVID 19 pandemic."*

I do not feel safe returning our children to in-class instruction and I will not be choosing distributed learning or homeschooling because I do not want to lose our spaces in our current school.

I have so many concerns with the return to in-class instruction that I'm at a loss of where to begin. I could list a dozen reasons, but I, like so many parents who you won't even hear from, am emotionally exhausted. I can barely muster the emotional energy it takes to write this short email. The notion that parents are now expected to advocate for a safe plan for their children, when they have been fighting for the safety of their family for the past 5 months already, is ludicrous.

We strongly value our school community, in large part because one of our children has severe anxiety. If we are forced to choose a home learning option (be it distributed learning or homeschooling) for the safety of our family, it will mean losing our spots in our current school (our children are in French Immersion). Losing a spot in French Immersion is a significant loss, but losing a spot in our school community would result in years or more of anxiety struggles for our child who does not adjust easily to change, since our English catchment school is not the same as our French catchment school.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter of support. I am grateful to the Board members for putting forth this motion.

Jennie Bartosik

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Public submission for special board meeting  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 12:05:58 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Hi there,

Please confirm that this has been received.

Jennifer Nichol.

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** H Nichol [REDACTED]  
**Date:** Fri, Aug 21, 2020 12:00pm

To the Greater Victoria Board of Education,

I am writing to clearly express my whole-hearted support of the motion as written, "that the board of Education of School District No 61 write to the Minister of Education advocating for the full funding and flexibility to create an online learning hub option for families which allows students to remain connected to their school community through the COVID 19 Pandemic"

So again to be clear, yes, we want an online learning hub.

Before I start, I would like to acknowledge the work that has been done to date from everyone involved in this exceptional time. Thank you. I would also like to recognize that I am speaking from a place of privilege of being to work from home and privilege of understanding in that my Mother happens to hold a special-ed teaching certificate and also provides us with the unique perspective of having worked on the Success by 6 board as well as in child protection for years. I also have working knowledge of childhood anxiety and illness and the thousands of hours our family has spend educating ourselves on illness, best outcomes for kids, healthy environments and also just parenting our kids. So we are not without insight into the work that goes on behind the scenes, what is best of our own kids and insight from educational and mental health professionals and also the important considerations being made for children who tragically need school because it's a safe haven for them. Our voice matters. Kids with chronic illnesses matter. Kids who struggle

with intense social settings matter. School as it was, was not a safe and happy place for all kids and we have this incredible opportunity to make it a better fit for more kids. So with that being said, it is with passion, humility and an incredibly deep love of all children with chronic illness and the kids who thrived in a quiet self paced environment that I write this letter in support of a hybrid learning option on behalf of our family and all those other parents who won't have the time or knowledge of this meeting who relate to our lived experience.

In support of my support, I offer the following testimony of our Family unit's lived experiences of school and the pandemic and how this time intersects with our work, childcare options, chronic illness and mental health.

My son has rare chronic illness that, when active, causes his esophagus to scar and spasm and close up to the point that he regurgitates food and/or food can get stuck which requires medical intervention. Diagnosis of this took years and there is 1 doctor in BC at BC Children's Hospital who specializes in this. Getting an appointment takes up to a year, and that's if you're lucky enough to have a family doctor who refers you and lucky enough to have access and resources to take weeks off work to attend dozens of appointments and travel to Vancouver for treatments. Even then, the gold standard of diagnosis for many digestive illnesses is endoscopy and colonoscopy and with the current backlog of day procedures at BC Children's there is another 6-12 month wait. So in some cases you're over 2 years before diagnosis is confirmed. This can be similar for other childhood diseases and I can tell you that every parent I've spoken to has trauma involved with their kids illnesses and school. I sent information and documents about his disease to the school and most were seemingly never read or at least nobody was ever familiar with them when I asked.

We don't fit into the check boxes on the IEP plans, Teachers aren't dr's and I'm sure you are aware that there is zero to minimal mental health supports available in SD61 we were bounced around from email to email and never actually connected with someone, we were told there was never even a file started. During this time when he was in extreme pain and was mysteriously bringing food up he developed a paralyzing anxiety that included a fear of school because he didn't want to have an episode at school and it required thousands of dollars of mental health support for him and our whole family to even get to a place where school was not seen as a terrifying place. We aren't wealthy people and are still paying off the debt we incurred trying to get help. We felt hopeless and unseen by our school system. It was traumatic.

Trauma considerations are very based in science and are something I hope that everyone on the School Board is becoming familiar with in order to have a trauma informed school environment. Reading and listening to Minister Fleming talk about the requirement for full time class attendance with no options other than to pull your kids and try to find a Blended or DL option (they are all full, fyi. Only wait and see registration for full homeschool is available) has been complete re-traumatization. It sent us right towards pulling our kids and homeschooling, which we are still considering and see this effort by the board as the last chance to keep our kids enrolled in their current school, with their hard earned school community.

We still live with anxiety each year wondering if we will get a teacher sympathetic to his unique needs and able to accommodate the level of school my son can miss when his illness flares. His illness is made worse by food triggers (certain unknown foods cause white blood cells to attack the esophagus tissue), **stress**, seasonal allergies, anxiety, anything that causes reflux and sometimes it just flares and we don't know why. After last year we gave up on trying to get an IEP and were blessed to have an incredible teacher who was willing to send home actual homework when he missed school and keep a box of safe foods so he could be included when people brought in cupcakes or whatever for birthdays, he was so happy. He loved her and actually asked to follow her when he found out she was leaving the school. The message we got from the school was that she wasn't really supposed to do that and that we were lucky she did. We were devastated to have that kind of response.

If the argument being made by Dr Bonnie Henry is that some children will fall behind and never catch up, why is that only being considered now? My son missed over 47 days of school when we were being diagnosed and we were offered zero at home learning options, despite our many requests for support.

So what about my son? And kids like him who struggle to participate in daily class attendance due to chronic illness that flares or that requires intermittent bouts of intense testing and travel for medical treatment? Kids whose diseases have no official recommendations around COVID-19 because there is no evidence to make evidence based decisions on? Are we expected to just find comfort knowing that contract tracing

during an outbreak will be quick? That could be too late for some of us. My son is like some kids in many ways, he wants to see familiar faces and he has just said, "Well they wouldn't be sending us to school if they thought even 1 kid would get sick, right Mom?" How do you explain percentages and infection rates and acceptable amounts of death being spread by what's supposed to be a safe place for ALL kids and teachers? Is the government going to be providing billions of dollars in mental health funding to cover the costs of the \$150-\$250 a week cost of sessions for teacher, child and parent psychology appointments required to navigate this forced in person participation?

Please give us real options. I can say with confidence that my child has never been happier with school than when we had the option to give 100% when we was feeling great but take a pause when he wasn't. In the chronic illness circle, it is common knowledge that the regular school day system fails kids with chronic illness daily, these are kids with who already experiencing a feeling of separation from their classmates as they have diet restrictions, anxiety surrounding having a flare or incident at school, or at missing out on important class material because they are unable to attend class that day. My son said that **he finally felt like school was good for him**. When I asked him for a comment for this he said, "I like my friends, my school and the teachers and I don't want to go every day, but I don't want a new school. I want to do some things at home with you." He is saying this without even knowing the full severity of the pandemic.

Continuity during these times are critical and uprooting them their existing school communities would have consequences and children who can't attend full time in person learning for what are very legitimate reasons are being singled out more than ever. I don't believe you are fully aware of the incredible amount of work you are putting on parents of chronically ill kids, you are further traumatizing them - there is no doubt. I can't tell you what a breath of relief we could take if I read the words "BC is now acknowledging the diversity of child and family needs across to the province and is now offering hybrid learning options from each child's current school."

Even with the letter sent out yesterday, EOE isn't specifically listed as immune compromised although he takes a form of steroid daily, it's not on your list that was sent out yesterday. So as I read it, we would still be without an option. Or rather no, option without yet another fight and an incredible amount of time, money, more trauma, and sheer luck to coordinate with our team of specialists. Specialists who are in many cases working with no



official recommendations because there is simply no or very little data. I can also tell you that the Drs I have talked to are not comfortable making recommendations anyways. That's the reality of it. Give us the option to choose based on our own lived experiences. Trust us as you're asking us to trust you.

Aside from my tale above, I share many of the concerns that others have already expressed.

- My Mother is our sole childcare provider. She is the only adult in our bubble. Am I just supposed to put her at risk or do I choose no childcare?
- My kindergartner aged daughter literally dropped her mask on the bathroom floor and picked it up and put it back on. This is after 3 months of practicing at home.
- My 9 year old son has to be reminded to wash his hands every single day, again this is after 9 years of practice and countless hospital trips.
- Is the province going to invest billions into making indefinite, weekly mental health support available to the families who spread infection through their schools and homes and contribute to the death of their teachers or loved ones by attending school? That's a hard question, but it's a real one. One that many mental health experts are asking.
- Why is nobody talking about the long and dreadful recovery from COVID? Not to mention the potential for undiscovered long term effects in children. Similar to the Zika virus and the cases of heart damage being seen in the states. This is not just about life and death.
- Isn't it time anyways to help train and support teachers transition into a more tech savvy school space? Our school had only a couple of teachers who would set up google classroom.
- why would we not want to leverage this tragedy into an opportunity for our children

and teachers by moving them into a learning environment that more accurately reflects the world they will live and work in?

I have to meet the noon deadline now, so I'm signing off from my campsite so I can let my kids have a few days of stress free living. Apologies for any grammar errors, this is from the heart without any time for edits.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Nichol & Adam Nichol

[REDACTED]

SD61 Parents of two kids who have been mostly calm, always kind and can hopefully continue to be safe.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Submission  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 11:37:19 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Please see my below submission:

Dear SD61 Trustees and Administration,

Today I urge you to offer flexibility in choice for families returning to school in September.

Right now, the current recommendations are to acquire a doctor's note in order to have accommodation to gain remote access to education for families that do not have the privilege of health. Dr. Henry has set strict guidelines as to what is considered immunocompromised 'enough' to be granted accommodation. There are no exceptions for families where an adult is immunocompromised. This recommendation is much too strict. Two of my children have severe, uncontrolled, viral-induced asthma, among other issues. They are in the emergency room multiple times per cold and flu season. My youngest child, due to enter kindergarten, has had multiple hospital admissions every year of his life - this is from indirect exposure to viruses - ie; his older siblings bringing it into the home. All of his hospital admissions are to support his airways. I have seen him and his sister struggle to move enough oxygen into their bodies - a fear I cannot describe, and a trauma I am not keen to revisit over and over while advocating for safe schools. This is from viruses like rhinovirus. A common cold. Both of them have reduced immune function, due to physiological issues, and also as an effect of the medications they take. Covid-19, a respiratory virus is my worst nightmare.

