



Wednesday December 11, 2019

M. Jean-François Roberge  
Minister of Education  
1035 rue De La Chevrotière, 16th Floor  
Quebec, Quebec G1R 5A5

Dear Minister Roberge,

The Special Needs Advisory Committee of the Lester B Pearson school board supports the addition of the 20-minute recess as we believe increased movement and exercise is beneficial in many ways to all students especially those with special needs. However, with its mandatory immediate implementation this school year, we do continue to have concerns with the rules surrounding its execution.

Our main concerns are:

1. This additional recess period requires more support and to date, there has not been any extra funding provided for this initiative. We highlighted this concern in our response last year and feel the need to mention it again since it is clear that there is a need for more support staff. The feedback we are receiving from administration, teachers and support staff is that the resource department is finding it difficult to schedule the staff and ensure adequate break periods for a safe working environment.
2. Transitions are difficult for many students, particularly those with special needs. As a result, this extra transition is causing some of them to have heightened levels of stress and anxiety. This in turn, has led to an increase in challenging behaviours in certain situations. Ultimately, this lowers the quality of the students experience and negates the overall goal of the added recess. We suggest that exceptions be allowed to accommodate students who may experience these negative effects.

3. Cycle one and two teachers have mentioned that there is a noticeable loss of teaching time due to the need to get the students properly dressed and undressed for the winter months. This is resulting in more homework being sent home to help keep up with the curriculum.
  
4. Now that Winter is upon us, students outdoor clothing is getting wet in their fun outdoor play but are not given adequate time to dry thus resulting in them playing in wet clothing for the afternoon recess.

The Special Needs Advisory Committee would like to suggest that Schools have more flexibility to develop the needs of their students such as:

- Students be allowed to remain indoors from time to time with the understanding that the children will still be physically active for a 20-minute period. There are many activities that have proven to be beneficial and that could be alternatives to an exterior 20-minute recess period such as: indoor sports and activities such as Zumba, Brain Gym or a BOKS program or something similar
  
- Extra funding be allocated to support staff to help students with special needs get the most positive and safe experience as possible for the extra recess

The overall message we would like to convey is that we fully support the idea of more movement during the school day however to make it more effective, we believe some minor adjustments are required. Our hope is that you will consider our suggestions in order to make this recess period effective and enjoyable for all involved, which we believe was your original intent.

Sincerely,

Jennifer DiMarco - Chairperson

Special Needs Advisory Committee, 2019-2020

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**cc Dr. Cindy Finn, Director General of LBPSB**