

October 7, 2021

Via Email to TDSB Trustees

Trustee Services
Toronto District School Board
Administrative Office
5050 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario M2N 5H8

Dear Trustees,

We are the Executive members of the OSSTF Toronto Teachers' Bargaining Unit and we are writing to you today on behalf of the approximately 5000 secondary school teachers and adult day school teachers we represent. We need you to be aware of the untenable conditions under which the vast majority of our Members are working.

Despite claims from the Board last Spring that hybrid learning, or as it is now being called "simultaneous online learning" would be a last resort and an emergency response, we know this is not the case. OSSTF Toronto is awaiting data from senior staff at the Board, but we know from our own internal survey that hybrid learning is likely occurring in the overwhelming majority of classes at the secondary school level. In many schools, 90-100% of the classes are hybrid. This is unacceptable. When the Board learned in mid-August that more students selected virtual learning than had been expected, there was an opportunity to pivot and create dedicated virtual learning hubs or a smaller fully virtual school. Other school boards were able to do this whereas the TDSB ignored this opportunity and chose what is simply the easier and more cost effective way.

Not only is hybrid learning a pedagogically unsound model for students and one that only serves to worsen inequities, but it is a model that is unsustainable for the teachers and education workers who are required to employ it. To be sure, our teachers are dedicated, hardworking professionals who will always strive to do their best, but this model is placing the burden of the Board's and Ministry's inadequate response to Covid in the schools on the backs of our Members.

Further, inadequate health and safety measures at the school level further the frustration and anxiety that our Members are experiencing. The notion of cohorts is unrealistic given that at lunch, students can and do mix freely, unmasked as they eat. We have been asking senior staff for weeks for a plan that actually takes public health measures into account, and makes lunch breaks safe for students and education workers alike, but we have yet to see it. Though student occupied classrooms appear to have portable HEPA filters, there has been a lack of instruction to teachers on their use. Moreover, HEPA filters are not being placed in all occupied spaces - such as Guidance

and Experiential Learning offices, staff rooms and department offices. Imagine what teachers must conclude their employer thinks of their safety when this is a secondary consideration. And though we know the Ministry has not adequately funded the Board so that class sizes can be reduced, the fact remains that large class sizes are a clear risk to health and safety while we are still in the middle of a dangerous fourth wave of the pandemic.

We implore you to please take these matters into immediate consideration. Hybrid learning must end now. Dedicated virtual classes must be implemented now - whether it be at the school level or via virtual hubs or a virtual school. Our teacher Members will always do their best to provide a quality education for their students. Their needs also need to be taken into account, now.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Michelle Teixeira, President

On behalf of:

Chris Chandler, Vice-President
Michael Platt, Vice President
David Pickering, Treasurer
Deborah Buchanan-Walford, Executive Officer
Nicole Gauthier, Executive Officer
Danica Izzard, Executive Officer
Jason Kunin, Executive Officer
Maryline Lanteigne, Executive Officer
Rony Masri, Executive Officer

c. Colleen Russell-Rawlins, Director of Education, TDSB

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