Under the current recommendations, doctors may not feel comfortable writing notes for families like mine, because we don't fit clearly into the PHO's definition of 'immunocompromised'. *Our specialist has given us the advice to follow the current BCCDC guidelines. As of July 10 (our last communication), which states ["When outside of your home, practicing social distancing by keeping two meters \(six feet\) away from one another."](#) This is not possible in the restart model.* What schools are asking of us goes against these guidelines. Right now, I have no idea how the school will accommodate for my kids to be able to physically distance, and what will happen when they cannot maintain it. I have been told that to keep my kids in school there has to be 'bums in seat' in and around the third week of September to keep their spot. The third week of September is known in the medical field as the 'September Asthma Peak'; [Approximately 20 to 25 per cent of annual](#)

[hospital admissions for asthma of children in Canada occur in September](#). What will happen this year with the addition of Covid-19? Expecting my kids to be present and risk illness is a flawed, and inequitable funding model.

Learning from home is not something that comes without sacrifice, but it is not a choice when the other option is exposure. Parents/guardians of kids with complexity have always had to sacrifice income, mental health, social relationships to protect and care for their children. It's difficult to keep in the workforce when you have to go to the emergency room at the drop of a hat, or take multiple weeks off of work to care for kids. We know this is a problem parents of children with disabilities have always had to juggle, and it is not OK. We are being asked to advocate for basic health and safety during a pandemic. The current data for children like mine is non existent, likely because they have been strictly adhering to safe practices. My children are not guinea pigs. I am not willing to find this data out the hard way.

Our school community is incredibly dear to us. My kids desperately want to go to their school. As it is now, it will not be safe for them. Sadly, if they are denied an education because they do not fit the strict guidelines set out, or their 'bums are not in their seats' they will lose their space in their school. ***They will lose their equitable right to access education because of a disability.*** We attend South Park, so are technically now out of catchment, despite having been there since 2011. I can't even give them the peace of knowing that when things are safe, they can go back to their school.

I urge you to allow parents to decide for themselves what level of risk they are comfortable with for their families. Many of us have been living in stringent, tight bubbles since early March. We are asking students to go into an environment that is only safe for healthy students. It's not OK.

Thank you for your time,

Jenn Turnbull

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

-

[REDACTED]

-

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Special board meeting Aug 24  
**Date:** Thursday, August 20, 2020 4:31:12 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Hi Andree  
Please find my written submission below.  
Thanks

Dear Board of Education,

I am writing to express my support for families to have the option for hybrid/online learning. I do not feel the current plan of full time return to in-person learning is safe for families and teachers.

The current plan does not limit physical distancing within learning groups. The learning groups of 60 is too large and contradictory to the bubble maximums we have been told by the Public Health Officers to maintain.

Also, the fact that homeschooling requires a student to be pulled out of their current school is not fair for those who want to keep their children home only for the duration of the pandemic.

I am in contact with immune compromised and elderly family members and strongly believe families should have a choice based on their situation. Please allow parents, teachers and students to have the option for online learning. This will keep our community safe while the pandemic is ongoing.

Thank-you for your time,  
Josh

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Letter/ request for remote learning  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 19, 2020 9:59:17 AM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Hello,

My son Geo attends oak bay high. At the beginning of spring break and the covid lock down my sons Doctor called in a panic at 10:30 at night because his recent blood work had shown that he has an auto immune disorder. Obviously this puts him at a much higher risk especially since new appointments with the doctors at children's hospital, where they would like him to go as he already sees an endocrinologist there, are even harder to get and we do not yet know which auto immune disorder he has. He has stated that he does not want to go back to school as he does not trust teenagers. He needs an guided online learning option as I am a single mother working full time and can not do traditional homeschooling with self paced curriculum.

We are both also concerned about the size of the pods for his sister who would be going to school at Monterey middle school. She needs the social interaction and is not able to stay home with her brother all day while I am at work without getting frustrated however then her having possible contacts with 120 kids who also have multiple contracts out side of school and then coming home to her brother is a very large risk.

As someone who was traditionally homeschooled for many years something some of the parents did was have small "pods" of a couple families where they would hire someone to supervise and help their children with their work. If the schools were to offer an online option and if there was some funding available (most likely through affordable child care?) this seems like it would be a great option that would allow social interaction on a smaller scale and also some supervision for parents that needed to work. (This was something done for middle school and up children smaller children generally need more direct supervision)

Thank you  
Karen and Geo Horton

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Written Submission for Special Board of Education Meeting on August 24th  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 11:56:45 AM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Good morning~

I'm writing to you today about the Special Board of Education Meeting on August 24, 2020. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and concerns with the Board.

It is my understanding that the main topic of discussion at the Board meeting is the Recommended Motion: "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 hub option for families which allows students to remain connected to their school community through the COVID 19 pandemic."

While I don't have a fulsome vision of what an 'online learning hub' is, I would like to think that it would provide students with a remote learning option for this school year.

I have always known our schools and the School Board to safeguard my children. As an immunocompromised parent of a grade 7 student and a grade 10 student facing a return to school during this frightening time, I am extremely worried. I cannot believe that my husband and I are in a position of having to choose between our children's education and my life. It is not a choice I would wish on anyone.

If the online learning hub that you mention in your recommended motion would allow for there to be a remote learning option that would allow my children to remain in their class and school, while learning from home, I support this.

What I do not understand, though, is why an online learning option is not being included in the existing return to school plan that was proposed to the Ministry of Education. What are parents in situations like mine to do? I realize that there are distance learning options, but if the intent is to ensure our children's safety and well-being, then pulling them from their school communities and dropping them in a distance learning school, which will result in even more stress, is not the solution.

Thank you for your time and concern,

~Kathy Rowbottom

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Submission for Meeting August 24  
**Date:** Thursday, August 20, 2020 7:34:24 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Katie Macquarrie (parent of child in SD61)

Dear SD61 Administration,

I am very grateful to SD61 for considering this motion, and for listening to our concerns. My daughter, who just turned 7, is entering into grade 2 in SD61. I am a single mother and my daughter and I share a home with my parents, who are both in their 70's. Our close family of four have real concerns with my daughter returning to in person schooling in September for the following reasons:

- I suffer from severe asthma and two autoimmune diseases. My doctor has been in close contact with me through the pandemic and has written a letter suggesting I isolate as much as possible to protect my higher risk of severe consequences if I were to contract Covid-19.
- My mother is 71 years old
- My father is 73 years old and under the care of a cardiologist for serious heart issues, suffers from a debilitating autoimmune disease, and has a long history of serious pneumonia. As a retired naval commander, Veterans Affairs has categorized him as "in frail health". He has been told that he is at a very high risk of serious complications were he to contract Covid-19. Due to our health concerns and the fact that we can't isolate from each other in our shared home, I had hoped for my daughter to return to school via online learning in the fall. However I was told that my only options were to:
- Register her in the B.C. Homeschooling Program (and withdraw her from her school community that she loves) or;
- Register her in the Distributed Learning Program (and withdraw her from her school community that she loves) or;
- Send her to full time school, in person, with no social distancing or masks required, in large cohorts.

In order to enrol in either current online option, I would require the consent of my daughters father to withdraw her from her current school (something most divorced parents will require), and in my situation I will not receive this consent, leaving me with the only remaining option of sending my daughter to school at the serious risk to my own and my parents health. This is unacceptable to me, that I have literally no options to protect my family.

A BC Supreme Court Judge in June deemed it unsafe for my daughter to attend school, camps or childcare in June and over the summer months, due to my and my fathers health issues, yet



with a return to school being mandatory now and there being no online option for my daughter (as she herself is not immunocompromised), I am left having to send her to full time in person school while the pandemic is significantly worse in our community than it was in June. I feel frustrated and at a loss as to how to protect us.

Having an online option to continue to participate in school via online learning allows my daughter to remain connected and enrolled in her school she loves, while ensuring her mother and grandparents are protected from harm, which ultimately protects my daughter.

I thank the school district for bringing this motion forward and am truly hopeful that my family, and others in similar situations, are not left behind.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

Katie Macquarrie

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Written Submission for August 24th Special Board Meeting  
**Date:** Thursday, August 20, 2020 5:02:08 PM

---

**CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.**

---

Good Afternoon Andree,

I'm sending a written submission for the upcoming Special Board Meeting on August 24th.

The main point is that we have been offered a plan for returning to school that is based in hopes for a best outcome and aims to control outbreaks rather than prevent them. Besides this, there has been no plan put in place for parents who choose not to send their children to school, which is a serious oversight because the schools may need to shut down at some point anyways. Having a plan in place to support learning and connect with students at home is something I expected, not something I thought I would have to advocate for.

Thank you to you and the board for calling this meeting. Many parents out there don't feel they have a choice, but I am sure that there is a better plan for our educators and kids than what we are being offered right now.

-----  
Good Morning,

I have significant concerns about the current plan for students to return to school. I have contacted School District 61, my kid's two schools, my elected representatives, and now I am providing a written submission for your consideration at this special meeting of the school board.

I am deeply uncomfortable with the idea of putting my children into full time school, indoors, where physical distancing is not reasonably expected and masks are not mandated. This runs contrary to every safety measure we've tried to follow since March. My family has been very cautious since then, and now we are expected to put our kids in learning groups of 60-120 EACH, and all the social bubbles associated.

**I interpret a lot of optimism and not an abundance of caution from our government officials** when it comes to plans for back to school. It all seems to say "Don't worry, it'll be fine." But the fact is, we really don't know what it will look like. It looks like an experiment and "hoping for the best", rather than an exercise in doing the most we possibly can to prevent community spread.

I am honestly exasperated that I've needed to appeal to the government to **implement their own guidelines and precautions** for safety when it comes to my children's healthy and safe return to school.

I keep hearing from government officials that students need to return to in-person learning for their education and social and mental health. [This is absolutely true in most ways, however if they return in such a way that endangers public health, they will undoubtedly suffer.](#) We counted on them to provide a plan that mitigated risk as much as possible. This is not what we got, and we are asking for significant, effective changes.

**Ideas:** *(I am not a health or education professional, these are ideas generated by looking at other school systems and the government guidelines we have been given by you.)*

- **Optional** at-home learning to help decrease class sizes, leaving space for children and families who *really need in class learning* for various reasons. **There should be a plan** in place for this if schools need to shut down.
- **Mandate No Loss of Placement** if parents opt not to put their children into in-person learning.
- **Implement Regular Testing**
- **Once or twice a week outdoor classes to supplement at home learning** would go a long way to

support kids struggling with isolation. Moving most classes outdoors whenever possible would be beneficial, as they did with the 1918 pandemic.

