

**From:** [EBCAT contact](#)  
**To:** [Board of Health](#); [Councillor Perks](#); [Councillor Cressy](#); [Councillor Layton](#); [Councillor Wongtam](#); [Councillor Ainslie](#); [Councillor Filion](#); [stephanie.donaldson@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:stephanie.donaldson@tdsb.on.ca); [ida.lipreti@tcdsb.org](mailto:ida.lipreti@tcdsb.org); [kate.mulligan@utoronto.ca](mailto:kate.mulligan@utoronto.ca); [peter.wong@sickkids.ca](mailto:peter.wong@sickkids.ca)  
**Cc:** [Medical Officer of Health](#); [Mayor Tory](#)  
**Subject:** Submission to the Toronto Board of Health on behalf of Toronto parent-led community asymptomatic testing programs  
**Date:** October 15, 2021 11:44:23 AM

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Please find below a submission to the Toronto Board of Health on behalf of 30 Toronto parent-led community asymptomatic testing programs.

Thanks,  
Sam Kaufman

To:  
Paul Ainslie  
Ashna Bowry  
Joe Cressy  
Stephanie Donaldson  
John Filion  
Angela Jonsson  
Mike Layton  
Ida Li Preti  
Kate Mulligan  
Gord Perks  
Peter Wong  
Soo Wong  
Kristyn Wong-Tam

CC: Mayor John Tory  
Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Eileen de Villa

**Submission to the Toronto Board of Health on behalf of Toronto parent-led community asymptomatic testing programs**

October 15, 2021

We, the undersigned, are writing on behalf of the participants and other organizers in our respective COVID-19 Community Asymptomatic Testing (CAT) programs, some of which are or were running, and some of which were planned before our test supply was terminated. We understand that the province has delegated decision-making and implementation regarding asymptomatic antigen testing in school communities to the local public health units. As participants and organizers of parent-led asymptomatic antigen testing programs in Toronto, we urge the Board of Health and Toronto Public Health to

quickly make regular asymptomatic testing available to all unvaccinated students in public elementary schools in Toronto. If supplies are insufficient to make testing available at all schools, we request that distribution be as broad as possible, with full transparency regarding the supply situation and the prioritization methodology chosen.

It is often stated that, despite outbreaks and school closures, Covid-19 transmission is rare within schools. However, we view regular asymptomatic testing as a proactive measure to reduce the spread of Covid-19 amongst unvaccinated children, wherever that spread happens, whether inside or outside of school. As the largest and most easily accessible unvaccinated sub-population, and as the age group with the highest per-capita incidence rate in the city, elementary-school students are a natural target for systematic testing. Case rates in Toronto students are also higher than case rates in the community. The more often children are tested, the more likely an asymptomatic, mildly symptomatic, or presymptomatic case will be caught before it spreads much further, regardless of where that spread happens. This should be done to prevent cases from reaching a high level, not only after cases have passed some threshold. We also believe that testing can help reduce spread within schools and can help reduce the size of outbreaks, with obvious benefits to children's health, children's education, and their parents' ability to work.

Our parent-led asymptomatic testing programs have had high uptake despite their lack of endorsement or support by school boards or public health. Parents generally find at-home antigen testing easy to do, and most children do not find regular testing intrusive, particularly if using easier swabbing methods like the oral-nasal swab used and validated for rapid antigen tests by Michael Garron Hospital, among others. False positive rates in our collective experience of running programs for hundreds of children for several weeks have been extremely low. Home-based testing requires little in the way of public health resources to manage, beyond initial education on the proper use of tests. We have found sharing videos, paper pamphlets and short explanations in person with caregivers to be very effective in our communities; some of us have already translated materials from English into other languages. Distribution of tests might be as simple as sending home from school a box of 25 tests per family, but if supplies don't permit that, volunteers can pre-package tests in smaller quantities, as many of us have done; different manufacturer's tests are also available for distribution in different quantities. Finally, from a mental health perspective, our testing programs have reduced anxiety among parents and children and given us all the feeling of being able to contribute concretely to ending the pandemic. If we can do it, so can public health.

We view regular, asymptomatic testing as a critical tool to help control the pandemic while we await the arrival of vaccines for younger children. We are willing to share our learnings from our experience running testing programs, and to support public health's efforts to roll out testing more widely in any way we can. Since the province has agreed in principle,

there are few reasons not to make testing available as widely and as quickly as possible. Our goal must be to keep schools open and communities safe by using all the measures available to us, including regular asymptomatic testing.

Signatories:

Adam Beck JPS - Jessica Hillgrove Stuart, Christina Gordon  
Balmy Beach Community School - Balmy Beach CAT- Kristen Heredia  
Bowmore Road PS - Bowmore Road PS CAT - Johanna Proceviat  
Broadlands Public School - Heather Matheson Pun  
Bruce PS - Bruce PS CAT - Avery Swartz  
Cameron PS - Cameron CAT - Monica Ben-Aron  
Carleton Village Jr and Sr Sports and Wellness Academy - Emily Viets, Kimberly Harding, Erin Pleet, Jennifer James, Adriana Cavell  
Chester ES - David Shory  
Deer Park JSPS - Mary Beth Lato  
Duke of Connaught JSPS - Duke of Connaught CAT - Mike McInnis, Shirley Che-Severn  
Diefenbaker ES - David Shory  
Earl Beatty JSPS - Earl Beatty CAT - Sam Kaufman, Erin Sperling, Kate Dupuis, Natalie Macfarlane, Betty Zou  
Earl Haig PS - Madelaine Hamilton  
École élémentaire catholique George-Étienne-Cartier - Michelle Bird  
Guildwood JPS - Holly Fraser  
Humewood PS - Laura Harte, Justine Shiell-Cappel, Bromley Henning, Shannon Greene, Lily Riggs  
Huron Street JPS - Ana Bilanovic  
King George JPS - King George CAT  
McMurrich JPS - Monika Jankowiak  
École élémentaire La Mosaïque - Leila Jawando, Clarissa Potter, Cameron Macleod, Caitlin Beukema, Kate Reeve  
Leslieville JPS - Leslieville JPS CAT - Jennifer Markovich  
Pape Ave JPS - Cara McCutcheon  
Perth Ave JPS - Alex Mlynek, Albert Malkin, Emiko Sekiguchi, Chloe Doesburg, Duncan Patterson, Bee Pallomina, Kendell Duthie, Gabriel Levine  
Regal Road PS - Lisa Wise-Milestone, Elinora Gerchak  
R.H. McGregor ES - Nadine Blum, Maryn Madoff  
Roden PS / Equinox Holistic Alternative School - Roden / Equinox CAT - Beth O'Reilly, Anna Mancuso, Arlene Reynolds, Courtney Walker  
Secord ES - Secord CAT - Satinder Toor  
St. Brigid CS - Siobhan Flanagan Dell

Wilkinson JPS - Wilkinson CAT - Jordana Feldman

Williamson Road JPS - Williamson Road CAT - Alison Attanasio

Winchester PS - Ricky Chan