



# New England Complex Systems Institute

277 Broadway Cambridge, MA 02139

11/16/2020

To Whom it May Concern,

I would like to express my concerns about current policies in the Netherlands about schools, including students, teachers and families. Also my support for the lawsuit that is designed to bring policy into line with scientific evidence, both for what we currently know about COVID as well as the information we don't have about the long term consequences of this disease in view of the large scale exposure and the precautionary principle.

I note also that across Europe and other places is that the experience of opening schools is followed by rapid increases in cases in the society as a whole, and eventually when hospitals are overflowing a need to lock down. All the experiments have been done and we can observe their effects in the almost 200 countries of the world. It is important to be aware that the successful approaches to combat epidemics do not require extensive time. The exponential increase can be turned into exponential decline and dramatically improved conditions within 4-6 weeks of strong action and community participation. A green zone strategy provides a rapid way to return to normal with safe schools, families and communities.

The scientific evidence of multiple studies shows that students can be infected and infect others, and that outbreaks occur in schools. Three of the most important studies were performed about cases in India and published in Science Magazine[1], Israel and published by their Ministry of Health[2], and a multinational study published in Lancet[3]. Because students are often asymptomatic (or particularly for young children perhaps are not reporting mild symptoms) standard testing protocols often miss their illnesses and contribution to transmission. Some countries have chosen not to test children, partially due to limited testing availability and prior assumptions that child infections are not important for their health or the outbreak transmission. Both of these have confused many other studies and has promoted an incorrect assessment of the involvement of children. Also, it is important to recognize that while students have a lower COVID-19 severe disease and mortality rate, these are not zero. The risk of child illnesses remains significant for the parents and families affected. The emerging understanding of Long COVID that is known to affect tens of percents of those who are infected, including asymptomatic and mild cases of COVID, has not been shown to be age dependent. While data on children is just beginning to be collected, this leaves us with the expectation that children may very well suffer heart, brain, lung and other organ damage for long periods and even their lifetimes. There is also the severe MIS-C that affects children due to coronavirus infection. Moreover, the transmission in schools, like other indoor, extended time gatherings, in often poorly ventilated rooms, and the use of shared bathrooms, are precisely the conditions for transmission including superspreader events that

have been widely reported upon, see in particular the Israel report that documents them directly.

Finally, it is imperative to recognize the dangers to teachers, parents, grandparents and other family members from the transmission. It is unfortunate that the government sees these risks as tenable in the face of the potential psychological, social and economic disruption of the society, but does not recognize that their severity will cause tragic losses both now and over time.

Alternative strategies can be learned from Taiwan, New Zealand, Australia, Thailand, China, South Korea, who have adopted Zero COVID strategies and demonstrated that countries that adopt this approach can emerge from the terrible dangers and outcomes of living with this disease into the opportunities of restoring pre-pandemic normal activity. Individuals, families and communities that minimize the impact of this disease now will surely benefit from the restoration of social and economic activity that arise. I note in closing that it should be recognized that the time it will take for the much hoped for but uncertain solution of a vaccination to be produced and distributed will still exact unreasonable health, life and economic harms.

[1] <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/early/2020/09/29/science.abd7672>

[2] [https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/reports/bz-400844120/he/files\\_publications\\_corona\\_bz-400844120.pdf](https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/reports/bz-400844120/he/files_publications_corona_bz-400844120.pdf) (unofficial translation attached)

[3] [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(20\)30785-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(20)30785-4/fulltext)

Sincerely yours,



Yaneer Bar-Yam  
Professor and President  
New England Complex Systems Institute

[yaneer@necsi.edu](mailto:yaneer@necsi.edu) / (617) 599-2901

---