- **Mandate Masks *wherever possible*.** It does *not make sense* to put groups of people inside a building for 4-6 hours a day and not ensure they wear masks as much as possible. I understand that the ministry of health is not recommending this, however I do think that going above and beyond in this situation would give parents, students and teachers a level of confidence in returning to school that many of us simply do not have. I understand the challenges of kids and masks, however, they can learn and this layer of personal protection would support everyone's safety and health.
- **Learning Groups/Cohorts are *too large*,** and multiply if you have other children. If everyone wore masks it would not be so risky, but we should be limiting interaction with anyone outside of a student's classroom, particularly in younger grades. It is logistically challenging, but not impossible.
- **Improve school ventilation systems.**
- **Listen to teachers:** they have been advocating for student safety and effective education for decades. Many have been teaching summer school and know the reality of what school will look like when students return in September. Do not ignore their concerns.
- **Fund Education;** more teachers, more EAs, outdoor classrooms, online learning, new ventilation, on-site nurses... our school system produces the next generation of educators, health care workers, builders, scientists, etc. The significance of school has been made very apparent by this pandemic. It needs to be funded in such a way that respects its role in propping up our society and economy.

#### Resources:

- [Are Schools Safe to Return? As a BC Teacher, I'm Not Sure](#) - The Tyee, July 28th
- [Reopening Checklist](#) compiled by the BCTF
- [Open Letter from BC Doctors regarding Mask Use](#)
- [When Covid Subsided, Israel Opened Schools. It didn't go well.](#) - NYT August 4th
- [COVID-19 Outbreak at a Summer Camp in Georgia](#) - CDC
- [BC Children's Hospital Psychiatrist: Safety More Important than School](#)
- [Plan for Reopening School Leaving too Many Students Behind](#)

I really, really want my kids to be in school; this was a light at the end of the tunnel for us. I had been counting on a cautious plan for school reopening, and I am so disappointed that I cannot rest easy about this. The current plan seems to be a calculated risk rather than one that does it's best to protect everyone's health from the outset.

**I want my kids to see their friends, learn from an educator, and learn how to navigate a "new normal" school in a safe way that is reinforced by mandated precautions.** If this is not possible, I am willing to support their education at home because I am able to, and help create smaller class sizes that make it easier to protect kids and teachers.

Thank you so much for your time, and for the work you do. Please, consider advocating strongly for student and staff safety in schools in a way that goes above and beyond.

Kelly Moncrieff

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Written submission — Special Board Meeting Monday, August 24th, 2020  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 18, 2020 4:19:45 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Dear SD61 Trustees —

I am writing today as a registered nurse and a parent to share my concerns about the proposed plan to have all elementary, middle, and high school students return to full-time in-person instruction next month.

I have two children, one in middle school and one in high school. We live with my parents, who are both in the COVID-19 high risk age category. My father is at further risk due to a pre-existing chronic respiratory condition. My parents and I are extremely concerned about the proposed plan for September — particularly the inability for adequate physical distancing within classes that have not been reduced in number, non-mandatory use of masks at all times whilst indoors, recirculated air, and large learning group cohorts. I believe that sending my children to school will place my vulnerable parents at an increased risk, which I am not comfortable with.

It is therefore even more distressing to realize that the only alternatives to placing my parents at risk are to withdraw my children from their schools and enroll them in distance learning (assuming space is available) or embark on a homeschooling journey. As a solo parent who works full time, I am uncertain about my ability to provide an acceptable homeschooling education. Furthermore, my son has been diagnosed with learning disabilities which — as we've learned this summer — impact his ability to be successful with the standard distance learning provided through SIDES.

I would like to request that families in our situation be provided with the option to remain enrolled in our schools with access to remote learning in order to protect the health of vulnerable family members who live in our household. I do not believe it is reasonable or fair to expect teachers to educate both the in-person learners and remote learners simultaneously and would therefore propose that additional teachers be hired as dedicated remote learning teachers. As a nurse, I am also concerned about the lost learning that will inevitably occur when students who have been attending school in person come down with seasonal colds & flus which keep them at home and the potential for a second wave, which may close schools completely. A robust and well-supported remote learning option provided through the schools will ensure that any student who needs to stay at home can continue to be supported in their learning.

Finally, I would like to request an immediate review of the "per head funding" policy that requires students to physically attend school before the end of September. I believe this policy is misaligned with our current reality and inappropriately pressures families into decisions that are risky simply to maintain enrollment and funding. A pandemic policy that allows children with high risk family members in their homes to access adequately-funded remote learning while retaining their place in their school can and should be considered.

Thank you very much for considering my requests to provide flexible and safe learning options for all students in our district this fall.

Sincerely,

Kira Antinuk, RN, BScN, MN

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Special Board Meeting - written submission  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 11:08:57 AM

---

**CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.**

---

Hello,

We are a family with two children in SD61 in both elementary (grade 5) and middle school (grade 7). We fully support the creation of an online learning hub option for families to allow us to remain connected to our schools.

We feel like the best option for us and our two children, during the pandemic, is to minimize contact with other students if and when the spread of COVID-19 in our region becomes higher. Given that the spread and duration of COVID-19 is unpredictable, it makes sense to plan for the worst, but hope for the best.

Preparing **now**, both individually and as a school district, for supporting children to be away from the classroom seems like the best action in preparing for the worst. In the event of another shutdown (whether local or regional), having the ability to connect online with teachers and students will make the best of an unavoidably bad situation.

Thank you  
Jeremy and Laura Stashewsky.

Lesley Arnold

August 21st 2020

RE : Return to school plan

Dear Minister Fleming,

I am writing to you today as the PAC President of Hillcrest Elementary School and a concerned parent within our community, that sees the potential damage this current back to school plan can do to our families. These views are my own but I am aware of many families within my community that are burdened by a sense of fear and worry around the health and safety of not only their children but family members that may be affected if no other options are put forward.

The current back to school plan fails to give parents an option to make a decision on schooling that will be the best for their family in this current Covid-19 pandemic. How is the ministry allowing a plan that is a one size fits all to move forward? You are giving families two options :

1- Return to school

or

2-Withdraw from school and enrol in distance learning ( provided there is space)/commit to homeschooling.

To allow this plan to move forward would mean you are remiss in your duties to protect the children and families that you are in power to serve. Is there such a disconnect between the hierarchy that there is no compassion towards those families that this could potentially harm? No child learns the same, just as no child's health records are the same. Covid-19 in your eyes, may not affect the majority of children returning to school but there are those families it could ravage and surely our Education Ministers want to put forward a schooling plan that will support all circumstances. Change is always difficult especially concerning a system of schooling that has been in place for decades but surely now, amidst a global Pandemic, it is time for our Education Ministers to put forward planning that will offer options to ALL families and their children. Every single family that you are there to serve should be given the ability to choose not only what works for them but what also protects their health and safety.

This plan falls short of meeting any of the guidelines that have been put forward by the W.H.O and Dr. Bonnie Henry. This has led to confusion due to the mixed messaging and parents are seeing that there



are two sets of rules : one for schools and one for day to day life. Surely the safety of students and their immediate families is that important to the Ministry of Education, that it warrants the time to meet and propose a plan that is more of a reflection of the protocols that have been put in place and also allows the Ministry time to meet the pleas of families wanting an online learning option to help protect their children's safety.

To not offer an online learning option is to not fulfill your roles as the key holders of our children's education.

I would ask that the Minister of Education revisit the back to school plan and make it a priority to put in place a learning hub where families can, without backlash keep their children at home while still being connected to their school. Home online learning should be an option. Families keeping their students at home out of concern for their health, would then be freeing up space inside the school walls to aid social distancing and a safe school space.

I also ask that schools with students registered with a preference for online learning during this global pandemic, do not lose their funding for that child's spot if they are able to learn from home. The policy of 'per head funding' requires students to be there in person before the end of September to be counted and have funding allocated to that school as well as to retain their spot in the school. In a global pandemic surely this needs to be reviewed. Why would the Education Minister want to punish teachers for parents making decisions based on their children's health and safety. With this policy you directly put children at risk by demanding parents send their child in to hold their place within their community school. Parents should not be forced into making a choice between their child's right to education and their child's right to be healthy.

This should not be something parents are having to demand. Our education ministers should have made this a priority from day one and it is disheartening to feel that children are being thrown into a potentially dangerous health situation. Every pandemic in history has had a second wave and it is likely in fall that Covid-19 will return stronger, as we already see cases rise. Why is our Ministry putting the health and safety of our children at risk and not offering different learning pathways for those who wish their children to remain at home to learn.


As parents, we have relied on your expertise to guide us through this unprecedented pandemic and understood that it is uncharted territory for all but to see the Ministry of Education fail those who they are there to protect is disheartening. I ask that you reassess the return to school plan and construct not only an online option so parents are not forced to return their children to school but a better guideline to protect the safety of all students, staff and families.

Minister, you should be rallying behind and prioritising building supported distance learning that keeps children at home connected to their schools. Instead, your plan throws families to the side lines or requires them to withdraw because they are daring to put the health and safety of their children first. As Education Minister it is your job to make sure our children have access to safe schooling and right now, with this plan, the simple truth is they do not.




I hope that my plea to revisit the back to school plan will be heard and not discarded. Now is the time to show us that you do care about every child's right to a safe education within this Covid-19 world.

Your Sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Lesley Arnold', with a long, flowing horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Lesley Arnold

**From:**   
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Special Board Meeting Aug 24th - Written Submissions  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 19, 2020 1:16:29 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Hi Andree,

I would like the following submissions put forward at the Aug 24th Special Board Meeting.

My son will be starting Grade 8 next month, he has ADHD and anxiety. Covid-19 has added another layer of stress to the world. My son struggles to stay focused on regular days and having to sit in a classroom during this pandemic will be even worse. He is terrified to be touched and around other classmates that may not take this pandemic seriously, he will not be able to focus on class work as he will be consumed with fear, nerves and anxiety. We also have high health issues in our family and cannot and should not be in a position where we could potentially be exposed to more germs.

An online classroom should be offered for each grade. It should be up to the family to decide if their child should return to school for in class learning during these circumstances.

Thank you,  
A very concerned parent

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

August 21, 2020

Dear Board of Education SD61,

Thank you for the opportunity to write to you and voice my support for tonight's motion. I am a mother of 3 elementary aged students and an active member in my school PAC. I have been closely following the information in regard to the return to school during the Covid-19 pandemic for this September.

