



July 31, 2020

## Re: Support for the BC Ministry of Education Schools Reopening Plan

On Wednesday, July 29<sup>th</sup> B.C.'s Minister of Education Rob Fleming and Chief Medical Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry announced the comprehensive plan for the reopening all of our province's schools this September. Our associations jointly wish to express our support for the reopening of all of B.C.'s schools this fall as well as our appreciation for the collaborative approach taken by both the Ministry of Education and the Public Health Office.

Faced with the unprecedented challenges created by the current COVID-19 outbreak, we believe it is critical that both students and staff be provided the opportunity to return to schools this fall on a full-time basis. By September, the majority of students will have been away from classrooms for more than five months. This has a significant negative impact on all children and youth, but especially on our most vulnerable students. We believe the schools reopening plan announced this week is a significant positive step in that direction.

Parents, guardians, staff and members of the public should be reassured by the consultation that has taken place with our associations and many other education employee groups, stakeholders and rightsholders in developing the initial plan, and that discussions will continue right through August and into the new school year. The use of learning groups is a practice, based in science, requested by the provincial health office. Our associations fully support the continued reliance on medical science to guide decisions regarding the safe operation of schools for the duration of this pandemic. While reopening schools under the current circumstance is complex and challenging, a great deal of thought and caring has gone into the initial planning and will continue to inform how best to reopen this critical part of our communities. Student and staff health and safety is at the forefront of every decision, and will continue to guide our input to how critical educational programs and services might best be delivered to all of B.C.'s 600,000 Kindergarten to grade 12 students.

Our associations look forward to continuing our work with the Ministry of Education and the Public Health Office to ensure a safe, productive and inclusive start to the 2020-2021 school year. The students of B.C. deserve our support and we will continue to work diligently through the summer to meet their needs. Wednesday's announcement of B.C.'s school reopening plan is the first step in allowing that to happen.

S. Higginson

President  
**BCSTA**

A. Sinclair

President  
**BCCPAC**

F. Coughlan

President  
**BCASBO**

D. Danyluk

President  
**BCPVPA**

C. van der Mark

President  
**BCSSA**