



September 24, 2021

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Honourable Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Education  
Victoria, BC  
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CC: Premier [John Horgan](#); Deputy Minister of Education [Scott MacDonald](#); Education Critic, [Jackie Tegart](#)

Subject: Immediate Attention and Action Needed Regarding Education Changes

In support of students in British Columbia and their families we ask for immediate attention and action regarding changes to Online Learning (previously Distributed Learning) the Ministry of Education has underway for the 2022/23 school year.

We ask for the following:

- Extension of current interim agreements and polices\* in place for the 2021/22 school year into the following year 2022/23, to allow time for greater public awareness and consultation.
- Review of the current Parent Forum process.
- Public release of all new policy manuals and updates to allow all parties adequate preparation time **before** implementation.
- Release of guidelines, criteria and selection process' being used in the solicitation, selection and onboarding of new Provincial Online Learning Schools (POLS).

The upcoming changes to school choice and delivery in British Columbia impacts each student and family in a unique way. Having committed to inclusive access to education for all its students the Ministry of Education must ensure it has communicated changes effectively and provided meaningful opportunities for a diverse range of input. Furthermore, policy changes must include adequate preparation time prior to implementation.

Examples of gross oversight with currently released timeline:

Proposed: October 2021 Parent Forum

- No public release about this forum process, criteria or how families can participate
- Extremely limited participation (2 parents per forum) that does not allow adequate representation
- Disorganized cohosting process with limited community organizations leaving large communities of students unrepresented or under represented.

Proposed: November 2021 – February 2022 Provincial Online Learning Schools (POLS) Solicitation & Selection

- Registration for the 2022/23 school year begins in January/February.



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- Some students may be left without school options
- Unclear (or no) catchment and boundary policies
- School provider options are not known in the time period students require to plan their school year.
- Limited (or no) communication and information with current school providers on the application and approval process

Proposed: March 2022 – August 2022 Provincial Online Learning Schools (POLS) Onboarding

- School providers will still be onboarding and learning new policy procedures as the school year begins.

Additional concerns:

- No information about changes in funding polices regarding designation categories (students with IEPs) and any resulting implications.
- No release and review of new funding policy changes prior to their implementation
- Removal of schooling options and choice
- Forced closure (due to application denial or low enrollment) of student's current school
- Lack of transparency with current plans, policies, and implementation framework.
- No clear source of information or who is accountable.
- "The Working Group recommended that a final review of changes to both the funding and service delivery models be conducted with the Ministry of Education data analysts, subject matter experts including practicing teachers and school district leaders to consider potential unintended consequences and to recommend mitigation strategies beyond those identified by the Working Group." \*\* This has not been addressed, should be done prior to implementation and include community consultation.

The students in BC, their families, all school providers and staff are entitled to be engaged and included in the policy decisions that directly impact their lives. Immediate attention and action to include a broad range of aforementioned parties is paramount.

We recognize previous work done in the [Funding Model Review 2018](#) and [Funding Model Implementation: Online Learning](#) however, an in-depth review and revisitation of the current implementation process as well as more inclusive consultation leaving time to address concerns is needed.

Sincerely,

*Amanda Flentjar*

Amanda Flentjar  
AutismBC

&

Kaye Banez  
Board Vice President, AutismBC

\*Policies referenced in this letter:

[Online Learning Policy – Active Participation \(Interim\)](#)

[Online Learning Policy – General \(Interim\)](#)

[Online Learning Policy - Homeschoolers \(Interim\)](#)

[Online Learning Policy - Students with Special Needs \(Interim\)](#)

[Online Learning Policy – B.C. Residency \(Interim and under review\)](#)

[Online Learning Policy – Funding \(Interim\)](#)

[Online Learning Policy - Homeschoolers \(Interim\)](#)

[Online Learning Independent Schools Policy \(Interim\)](#)

[Online Learning Policy - Students with Special Needs \(Interim\)](#)

\*\* [FUNDING MODEL IMPLEMENTATION: Online Learning: Page 5](#)