



Peel Elementary  
Teachers' Local

## OPEN LETTER TO PDSB DIRECTOR COLLEEN RUSSELL-RAWLINS

Monday, January 11, 2021

Colleen Russell-Rawlins  
Director of Education, Peel District School Board  
5650 Hurontario Street  
Mississauga, Ontario  
L5R 1C6

Via email

Dear Director Russell-Rawlins,

On behalf of Peel District School Board educators, we write to you to amplify the concerns expressed by our members regarding the current expectations during the emergency school closure and the shift to remote learning as we navigate the realities of this pandemic.

These realities include significant changes in how society functions. In order to be safe, we have changed the way we celebrate, the way we grieve, the way we work, the way we go through everyday life. In education, we have changed how we attend school and our mode of teaching and learning. Despite all of these changes, however, the expectations for teaching and learning have not changed to reflect that the current situation is unpredictable, extraordinary, and varied in its impact. How can educators and students continue to successfully meet pre-pandemic expectations as if nothing has changed when everything *has* changed?

Moving forward, but especially now during another emergency closure, remote learning must look different. Many families are having to navigate parenting responsibilities while working from home. An attempt at “business as usual” in education ignores the realities that education workers, students, and their families are facing in this pandemic. The expectations set out by the Ministry of Education in [PPM 164](#) fail to consider recommendations from experts. They are unreasonable and, in some cases, irresponsible.

The concerns raised since the first emergency closure last spring and into this current school year have now been intensified during this second emergency closure. We urge you to consider following the advice of health experts by reducing the number of synchronous instruction minutes required for elementary and secondary students and by modifying assessment, evaluation, and reporting expectations for the remainder of the school year. It would be reasonable, given these unprecedented circumstances, for

curriculum expectations to reflect essential learnings so that more time can be dedicated to building community and connection during a pandemic – the community and connection that our students need and will be missing by not being able to attend school in-person.

In addition to the concerns regarding virtual learning expectations, we are also deeply concerned about the safety of staff and students in classrooms that continue to remain open during this lockdown period. While we understand that students with high needs require an individualized approach, we cannot deny that we are in exceptional circumstances that require increased layers of protection that are simply not possible in face-to-face classrooms. We strongly encourage the Peel District School Board to close all in-person classrooms until community transmission is better understood, and that when these classes reopen, those educators be provided additional PPE. While we appreciate the importance of ensuring that our students in these special education classrooms receive support and access to learning, we also know that the health and safety of students and educators within these classrooms is paramount – as it must be.

We urge the Peel District School Board to review the expectations for remote learning and to re-evaluate their approach to this current system closure to ensure the safety and well-being of staff and students. Anything less would be irresponsible.

Sincerely,

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cc: Bruce Rodrigues, Supervisor, Peel District School Board