I want to encourage the Board to pursue and advocate for an online or at home option for this fall while allowing families to remain tied to their current school community. I strongly believe that the current 3 options of full in-class return, distance learning or homeschooling are all excellent options, but I feel that a 4<sup>th</sup> option could also provide some families and students with a greater sense of belonging, control and choice. Many families, such as ours, want to stay connected to their current community school and feel the support to provide home learning.

I strongly encourage you to vote in favor of tonight's motion and pursue the idea to create a learning hub option while allowing us to stay connected and engaged in our current learning community. Families are in the most part looking for choice. I recognize that the health and well-being for many families is reliant on getting back into the classroom. Perhaps families such as ours have not had a strong voice, but we are a family that experienced great success with at home learning in the spring. We do not want to leave our school and enroll in distance education, a decision that feels permanent. This is not forever, only for now!

I strongly feel that a home learning option while staying enrolled in your current school would be beneficial in lowering class numbers and creating an honest and transparent environment where families feel choice and don't feel the need to "call in sick" or seek a doctors letter to engage in home learning.

Thank you for your dedication to our public education and I trust that you are on the right path in seeking this further funding and learning option.

Best regards,  
Malia Allan  
SD61 Parent and PAC Member.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** August 24th meeting- written submission  
**Date:** Thursday, August 20, 2020 12:31:59 PM

---

**CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.**

---

*Hi Andree,*

*Please find my written submission letter as follows:*

August 20, 2020

-

Re: Special Board of Education Meeting on August 24th

Dear Board of Education,

I am writing to express my support for the Board of Education of School District No.61 advocating online learning option for all students within the Greater Victoria district. Currently, Canada's largest school board (Toronto) is offering students the option of online/virtual learning. British Columbians should also be offered this option; especially since British Columbia COVID-19 cases have been drastically increasing daily.

Why is gathering of more than 50 persons not allowed outside of schools, but permitted inside a small classroom without PPE or physical distancing. There have been growing reports of children being infected by COVID-19 from day camps and schools around the world:

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-19-kids-school-children-positive-tests-coronavirus-reopening/>

<https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/nearly-20-secondary-cases-of-covid-19-linked-to-boucherville-day-camp-bringing-total-cases-to-46-1.5046839>

[https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6931e1.htm?s\\_cid=mm6931e1\\_x](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6931e1.htm?s_cid=mm6931e1_x)

Teachers and students should not be mandated to return full-time to a physical classroom under current situations as it poses an unsafe workplace for teachers and learning environment for students. At this time, there is no adequate protection from COVID-19 exposure nor from students bringing COVID-19 home to an immune-compromised family member.

I as a parent with a pre-existing lung condition would most likely not survive if my child brought COVID-19 home from school. Please provide families, teachers and students with the choice of

online learning without having to withdraw from their current school.

Sincerely,  
Mary L

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

August 21, 2020

Dear SD61 Trustees,

You have most likely received numerous emails, presentations and petitions from concerned caregivers with children in French Immersion and the impact of COVID-19. Many caregivers are worried that if they do not send their child to school, they lose their placement in FRIMM. They want assurances that they have the option to keep their spot in FRIMM but not necessarily have their child attend in-class learning. They want at-home, online support for FRIMM and are advocating for funding.

I understand their concerns, however, I believe that this should not be an option for those entering early FRIMM.

My son is currently wait-listed for FRIMM kindergarten. He is an out-of-catchment sibling, currently enrolled at George Jay Elementary in the English track, where his sister will be entering Grade 3 FRIMM. Both children could not get into their catchment, Marigold, for FRIMM kindergarten, hence, how we ended up at George Jay.

I have full confidence in the safety of the school. My daughter went back to school in June, and staff and students maintained social distancing measures better than I have seen at most restaurants, grocery stores, and even walking trails. To allow students to stay at home and expect to be adequately taught via online learning is not feasible.

The following are my concerns:

1) Part-time or one-time attendance

Some parents are considering sending their child in for a day by September 30 to satisfy the per-head funding deadline and to secure their spot in FRIMM but have no intention of attending school full-time or will not be sending their child to school after September. This is an abuse of the system.

Some are considering attending part-time regularly or sporadically.

Per Adrian Dix, BC Minister of Health, COVID-19 will be around until at least 2022. Will these families abuse the system in Grade 1 FRIMM as well, meaning their child will not have had full-time French instruction in two years?

With long waiting lists, many caregivers will be very frustrated that people are abusing the system. I, and many others on the waitlist, would be more than willing to take their spot.

This also puts more burden on the teachers as they will not know if or when there will be an extra student in class, or if those students will require additional instruction to catch up to the full-time students.

**Attendance expectations need to be clearly defined and if they are not satisfied, the student must withdraw from FRIMM.**

## 2) Online Learning

French is supposed to be used about 100% of the time in kindergarten. Most caregivers do not speak French and would be unable to provide French instruction at home. The purpose of French Immersion is to IMMERSE yourself in French. However, they believe they are allowed to hold their FRIMM spot without meeting the expectations of the FRIMM curriculum.

Some are expecting to do online learning (not Distance Education) but this puts significant stress on the teachers as they have to provide both in-class instruction and online learning. Teachers may spend many hours of their own time developing online lessons but the caregivers may not do any of it. I am sure this was the case in the spring and not only is it disheartening but a waste of their valuable time and resources.

In the event of illness, I do not expect the teachers to provide online/supplemental learning. Pre-COVID, if my child was sick or absent for an extended period of time, there was no work provided by the teacher. This was expected by all caregivers; I do not believe it should change with COVID.

**Funding could be better used for programs for those with special needs, or those who do not have access to online learning.**

If parents do not wish to send their child back to school in September, it may be right for their family, but they are not immersing them in the language they are being taught. Therefore, they should not be in French Immersion. These families have **the ability to re-apply for the early French Immersion program in Grade 1 should they feel more comfortable**, and safe, then. With COVID not going away anytime soon, it is unlikely the families will find anything in the coming year to be safe enough for their liking.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Myra James

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andrew](#)  
**Subject:** Special Meeting Aug 24 - Parent Submission  
**Date:** Thursday, August 20, 2020 9:57:10 AM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Dear Mr. Porter,

I am writing because I am deeply concerned about the Board of Education's proposed plan for a return to school this September. I am a parent of three children who will be attending three schools, and that number multiplies when you include that I share parenting with my ex-husband and his family, which also includes three children in two schools and a daycare facility. In total, we have six children in our immediate family bubble, not including the children in his partner's ex's family that she shares custody with - which would bring the total to eight children in three school districts. If each child in our immediate families has a cohort of 60 at school, we are looking at 360 children and their families that we are expected to expose ourselves to on a daily unprotected basis. That number grows exponentially with each sibling, their school cohort, their parent(s) and extended family members in those children's family groups.

British Columbia is already seeing a huge increase in Covid-19 cases driven by young people gathering in large groups indoors for a single party here and there. How, exactly, does the Board of Education not expect those same results when they are cooping children up indoors in large groups on a daily basis? Entertaining a laissez-faire attitude when it comes to the health and wellness of children and their families is unacceptable, and will not help us flatten the curve.

My ex-husband, my partner, and I have all been desperately seeking answers on how to educate our children during this pandemic and have been considering homeschooling even though none of us are any kind of a qualified educator. We have no idea or direction on how to provide homeschooling for my children in grades 5, 6, and 7 as none is given, but we feel like we have no other reasonable option. All of the self-learning or distance learning programs have waitlists that are growing to thousands of parents long, leaving us no hope of finding assistance.

Please - PLEASE - give parents the **option** of keeping up with a distance learning/online classroom option similar to what we had earlier in the spring. Don't force us to send our children into their physical classrooms in September, and don't force us to possibly damage our children's futures by forcing unqualified parents to do it themselves. We need to see options and flexibility if we are going to find hope and fight our way out of this pandemic.

Kindly,

Natalie Erikson  
[REDACTED]



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Written Submission for Special Board Meeting  
**Date:** Thursday, August 20, 2020 4:10:47 PM

---

**CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.**

---

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing as concerned parents of two students in school district 61. The current proposed back to school plan with all students returning to the classroom in elementary learning pods of 60 students has made us anxious and disappointed. For the last six months, we have been told by provincial and federal leaders to keep our social bubbles small, protect the vulnerable and avoid the 3C's: closed spaces, close contact and crowded places. The back to school plan is in direct contradiction to these basic principles to reduce disease spread. We understand that in the majority of elementary school age children, COVID-19 presents as a mild illness and that contact tracing in the proposed learning pods will limit widespread illness. We also understand that nothing can truly replace the learning and social opportunities provided by in-school education and that in-class learning for many students is an absolute essential: it provides a safe space, child care, meals, etc. However, for some students and families, home learning is a necessity for this academic year, in order to reduce spread to vulnerable individuals who are likely to experience severe or fatal COVID-19 infections. These include children with immunodeficiency or other at risk conditions, and children from households with vulnerable adults.

We are just such a family and we do not feel safe sending our children back to in-school learning under the current plan for the 2020-2021 academic year. We have been most disappointed that no concern has been shown for this vulnerable population, for whom contact tracing might not be enough in the event of a school exposure. Without an online option provided by the school, we appear to have no choice but to withdraw our children from their beloved school, knowing that they may not be able to return to the same school in the following academic year. Children with personal illness, or with ill parents, who face the stress and challenges that come with this, should not be forced to decide between losing their spot at the school where they have become comfortable and developed friendships or exposing themselves and their family members to COVID-19 infection.

Please strongly consider providing an online learning option for vulnerable students and families through their schools. We do not want our children to suffer from an educational standpoint, but it is our duty as parents to protect their health first and foremost. As an alternative, but less desirable option, allow these families to register as home learners for the 2020-2021 academic year, with a guaranteed ability to return to in-class learning at the same school for the following academic year. Both options would remove vulnerable kids from the classroom and also allow smaller class sizes/learning pods.

In our opinion, in fact, all families who have the ability to participate in online learning or home schooling should be provided this choice. In these unprecedented times, nobody should be forced to decide between sending their children to school when it falls outside of their personal health risk tolerance or risk losing their spot at their child's school. All families who are willing and able to educate their children at home should be allowed to do so without risk to their child's future access to their school. This option would allow for even smaller class sizes/learning pods and further reduce the risk of COVID-19 infections at schools.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Phil O'Shea and Carolyn Benson

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Addendum to earlier written submission  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 9:30:33 AM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I am writing because I am very concerned about the back to school plans for this September.

