

April 26, 2021

Open letter to BC Teachers,

We are the BC Educators for Human Rights, a group of concerned teachers found across British Columbia. COVID-19 mitigation measures are having a detrimental impact on our children and youth. We can no longer remain silent.

As a component of our training, Teacher's are introduced to Maslow's Hierarchy (inserted picture) and the importance of having needs met. It is only when these needs are met that children are ready to learn. The current COVID mitigation measures in place are contributing to a deficit in these needs being met. The need for physical touch is a physiological need which is affected by the implementation of lockdowns and physical distancing. Safety needs have been compromised with the consistent changing of expectations and unclear, ever-changing requirements to attend school, participate in community and possibly families' economic loss and strain. Love and belonging – affected by physical distancing, lockdowns and even masking as 70% of our communication is non-verbal, including facial expressions. This affects communication between students and teachers and on student-to- student interactions. In addition, all of this long-term socio-psychological stress can escalate into mental health challenges (1). More than 90% of the potential deaths are occurring in 10% of the population, the elderly (2). With this in mind the response to COVID is out of balance to the cost our youth are paying.



Source: SimplyPsychology.org

The risk of dying of COVID in British Columbia is 0.03% (3). As a comparison, the risk of dying in a car crash in 2019 was approximately 1.22% according to the data from ICBC's Crash and Casualty information (4). It's important to recall some of the data that is actually available to us;

- Asymptomatic spread is rare (0.7% or less) (5)
- Median age of death by COVID is 85 (higher than life expectancy projected at 80.6 years) (6-7)
- To date approximately 80% of the deaths can be linked to long term care homes (8)
- In regards to variants there is no data indicating that the mutations are more severe
- 2 out of 45,000 teachers in BC have been in ICU for COVID. No deaths reported thus far. (9-10)
- 211 out of 45,000 Teachers in BC have WorkSafeBC claims for contracting Covid within the education sector (11)

The COVID Misery Index indicates Canada ranks 11 out of 15. As of the most recent update, Canada's numbers are well below the global average for ICU, hospitalizations, cases and deaths (12).

Never in Canada's history, have we as educators required children to be harmed with the intention of keeping the adults working with them safe. Children account for 1.9% of the COVID cases worldwide (13). Yet across Canada, the number of calls to children's helpline has more than doubled compared to the previous year (4.2 million calls in 2020 versus 1.8 million in 2019) (14). Hospitals have seen an increase in anxiety, depression, eating disorders, self harm and suicidal ideation (15-19). We have had one response – to mitigate COVID-19 to the exclusion of everything else.

We feel teachers have relinquished the bond of their profession out of fear; our risks are not as great as what has been identified. We implore you to add your voices to ours. Teachers have a part in ensuring children keep the right to their mental and physical health.

Tabitha Krauskopf, Anna Chambers, Sarah Rowat, Jessie Duncan-Wersta, Jolene Devcic Ryall, Emilie Perron, and Meghan Taylor-Macdonald

on behalf of the BC Educators for Human Rights

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