

January 6, 2022

Tracy Barill  
Director of Education  
Durham Catholic District School Board

Dear Tracy,

With the recent announcement from the Ford government and changes made within the Ontario school system, we once again face a transition to online learning. I'm sure you will agree with me that this was not how any of us wanted to start our new year. I am writing to urge you to take every precaution possible to provide a safe return to school for all.

To reduce a worker's risk of exposure to COVID-19, and the highly contagious Omicron variant, school boards must review and implement the occupational health and safety reopening program. Additionally, a worker must receive information and instructions about any changes to existing plans before they are re-introduced into the workplace. As we've seen in education, the virus can be easily spread amongst workers, students, and contractors where inadequate controls (measures/procedures) are not in place.

Respectfully, the Occupational Health and Safety Act sets out an obligation for Employers and Supervisors to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstance to protect workers.

This leads me to the purpose of this letter. I ask that rapid test kits be made available to all DCDSB CUPE Local 218 members while actively in the workplace, regardless of if they are double vaccinated. I also ask that the DCDSB supply to the Union the DCDSB Coding process. Furthermore, I ask that the DCDSB ensure families and staff have a mechanism for self-reporting data on confirmed and presumed cases and that the information be provided to the Union.

I would also ask that the DCDSB adopt a resolution that masking for all students, including those in senior kindergarten and junior kindergarten, be made mandatory during in-person learning (subject to credible human rights exceptions only).

School boards across the province, and most recently the Durham District School Board, have made the decision to mandate masks in kindergarten and will continue to share self-reporting. I ask that you take the necessary steps to adopt the same requirements.

I would like end with a quote, "The ultimate test of your greatness is the way you treat every human being" Pope John Paul II.

Sincerely,



Dennis Gibbs  
President, CUPE 218

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