What concerns me most is the insistence on putting the kids back into the classrooms *without*, apparently, a reasonable alternative or a communicated backup plan. While we, on the Island, have been very lucky, and our COVID-19 caseload has so far been low, it *is* ticking up right now. And this has all been WITHOUT having our kids (surely the least hygienically-minded demographic) all crammed into to same indoor spaces. I think the idea of dividing in cohorts is a good one, but these cohorts are too large, even if we assume that their *actual* size is the same as the *stated* size. For every child a family has in class, an additional cohort worth of kids is effectively added to *their* bubble, which is only a step away from *every other child in each of those cohorts*. So, yes, let's limit contact chains with cohorts, but they need to be smaller!

Moreover, should we decide to NOT send our child back to the classroom, she will lose her placement in her French Immersion class. I don't understand how a plan that makes us choose between health (personal and communal) and our child's education can be a good one. Under the circumstances, shouldn't we all be safer if everyone feels free to, and comfortable with, leaving the classroom when pandemic-related circumstances start turning sour?

Since outdoor transmission is so much more difficult than indoor, shouldn't we a) spend as much learning time outdoors as possible; and b) make the indoors as much like the outdoors as possible? Improved ventilation (possibly classroom-discrete) would go a long way to help! Has the school board considered something like a heat recovery ventilator for each classroom to exchange the air as often as possible?

Lastly (and I understand this is more of a ministry thing), WE NEED MORE FUNDING. More staff, so that cohort sizes can be better managed. More resources for better out-of-class options. More money for infrastructure to keep the children and staff in the schools safe! I understand having to spend more money always sucks, but it's going to cost us a whole lot more if we don't manage viral transmission effectively in our schools, given just how many people it will IMMEDIATELY effect if we all get this wrong.

Thank you,

Philip Robinson

**BY EMAIL**

August 20, 2020

Greater Victoria School District No. 61  
556 Boleskine Road  
Victoria, BC V8Z 1E8  
**Attention: Board of Education**

Dear Trustees:

**Re: Request for School-Connected Distributed Learning in Greater Victoria School District No. 61 (“SD61”)**

We are writing to seek a learning option for our children that involves distributed learning without being required to de-enrol from our neighbourhood school.

Our neighbourhood elementary school is the centre of our family’s community. However, sending our children to school in September will increase the likelihood that COVID-19 will be introduced to members of our family that have higher health risks. In short, we are being asked to choose between withdrawing from our community and accepting increased health risks for our family. After a summer of “fewer faces, bigger spaces”, this is a difficult – and seemingly unnecessary – choice for our family.

The BC education system is exceptional in many ways. However, COVID-19 is a respiratory-transmitted virus, and – based on our observations and experience – most classrooms have neither the size nor high-quality ventilation systems to accommodate physical distancing and minimize the risk of transmission in classrooms with full class sizes. At a time when it is anticipated that COVID-19 cases will increase, it appears that SD61 is headed for a Fall/Winter of “more faces in smaller spaces”. This is in stark contrast to BC’s post-secondary institutions, which are having nearly entirely distributed learning.

We understand the importance of brick-and-mortar education, and the need to offer in-person education in September. However, sending our children to school poses health risks to our family. We are in the midst of a pandemic, and believe SD61 ought to acknowledge that distributed learning is appropriate for some children and families during this time. We know our specific circumstances, and feel that we are in the best position to determine what is best for our children. While the in-person model may be best for many – or even most – families, numerous families may be unnecessarily subjected to health risks unless SD61 offers another learning delivery model in September.

As stated above, we seek some form of option(s) that recognizes the reality of the choices that families are facing. Ideally, SD61 would offer some form of school-based distributed learning or hub system – with an option to return to in-person class in January. However, even if SD61 only takes the small step of guaranteeing that our children will be let back into their catchment school

next year, it would alleviate some of the pressure that we are currently facing. Further, in relation to potential delivery models, we observe the following:

- It should be possible to realize efficiencies in a distributed learning model from a staffing perspective. There is an opportunity for some form of SD61-wide coordination for learning materials (*i.e.* recorded teaching videos for asymmetric learning, centralized lesson plans, grade level worksheets, etc.) and/or leveraging existing distributed learning materials (*i.e.* within SD61, from SIDES, etc.) that would materially decrease the amount of work required to deliver distributed learning on a per student basis. Further, presuming that some teachers are seeking workplace accommodations due to their personal health factors, those teachers (and others who are uncomfortable in a classroom setting) could presumably be accommodated by having them work in the distributed learning environment.
- A distributed learning option would likely result in smaller class sizes and fewer people in schools – which would make schools safer.
- If there is a change in school phases that limits in-class learning, an operational distributed learning system will put SD61 in a better position to continue student learning.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our perspective.

Sincerely,

Ross and Lisa Alexander

Ryan and Kathy Graham  
[REDACTED]  
Victoria, BC V8Z 6J4

Greater Victoria School District No. 61  
Board of Education of School District No. 61  
56 Boleskine Road  
Victoria, BC V8Z 1E8

Dear Members of School District No. 61 Board of Education:

**Re: Support of Online Learning Hub**

We write this letter in support of the motion *"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 hub option for families which allows students to remain connected to their school community through the COVID 19 pandemic."*

We have two children in School District 61. One in grade 10 at Spectrum Community High School and one in grade 6 at Glanford Middle School. We have serious concerns over the return to school as they currently stand:

- One of our children has asthma and there are other health issues with other family members in our household that could be potentially devastating if COVID-19 were contracted and brought in
- Younger students generally do not have the self discipline to social distance or accommodate the wearing of masks in a group setting whether it be in the classroom, travelling the hallways or playing outdoors. Most children tend to "forget" the importance of these and consistently remove masks, lower them, play with them until they fall off and stay close to their friends regardless of rules.
- Staff will be spending too much time monitoring and correcting the students adherence to the rules that there will be little time left for proper education.
- Staff will be put in a position that compromises their health and safety as students choose to not follow the rules whether willingly, or in the case of younger kids, by sheer forgetfulness. PPE equipment is not realistic in many situations where things happen without warning.
- Parents will still send their ill children to school as a care opportunity when needed. Historically, parents who require care have always sent their sick kids to school if they feel there are no more options, we do not see the pandemic changing this. This happened in the spring before schools were shut down and it will continue to happen. With older kids attending school is still an opportunity to socialize, bring up their grades before graduation and they tend to feel immortal often believing that there is nothing wrong with them and it pushes them to attend when they shouldn't.
- Cohorts do not feel any different than a standard class with staggered breaks (maybe). Students may only socialize with their cohorts under direct supervision but it is not realistic to think that a situation will not present where they have to inter-mingle. We know it is not the school districts responsibility to monitor outside school hours but the reality is many older students are not following social distancing rules as they are and we only have to look at the increasing case numbers and the daily news to see this. For parents or students to make the

decision to not enforce social distancing at home is a choice but this choice affects others when they are forcibly put together on a daily basis.

- March to June worked. If online teaching worked with little planning time, little funding and on the part of some teachers, students and parents, little technological know how, than it can work for the fall. We would rather a late start to school with the option of online learning provided than being forced to either compromise health, homeschool with no credits towards graduation or hoping to enroll in a distance learning school which with todays demands are all full. Where does that put us? Teachers can provide this type of schooling with all the technological options out there. If middle and highschool had an online option it could open up space in those schools to temporarily house elementary kids that need full time schooling providing more distancing options. Many teachers did an outstanding job in the short time they had to make education still viable and engaging for all ages. Let them continue to do so.

We understand that the district is working within budget, policy and provincial directive constraints but now is the time to push back so we can do what is right for our children and community. Please vote in favour of the above motion so we can put the decisions back where they belong, with the students and staff that are being affected.

Thank you

Ryan and Kathy Graham

Hello Andree,

Hope you and your family are safe and well.

My name is Saeed Vafaei. As a father of two boys who are attending grade one and K at EMJKS I have the following questions. I am extremely nervous about sending my sons to schools this coming September 2020 and I believe we should have online, remote learning for our children so they are safe until we have vaccine or things sorted out later this year.

- **How does mandatory masking work in a 3/4 split class? How you teach 5 year-old boy to wear a mask for 6 hours, it is impossible?**
- **Why is it only up to parents to screen their children?**
- **Why will elementary school students only need to be one metre apart and not two? And how would you manage that???**
- **What are the protocols for using shared equipment like musical instruments or physical education equipment?**
- **If there is an outbreak, does the whole class or the whole school have to quarantine?**
- **With existing contractual limits to teacher supervision time, how will schools manage all the extra supervision required before, during and after school?**
- **What's the plan for the excess students who don't fit in the classroom as per distancing requirements?**
- **How will schools manage the time it takes for everyone to wash their hands?**
- **How do you maintain social circles/bubbles of 10 people if kids have cohorts?**

Again, we need remote learning set up for our children until we are safe and this pandemic ends.

Thanks, and please share my concerns,

Saeed Vafaei

August 19 2020

Dear SD61 Trustees,

Thank you very much for holding this Special Board Meeting and for considering the significant concerns of families and other stakeholders with the Ministry of Education's 'Return to School Plan'.

I am asking for some flexibility from the district for the many different challenges that families are facing during this pandemic. There is no one size fits all. There are many ways to approach this. I am also asking for schools to be supported with what they need for increased outdoor learning for their students.

Other provinces –Alberta (Edmonton and Calgary will have online learning hubs with flexible entry and exit points) and Ontario (Toronto has an online option) have provided options for parents. Districts are hiring teachers with Ministry funding or using teachers that are immune compromised themselves to run these hubs. I just heard this morning that more locally the Comox Valley SD71 Trustees have voted to allow children to hold their seats in their schools if families decide to homeschool or DL. I know that the Richmond School District Trustees have written a letter to the Ministry of Education asking for flexibility as well as for other supports.

Also, I am asking the district to ask the Ministry for money to support all schools with outdoor learning. This will be help support all students returning to school in their learning this year. Dr. Henry has said that learning should be outdoors as much as possible but schools will need help with this. There are supplies and gear needed to get this running quickly in schools (rain gear, tarps, sit-upons, clipboards, outdoor canopies, training in outdoor education for teachers etc.) My child is at a school with an active PAC and we could probably mobilize quickly to gather some basics for our teachers but I know that this is not the case at many schools in the district and province.

