

August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Clinton Street Junior Public School – Parent Council Executive Committee

460 Manning Ave

Toronto ON M6G 2V7

*hello@clintonschoolcouncil.ca*

Dear Trustee Moise, Director Jackson, and Principal Antunes

CC MPP Jessica Bell

We are writing on behalf of the council and concerned parents at Clinton Street Junior Public School to express our serious concerns with some of the directives, or lack thereof, in the recently updated TDSB guide to the safe reopening of schools (released Aug 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

We understand you are in a difficult position, given the woeful stance the Provincial Government has taken towards the safe return of students, particularly elementary students, to the public education system; but we cannot sit idly by and let the board follow a similar path. We implore you to immediately address the shortfalls in your plan to improve the likelihood of a safe and sustainable return to school during this global pandemic.

Trustee Moise and Director Jackson, we are specifically requesting action be taken on the following high impact items:

**1. Reduced Class Sizes for ALL Grades**

- Mandate a maximum class size of 15 students
- Where a 15-student cap is completely impractical, ensure sufficient space is provided for all people in the classroom (students and teachers) to practically maintain a consistent minimum physical distance of 2m
- Allocate funds to equip outdoor classrooms for all classes that cannot be accommodated indoors in accordance with the above distancing restrictions

**2. Abolish the Specialised Rotational Staff Model**

- It is a clear contradiction to plan for “cohorted classes” and then rotate specialised staff through every classroom in the school
- The use of rotational staff is a blatantly unsafe practice that increases the risk of exposure for everyone in attendance at the school and the wider community
- We request you consider other alternatives to this model, including:
  - Shorter school days to allow for teacher preparation at the start or end of the school day

- Online teaching options for specialised subjects that cannot be taught by the assigned cohort teacher, either during class time or at home
- Short-term suspension of the delivery of specialised classes (e.g. gym, art, music, French) until a safe, non-rotational, plan for teaching these subjects can be implemented

### **3. Investment in Adequate Ventilation**

- Mandate measures to ensure all indoor classrooms, or other indoor spaces to be used by students, are adequately ventilated. Including, increased HVAC maintenance, supply of portable air filters, window adjustments to enable open windows wherever possible
- Increased care taking capacity to support these mandates

### **4. Mandatory face coverings for all**

- We were pleased to see the board has put forward a motion proposing mandatory mask wearing for all TDSB students
- We support the wearing of masks by all staff and students, including JK-3, with exceptions only for those with special needs or medical exemptions

Taking action on these measures will go a long way to relieving the stress and indecision parents and teachers are facing about whether the public-school environment will be a safe place to return to in September.

Given our priority, and yours, is the provision of public education in an environment that ensures the health, safety and emotional well-being of our school communities, we are requesting a revised TDSB reopening plan that clearly addresses these shortfalls.

In addition to the delivery of these priority items we also request you provide more specific and clear communication on the following items:

1. Has the teacher's union been involved in the return to school planning? How have their concerns been accommodated in your plan?
2. By who, how, and when will the appropriate safety and hygiene equipment be bought, delivered and installed at our schools?
3. How will the public health nursing staff and the additional janitorial and care taking services be specifically allocated between schools?
4. What is the boards position on how class sizes will be impacted if attendance is lower than expected at the start of the school year? Will this result in smaller classes or the consolidation of classes and the removal of teaching resources from the school?
5. What mental health supports will be available for students who opt for on-line learning and are missing the important social component offered by in-person attendance?

Given the extremely short timelines we are now facing, and the extensive planning, procurement and implementation involved in ensuring schools are as safe as possible when they reopen, we are requesting that the TDSB keep an open mind with regards to delaying the start of school. Families and students have waited this long, and we would rather wait a little longer and return with confidence that adequate safety equipment and protocols are in place, that teachers and staff are well prepared, and that details on what to expect when students return to school has been properly communicated to all families.

On behalf of our parent community we want to thank you for your hard work and dedication during this challenging time. As a parent group we are committed to working with you and our school community to implement, and if necessary, fundraise for, measures that will increase safety at Clinton and across the TDSB schools. We must all do whatever it takes to minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread, while also providing our children with the opportunity to learn and thrive, addressing these clear gaps in the TDSB plans will go a long way to achieving those objectives.

Sincerely,

Clinton School Council Executive