I feel frustrated that the only options for families who don't have a immune compromised child that qualifies for supports are to attend in person, withdraw from school and enrol in distance learning or register in homeschooling. There are also potential barriers for families in getting a doctor's note (lack of family doctor, financial cost of a note etc.) In addition, there are many different situations with families I know whose parent(s) are immune compromised or whose grandparents or other close relatives that assist with childcare are immune compromised. In our family, on both sides, we have grandparents in our bubble that are in their 70s and 80s. We will be able to make this work by keeping a distance from grandparents or meeting outside but it's not preferable. I know that some families would happily enrol in distance learning or register in homeschooling but fear losing their spot in French Immersion as well as a connection to their schools. I'm wondering if at the district level it would be possible to amend the enrolment priorities for families choosing to homeschool or enrol in distributed learning programs during the pandemic. This would alleviate some stress as they would have more of a chance to return to their school in the 2021-2022 school year.



Dr. Henry's mantra has been built on kindness and compassion and that we don't necessarily know everyone's personal circumstances and stresses. I know that there are many concerns about people's mental health during this challenging time. An approach that would align with this will require more flexibility and supports from schools, districts and the Ministry of Education. I know that there are many ways that district and the Ministry of Education can be supportive and flexible with families during this pandemic that is 'not here forever but it is here for now'.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and for seeking more insight from families.

Sincerely,

Sara Robinson

August 19, 2020

To the members of the Greater Victoria Board of Education,

We applaud the motion of School District 61 and whole heartily support the development of optional online learning hubs. A learning hub strategy provides a viable educational option for families like ours that wish and need to keep their “Bubble” small.

It is evident from other jurisdictions that the educational process will be substantially impacted as individuals in the classroom cohorts become exposed. Each exposure will result in the full cohort including its teachers to self isolate therefore online education strategies should be viewed as a critical enabler for maintaining a reliable education system. Members within our school / provincial communities are depending on education options that better protect their families.

Government took swift steps to force every business in the province to alter their delivery approaches to combat Covid and Government needs to hold themselves to that same bar by delivering educational options that help society combat and minimize the impacts of Covid.

Sincerely,

Sarah Jefferies and Guy Weeks

Dear Board of Education, Educators, Education Administrators, Parents and members of the public.

Thank you for the opportunity to send in a presentation to support an online learning hub option.

As a public servant working in facilities for the largest social sector ministry in BC, I fully appreciate how difficult it is to adapt physical spaces and social programs during COVID. I am not envious of the position of the school district or the Ministry of Education. But I am also not confident in the plan that has been presented to “bubble” students and resume studies as if there is no threat to the health of the students, teachers and administrators.

I am the parent of grade 3 and grade 6 French immersion student. Or now as I like to think of myself, the mother in a bubble of 120 kids in 2 different schools, a baseball bubble mom, and an out of school care mom with potential exposure to 1,000+ kids and their bubbles daily. Seems alarmingly similar to pre-COVID exposure and a far stretch from a small group.

**“Crowded indoor gatherings are a major source of transmission.  
Remember to keep your groups small, only spend time with people you  
know, and always stay home when feeling ill”.**

Government of British Columbia August 20<sup>th</sup> Facebook

**“Fewer faces, bigger spaces” – Dr. Bonnie Henry, May 7<sup>th</sup>** Global News

These statements and many others from the Government of British Columbia are at direct odds with the school reopening plans. Groups of 60 or 120 are not small. They do not allow for fewer faces in bigger spaces. There will be the same number of faces in the same spaces as pre-COVID.

This is an opportunity for SD61 and the Ministry of Education to provide learning options to the parents, and children of Victoria. As a French Immersion parent its heartbreaking to have to make the decision to remove my children from the schools, friends and language they have come to associate with education. With no SD61 distance learning programs available in French I am faced with sending my children into educational institutions at odds with the direction of the BC Government and my own personal beliefs, or removing them from their friends, language and everything they associate with learning.

I am trying very hard as a parent, citizen of BC, and public servant to “do my part” as I fully expect each and every one of us to be part of the solution. I urge the Ministry of Education and SD61 to “do your part” by adapting to the current situation and changing the educational options available to include full funding and flexibility to create an online learning hub option for families which allows students to remain connected to their school community through the COVID 19 pandemic.

Thank you

Sarah Patterson



Government of British Columbia

43 mins · 🌐

...

COVID-19 update: 80 new cases for a total of 4,825 cases in BC. Crowded indoor gatherings are a major source of transmission. Remember to keep your groups small, only spend time with people you know, and always stay home when feeling ill: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/22913>

# COVID-19 Update

[gov.bc.ca/covid19](https://gov.bc.ca/covid19)



NEWS

May 7 2020 8:10pm

🕒 02:33



‘Few faces in big spaces’: Dr. Bonnie Henry on B.C.’s restart plan and slowly moving into phase two

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** submission for board of education to be coming.  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 18, 2020 11:45:13 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

I wanted to let you know I plan to send a written submission as to the need for a learning hub for families connected to the district. In brief, I am a mid 40's single parent to a soon to be K student 20-21 and registered for Tillicum. I am at very high risk if exposed to CoVid. My alternate care provider, my elderly parents(69 and 74) who my daughter spends a few days a week with are also at very high risk. This is her bubble. This is her circle of support. A Covid19 exposure means her entire world may come crashing down. Many families are like me, or have a sibling with immune compromise. My daughter has several close friends who will also be at the school, and possibly her class. Distance won't work because I work, sometimes from home, but still need to work to pay our bills. If the numbers continue to rise, I would live her connected to her classmates, but it will need to be from home until medical advances happen. If the numbers stay low, masked and sanitizer in her pocket, she may come part time to school if I can see a safe way to do so for the time being. We need alternatives that are safe and allow her to be connected to her community school. I would be over the moon if somehow each school got a home learning bridge teacher to support the students that are working from home for safety or who need to self isolate due to exposure or who are compromised, or who may have covid symptoms. There are so many reasons to do so. I actually think I have explained a reason to have a distance hub connected to the schools, but if I am able will elaborate before Thursday.

Shannon Gallie  
Tillicum School Parent (a large school of working families)

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Online Learning  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 10:42:54 AM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

I am in full support of kids learning from their homes. I don't understand why anyone would want to risk COVID19 and packing the schools full of children could be dangerous. I know it will be a challenge to teach our kids at home but I don't support a mandatory return to school. We should have a choice in this pandemic.

With some kids learning from home, that will mean smaller class sizes and maybe some classes could be combined which would free up some teachers to do online learning. My child is scared to go back to school, please listen to us and give us the option to keep our kids home and safe.

Susan Xie

Greater Victoria School District No. 61  
556 Boleskine Road,  
Victoria, BC V8Z 1E8

August 20, 2020

To whom it may concern,

I submit to The Board of Education of School District No 61 that a request be made to the Ministry of Education that an Online Learning Hub should be fully funded and implemented without delay. Creating an Online Learning Hub has multiple wins with few downsides. It would allow schools the flexibility needed to educate our children as we face these difficult times.

COVID-19 is with us for the foreseeable future. The risks of severe cases are higher for some vulnerable sectors of our community. Many of the long term effects are yet unknown especially those for children. Parents are worried about their children, their families and the community at large. Many of parents' concerns could be at least partially alleviated with access to an online learning hub.

Win #1. Children in circumstances that make it risky to be in a classroom. For those children in our community who are immune-compromised, living in a household with an elderly, ill and/or immune-compromised individual, or in frequent contact with an elderly, ill and/or immune-compromised, a learning hub would give them the learning tools that would allow them to effectively learn from home. An Online Learning Hub means they don't have to choose between an education and the health of loved ones. Imagine the guilt a child would feel if they brought home COVID and infected their grandfather who is battling stage four cancer. The alternative of not seeing a grandfather that may only have weeks to live is equally devastating.

Win #2. Smaller class sizes. Since a Learning Hub would give parents the choice of their kids learning from home, there would less children physically present in the classroom. Therefore the children in the school have more room to effectively physically distance. We've been told for months that the #1 way of preventing the spread of COVID-19 is distance. This also creates a safer work environment for our teachers.

Win #3. An Online Learning Hub would provide a resource for those students that are temporarily not at school. When they are sick for example. One of the reasons kids are sent to school when they are still sick is the fear of missing too much, falling behind and never catching up. With the learning resources available, after the first couple of days of being sick in bed, they can return to their school work at home until their symptoms are completely alleviated as requested by Dr Henry. It would also give the opportunity to children to occasionally self-isolate to see relatives for special occasions. For instance, my son's grandfather and great-aunt lives in the Okanagan, I don't want nearly a year to go by before he can safely see these important family members (quite frankly, my 92-year old aunt may not have a year). However, with a

learning hub available, we could self-isolate before a Christmas or Easter visit to ensure that we are not risking their lives.

Win #4. Students can remain in their chosen school and program. While Distributed Learning is possible for some students many are in specialized music, art, science and language programs such as French Immersion. Withdrawing from the school in order to enroll in distributed learning often means giving up these programs.

Win #5. There's less pressure in the Distributed Learning schools to increase their capacity, which for one or even two years, could be impractical.

Win #6. By creating an Online Learning Hub now, you'll have the infrastructure in place if a class, cohort or school has to quarantine/close due to a positive COVID-19 exposure.

Win #7. An existing Online Learning Hub would also provide a seamless transition if at any point BC needs to move to any other stage within The Five Stage Framework for K-12 Education as required by the Ministry.

Lose. It would be irresponsible not to point out the big lose in this. I want to recognize that the brunt of the additional work will fall on the shoulders of the teachers. Accommodations, training and preparation time would have to be given to teachers to be able to execute an Online Learning Hub.

I also want to ask those parents for which the Online Learning Hub didn't work in the spring to keep in an open mind. It was an emergency situation in the spring. For the most part at the elementary level, the learning was geared to keep the children engaged but didn't count as the teachers were averaging the first and second term reports. There were some great hubs available but there were some that fell short. Give the system a chance when it counts.

In closing, we are in the midst of a pandemic, there is no best solution. However, an Online Learning Hub can provide the flexibility to all students, regardless of their situation, to adapt to the current health crisis.

Yours truly,

Suzi Smart and Michael Evans

Concerned parents of Arbutus Global Middle School student



Attn: SD61 Board of Trustees

Submission

Re: Reopening of Schools

I would like to thank the board for holding this special board meeting, and allowing the opportunity to provide input and express opinion. It is always important to hear from stakeholders and the public, but during these times it is crucial.

I am a mother of two children, aged 13 and 11, due to enter Grades 8 and 6, respectively, in September at Monterey Middle School. I would like to take a moment to explain COVID-19 from our family's perspective.

In 2010 I was diagnosed with Common Variable Immunodeficiency Disease (CVID), a primary immunodeficiency, or genetic disease of the immune system, where my body lacks the ability to produce B-cells. Without a properly functioning immune system, I lack the ability to fight infection (viral, bacterial or fungal). The necessary handwashing and precautions now taken, were a part of my everyday life pre-COVID. Needless to say, we are taking COVID-19 very seriously. My family of five have been isolating throughout the pandemic.

My husband and I were disappointed to hear what little measures were being taken by the Ministry to ensure a safe return to school. We had hoped that our children, who have had almost no social interaction since before March Break, would be able to return in some fashion. However, putting the onus on children to wear masks and wash hands is not only ambitious but unrealistic. "Cohorts" of 60-120 students terrifies us, where our bubble of 5 will all of the sudden be open to hundreds of people (the students in both of their cohorts, their families and everyone they interact with).

Options must be made available, and the schools need to be flexible for families. My husband and I both work full-time (from home at the moment), but school should not be day care. We would like the option for our children to learn in smaller groups (5-10) part-time and then continue online safely at home. We would also request voluntary, school-assisted learning should families, such as ours, be forced to opt-out for health reasons.

For the moment, on advice from my treating specialists, we are planning to keep our children out of the physical school environment until at least until the beginning of October. We are working with Monterey to see how their learning can be accommodated, but have no plans in place as of yet. We remain hopeful.

I hope that you will all take my family's concerns seriously, as there are many other families living in Victoria with chronic illness. We all need to work together to find a way to live through COVID-19, which may be for quite some time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Whitney Goulstone", enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Whitney Goulstone

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering several lines of text.A solid black rectangular redaction box covering a single line of text.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Special Board Meeting  
**Date:** Monday, August 24, 2020 8:42:20 AM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Our family is in favour of the motion put forward:

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 hub option for families which allows students to remain connected to their school community through the COVID 19 pandemic."

Gina Zak (concerned parent)

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Board meeting on Monday  
**Date:** Saturday, August 22, 2020 2:16:32 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Good Afternoon Ms. Porter,

I have recently learned of the board meeting on Monday. I see that I have missed the deadline to submit a written statement but I am writing to you today to express my concerns as a parent and educator in hopes that they may be shared with our decision makers.

The current back to school plan, does not allow for proper physical distancing to be created. In June, I was able to fit 6 students in my classroom and respect 2 metre quadrants for each student. In order to accommodate 24 students, I will not be able to ensure spacing that is much wider than one foot of distance between students. As a parent, I did not send my children to school in June, but we have spent time this summer learning how to wear a mask in indoor public spaces, and how to play with other children while distanced. We all know that the new normal that we have adjusted to during the past few months is here to stay for a while. It is important that all families are able to access public education in a manner that is safe for them. It is important that our district finds a plan that is safe and sustainable. One that does not have everyone reverting to complete online learning if and when our numbers rise. I know we are smarter than that.

I urge our district to put pressure on the Ministry of Education to fund a hub model that will support families who need to keep their children home this year. This option will also support teachers who are not able to return to work if the current plan is carried forth. Additional benefits will be felt at the school level because it will enable class sizes to remain small and distanced.

I have read a few articles that outline the model being used by the Calgary school board and feel that this model is one that could work well in our district.

Thank you for reading my concerns. I would be so appreciative if they could be shared with our trustees on Monday's meeting.

Best Regards,

Amy Collins-Emery  
Parent of Frank Hobbs students, and teacher at Cedar Hill Middle School

**Dr. Adam M. Gunn**  
**B.Sc., M.D., F.R.C.P.C.**  
**Child, Adolescent, & Adult Psychiatrist**  
**265 – 3066 Shelbourne Street**  
**Victoria, B.C. V8R 6T9**

August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020

Superintendent Shelley Green  
& Board Members  
School District No. 61  
Victoria, BC

Dear Superintendent Green and Board Members,

First, I would like to offer my personal thanks and congratulations for taking the courageous and wise position of advocating for safer educational options for the children of Greater Victoria during this Coronavirus pandemic. These are historic and the most challenging of times, as well as a time of the deepest level of needs of children in several generations. As a father, a child, adolescent, and adult psychiatrist, and also a physician with a degree in biology and microbiology, I feel I have an informed opinion to contribute.

**THE CONCERN**

I am very clear that the current B.C. plan for mandatory and full in-person reopening of schools this fall during the pandemic is without meaningful public health precautions and is risky and ultimately unsafe for our children, our families, and our communities. The current plan for full cramped classrooms (often with limited ventilation) does not allow for physical distancing. Nor does it significantly encourage masking in the classroom, or allow for remote learning options.

**CURRENT BC & LOCAL RATES IN CHILDREN & ADULTS**

Note that evidence is accumulating that children can contact and transmit SARS-Cov-2 at higher rates than previously thought, and for age 10 and older likely at similar rates as adults. Also please note that rates of child infections in B.C. are increasing, and that many children have likely gone undiagnosed and untested. In the past 2 weeks the BCCDC confirmed 90 more children as testing positive (34 new cases under age 10 and 56 new cases between ages 10 and 19), the highest weekly rates in BC children for since the pandemic began and increasing. And currently the percentage of children among BC COVID-19 positive tests has more than doubled since June 1<sup>st</sup> - from 3% to now 7%. And all this while they have been out of school, prior to the planned fall return. Since the end of the school year the number of children in BC with confirmed COVID-19 by testing has almost tripled from 118 cases as of June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020, to a total of 335 cases in children as of today. In the last 8 days, Lower Vancouver Island (i.e. largely the Greater Victoria area) has started to surge with 8 new and confirmed COVID-19 cases, with new reports on an almost daily basis, whereas earlier this summer we had gone 2 months without a confirmed positive case. Today the Province reported 90 new confirmed cases of COVID-19, one of the highest daily rates of the entire pandemic, 2 new deaths, and active cases of COVID-19 set a new record of 824 in BC. (All case numbers from the BCCDC.) Of course, due to limited testing and high levels of asymptomatic carriers, we know that the true numbers of SARS-Cov-2 infection are much higher, often estimated to be 8 to 10 times higher or more. In other words, COVID-19 rates are now peaking and rising at the highest levels of the pandemic, rates in children have nearly tripled over the summer holidays and are increasing rapidly, and since transmission is facilitated

by close contact indoors, we face a very strong risk of an explosion in COVID-19 rates in both children and adults this September.

### **SCHOOL REOPENING EXPERIENCE IN OTHER COUNTRIES & THE RISKS IN BC**

School reopening outbreaks were a large contributor to Israel's massive second wave, as well as in other jurisdictions. In Israel new infection rates were down to double digits for the entire country in the days prior to school re-opening and it was felt Israel had successfully defeated COVID. But within days of the school re-openings hundreds of students and teachers in Israel were testing positive for COVID-19. In May Israel had one of the lowest new infection rates in the world, but then the school reopenings contributed to a second wave peaking at 1,500 to 2,000 new cases a day in recent weeks.

While there are conflicting studies claiming that mass school reopenings have not led to increased infection rates and are "safe", on close reading these all have major methodological errors or else cannot be generalized to the BC plan as currently proposed. Studies from China include universal masking and physical distancing and the reliability of the infection rates quoted must be questioned due to government interference with medical reporting. A much-touted study from Australia is massively flawed as almost half their data is from the period of when schools were closed on March 22<sup>nd</sup> and after several weeks prior of physical distancing and plummeting attendance rates in the previous weeks. So of course the school infection rates collected until May 1<sup>st</sup> will skew falsely low since there were almost no children actually in schools for the final 6 weeks of the study and physical distancing had been in place for 2 weeks prior. When you look at the actual raw Australian data it is pretty obvious that the infection rates within school settings was much higher in the weeks prior to physical distancing and the switch to mostly remote learning. Denmark has been touted as successfully reopening schools late this spring, but their public health precautions were extensive and totally different from the minimal measures being proposed here in B.C. In Denmark they had a staggered reopening according to age, first in elementary school, and then gradually in middle school and high school ages over the following month. In the schools themselves, classes were divided into smaller groups of 6 to 10 students, strict physical distancing of 6.5 feet was observed, student hand washing was required every 2 hours, and schools often had shorter hours or were closed on more days.

Israel's school public health requirements were (and remain) actually more stringent than what is being proposed here in B.C. - however, because of overcrowded classrooms and a heat wave when masking requirements were briefly waived, physical distancing and masking were not implemented in Israeli schools for a period in late May, and the second wave ensued within days. So the actual public health reality in Israeli schools in late May is very close to the approach being proposed for BC schools for September (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/04/world/middleeast/coronavirus-israel-schools-reopen.html>). In matter of fact, what's being proposed here at the level of government public health requirements for the schools is one of the least stringent of any other jurisdiction that I can find, outside of the US. Finally, oddly in recent weeks public health precautions on buses in B.C. are now greater than those proposed for schools, and school public health recommendations for children are dramatically less than the WorkSafe BC legal requirements for all other public and private institutions.

When other jurisdictions in the world continue to recommend strict physical distancing in schools to prevent Coronavirus transmission, why is B.C. not doing so? When other jurisdictions are combining in-person and remote learning and reducing class numbers to as low as 6 to 10 students, why is BC not doing so? When countries such as South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, China, and others successfully teach children to mask consistently in school, why is BC not attempting to do so? (Experienced parents, mental health clinicians, and educators know that most children will readily internalize safety behaviours when the supervising adults are firm, kind, and give consistent reminders.) And how can we consider organizing children into cohorts of 60 to 120 children (and thus potentially add thousands of new family contacts) without a physical

distancing requirement in order to satisfy epidemiological purposes, but which flies in the face of the physical distancing and very small social bubbles that have been required of all of us for months to attempt to keep Coronavirus transmission rates low?

I, as well as many other physicians and parents, am greatly concerned that the Province's current return to school proposal runs totally counter to the public health approaches we have been instructed on and utilized since the spring, and the World Health Organization's 3-C's recommendations of avoiding crowded places, close-contact settings, and confined and enclosed spaces.

### **ONLINE LEARNING HUB MODEL SUPPORT**

I strongly support SD61's proposal to pursue an online learning hub option during the pandemic, as an alternative to the limited correspondence and in-person school models. I note that surveys in recent weeks report that as many as 35-50% percent of BC parents may not send their children to school this fall or are undecided. This will add to what will be a high absenteeism rate with any children that experience even mild viral cold or flu symptoms that could be COVID-19 being required to quarantine at home for 14 days. Currently there is no realistic plan to deal with the absenteeism issue and allow for children out of school, whether temporarily or for the year, to catch up and successfully achieve curriculum requirements. Whereas an online hub option would allow these children to complete their schooling. If options such as online learning hubs are not provided, the drop in enrolment as students switch to correspondence school or private options will lead to a loss of funding for school districts and schools, whereas online learning hubs could prevent this. As an experienced professional, I am greatly concerned about the grave risk to children's mental health with the current highly limited and unsafe options of in-person schooling or correspondence school. While parents' and children's concerns have been unwisely dismissed as "anxiety" and thus by implication distorted and unrealistic, psychiatrists differentiate between anxiety and fear, with fear being due to true dangers. And the dangers here are grave. (<https://www.vancouverite.com/top-bc-childrens-hospital-psychiatrist-says-safety-more-important-than-school/>) As currently the only alternative to in-person schooling is correspondence school, forcing children to withdraw from their schools and peer groups will only further increase their stress of isolation during already isolated times. Most mental illnesses are triggered to a large degree by damaging effects on the brain of persistently excessive levels of the stress hormone cortisol. If we further add to children's stresses at this time of historic stresses on them and their families by not providing them a schooling option that they feel are safe, we put them at significant risk of increased mental illness. This includes an increased risk of suicide, which I must remind begins to peak at the high school ages of the mid to late teens. An online learning hub will at least partly address some of these risks and concerns. Further, online learning hubs would have the secondary effect of decreasing the number of students that remain enrolled in in-person classes, hopefully allowing for at least some physical distancing for the students that remain in school, and thus decreased transmission of the virus.

### **MIXED IN-PERSON & REMOTE LEARNING MODEL SUPPORT and PREVENTION OF SCHOOL OUTBREAKS**

However, as infection rates are now rapidly increasing, it is my deep hope that the school district will consider further measures for our children's safety : also proposing a mixed model for in-person students of half time remote learning and half time in-person learning. This would increase student, teacher, staff, safety by having half (or less with absenteeism) the usual number of students in class at any given time, as it will allow for having the space for physical distancing and prevent crowded classrooms. With less students under teachers' physical supervision at once, it will also allow for greater screening for symptoms, monitoring of hygiene and hand washing, and possibly more outdoor education. This combined with mandatory mask use both in the classroom and halls (<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/u-s-doctors-recommend-stricter-masking-for-students-than-canada-1.5071165>) would likely dramatically reduce transmission of the virus in schools, as shown by countries that have used these strategies

successfully in re-opening their schools (e.g. Denmark), versus the ones that have not (sadly, the USA, Israel, and others). This model would be the only one that includes public health measures that could actually prevent school outbreaks, to be differentiated from the current goals of at best early detection and containment of school outbreaks. Finally I am greatly concerned that presently there does not appear to be a school back-up plan to prepare for the possibility of the spread of the pandemic reaching severe levels as it has in the U.S., Mexico, South America, India, Russia, the Middle East, and previously Europe. To not have made preparations for this possibility strikes me as great hubris; having mixed remote/in-person and online hub models running would give schools options to respond to worse case scenarios.

### **POTENTIAL COSTS TO CHILDREN OF INACTION**

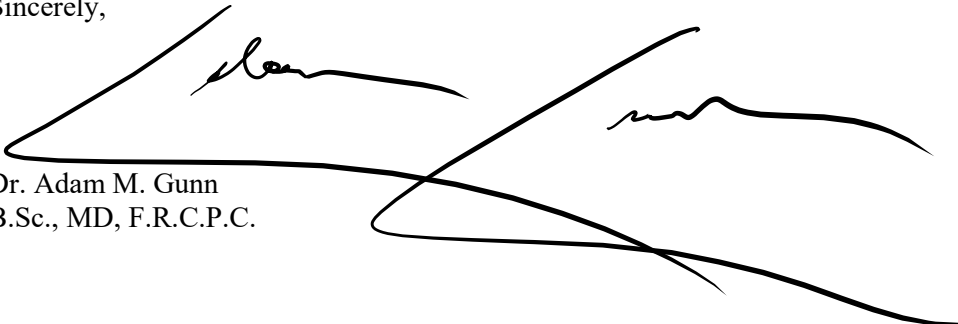
Otherwise without such safer educational models for students and their families, I believe that we stand at the precipice by providing ideal conditions for the spread and exponential growth of the pandemic with full-time in-person schooling this fall.

As someone with a dozen years of post-secondary education and who has saved for university for my children since their births, I deeply understand the importance of education to our society and civilization, but strongly feel that in the current situation of risk to life, safety must be put first. Firstly, there are risks of very serious medical conditions to children from COVID-19, including Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), that can lead to long-term organ damage (see the Public Health Alert from the Canadian Pediatric Society). But further, what are we if knowingly expose mass numbers of children to high transmission rates of an infectious pandemic that we are aware has a significant mortality risk for possibly them (estimated at about 0.2%) and even more so their family members? (A mortality risk between 0.2% to 3.6% for adults between 20 to 69 years of age, with increased risk with each decade of life.) Neither the children nor we should feel responsible for possible deaths due to our own denial or lack of foresight. But as mental health clinicians and most parents know, if there are tragic outcomes in their lives, children will unfairly blame themselves, as they will if they or their family members become ill or die from COVID-19 after contracting it from school.

As a psychiatrist with 25 years of experience working with a very wide range of patients suffering from impairments to their learning, I can tell you that over the long-term a lost year or two of education can be made up. But lost lives cannot be.

Again, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to your and the entire Board's great efforts and dedication in these weighty matters to our children's best interests, health, and education. I am happy to provide additional citations from the scientific research literature and media on request.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Gunn', is written over the printed name and extends across the bottom of the page.

Dr. Adam M. Gunn  
B.Sc., MD, F.R.C.P.C.



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Comments for the SD61 special board meeting  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 6:21:05 PM

---

**CAUTION:** External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

As a parent of a middle school student attending an SD61 school I have the following comments regarding the return to school plans:

- It is vital that in-person, full time schooling be available for students who require this for full support of their educational or social needs.
- However, it need not be a binary option between full time in-school attendance or distance learning or registered homeschooling, as has been presented by the Ministry of Education.
- There are many students who would benefit from some in-person schooling and some home-based or online learning, and would like this option to be available. I would personally welcome this option for my child.
- Some distance learning programs have this kind of structure, but are now limited in accessibility. Why not develop a similar model at the school neighbourhood level, after surveying families to assess demand in each area of the city?

- Smaller learning groups or cohort sizes should be the aim of school administrators for a number of reasons. Smaller learning groups will reduce the impact on families should a case of COVID-19 occur in a school. Fewer students and staff will need to be excluded from school, and the rest of the school can continue to function. 60 people per learning group is not an operational target; it is a cohort size maximum. Groups should be as small as operationally possible, ideally one class.

Smaller learning groups will also allow for more physical distancing in the classroom, to decrease the risk of transmission should an exposure occur in the school.

- Offering a hybrid model for those families that would like this option will decrease the overall number of students in school at any one time, allowing for smaller learning groups.

- Individualized learning is the current direction of the BC curriculum. How is a restrictive school structure that allows only two options for students and families consistent with a flexible, learner-focused curriculum and school experience? The Education system itself needs to be innovative, especially as it claims to be educating for innovation and innovators.

Thank you,

Sincerely,  
Dee Hoyano

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** Hybrid option  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 5:24:34 PM

---

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Dear Andree Porter,

My apologies this is late. If possible could there be three options for school in the fall-1) full class for those parents needing that, 2) hybrid class-like what was offered in June - smaller class size and two days and then cohort 2 goes on the other two days and then 3) those who choose to do full distance learning at home. My child has a heart defect so a smaller class size like option 2 and some home schooling would be ideal for his needs and his twin sister and still allow my husband and I to work by flexing our hours. Less exposure the better. I also feel having the kids in the hybrid class with other kids they know would be ideal as the social connections are so important. While I recognize this is a different way of teaching for our teachers and that this may be a barrier, it is doable. My team of nurses and clinicians and home care staff had to modify their practice in a two week timeframe in April and educate themselves on providing virtual care as well as in person care and they did it for the best interest of our patients. It was a new way of care and change was hard. I feel we need to ensure we provide education that is in the best interest of our children and safety for the school staff. I'm cognizant that we need to make our economy function however it should not be at the expense of our children who have the potential for a longer lifetime of living with complications post covid if they get it. I would also request that temperatures be taken at the school entrance every morning for students, teachers and staff.

I recognize this is asking for the world but I have to ask and hope.

Thank you for your consideration  
Sia

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Porter, Andree](#)  
**Subject:** letter in support of motion by the Board of Education;  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 3:55:40 PM

---

**CAUTION:** External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

---

Hello Greater Victoria Board of Education,

I am writing in full support of your motion to create an online learning hub option for those families who cannot or are unwilling to send their children back into the classroom while the threat of COVID-19 still looms.

We are educated and informed, and we are afraid of COVID-19 and what it can do to our loved ones and city. We do not want our kids to re-enter full classrooms; indeed, we don't want them to enter classrooms at all, not until the rate of infection levels and stays level.

My family and I, like so many British Columbians, have been tied to the CBC for daily COVID-19 updates, and it is becoming increasingly clear that whatever flattening and leveling of the curve was accomplished by the end of June is being quickly undone. We had been told to expect a second wave once the weather began to turn cold, but instead our second wave is mounting in the hottest days of summer. This, arguably, is because the spread of this virus is dependent not on the weather, but on its human carriers. While the number of hospitalizations is no longer growing at the same rate as the infections, this is unlikely to hold, as it has more to do with the average age of those infected than the severity of the disease in its current state. And once those infected mingle. . .

Images on the news recently presenting crowds of school-age youth blatantly ignoring the dangers of this pandemic only make this situation more untenable.

While our schools may be safe enough today for the more robust of our youth (and their families), the current rate of infections suggests that it is unlikely that they remain so for long. As such, closures or partial closures are all but inevitable.

Is the idea that we are sending all our kids back to school in full classrooms, for now, at best, just in case things don't get worse? or, more likely, is it just until enough of them bring home enough pathogens to put our elderly and infirmed back into hospital in high enough numbers to justify a shift?

By supporting those who do not wish to send their children in these classrooms, we will be reducing the numbers occupying Victoria's already overtaxed classroom space and allowing, for those who wish to or must send their children back to class full time, the level of social distancing that Bonny Henry and her colleagues have been impressing upon us daily.

In June, we were told that the sparsely-filled classroom augmented by home learning we witnessed was intended as a model for going forward safely in the fall. And everything we see today argues that that is the only safe solution.

A dual system of in-class and at-home learning is far more nimble. Should the future hold what today is promising, and the schools shut again, at least a system will already be in place to keep our children's education on track.

Sincerely yours,

Brock Cameron MacLeod