
From: Duffy, Melanie [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2017 11:32 AM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Amendments letter

I send this to you in fear that I will not be permitted to present at the amendments committee.

I'm about to tell you my personal, professional experience as a teacher entering her 14th year in the profession.

Why I said NO to this contract offer:

It's not about the money. I abhor people saying "if you vote no, it's about the money". No. It isn't. Not for me. Would I take better money? Of course! It's ridiculous for a government to suggest that we shouldn't even come close to cost of living increases - given cost of living increases, I'll be making LESS for the next four years than I am right now.

When I joined this profession, I expected wage increases that would at least match cost-of-living.

I was also promised a healthy service award after years of teaching. Now, I will get nothing.

When I joined this profession, I was promised a good pension. That has been sliced and diced and I cannot count on anything when I retire in 15 years. That is frightening.

For many people, their primary concern is the money. And I'm sure not going to fault them for that. I completely agree that the money is ridiculous.

But, in "picking my battles", working conditions right now abysmal. Class sizes in elementary were reduced in grades 3-5 by less than a handful of students but, unbeknownst to most of the public, the government did it by dramatically increasing the number of combined (split) classes and completely removing any school or principal autonomy in class composition decision-making that would normally consider high needs or at-risk students. They have reduced class composition to a formulaic number system, not a human system. That's ridiculous on its own, and when you consider the repercussions of inclusion with no-consequence policies, lack of training and severely low levels of student supports, it's a system designed to fail all of our students. Ask me the last time I had training on how to work with students with ADHD, oppositional defiance disorder, foetal alcohol syndrome, learning disabilities, physical or emotional limitations?

With increased paperwork and data collection, purely for purposes of "showing growth" rather than "attaining growth", teachers are stretched to the limit. Standardized assessments are doubling in elementary schools yet no meaningful professional training has been offered to teachers in years.

PowerSchool and Tienet has meant hours upon hours of classroom assessment, student assessment, marking, data collection and online reporting. Why? When did a group of seasoned professionals meeting together to come up with good strategies for individual student learning become less than enough?

Staff meetings and copious after school "documentation" obligations are taking up hours upon hours each month... which is time away from me being able to sit in my classroom and figure out how to meet every student's individual needs.

We have learning centre teachers that can't come close to meeting the needs of students who should be in or serviced by the learning centre but can't because there's nobody to work with them. We have resource teachers that are pulled away from resource in order to do a months worth of testing and assessment on students that don't need it because of carte blanche policy; meanwhile, the resource students are not being seen. NOT BEING SEEN.

We have pilot programs dropped on classrooms or schools that require data collection, marking and feedback be sent to a governing body that refuses to acknowledge the feedback given.

I am the teacher.... I cannot be the interim resource teacher, the assessment coordinator, the pilot tester, the data entry person. I am the teacher. Hire other people for those jobs. Let me do mine.

I picked up my daughter from her after school program the other day, just before 6 PM which has been the case for most of this year. By the time my teaching day and after work obligations are handled, it leaves me only the very late time in the day to do any student planning. This means ten hour days plus loads of evening and weekend work. The first thing my daughter said to me, after she hugged me, was how puffy and gray my eyes looked. Why is this happening? It's because I'm being pulled in 1000 different directions that are not purposeful nor valuable for students. I don't need anyone to feel sympathy for me. I'm one of hundreds and thousands of teachers going through this right now and that's not what I'm asking.

I said no to this contract because these working demands are taking away from my students. I just want to teach and inspire young minds... but the demands on me and those I work with don't give us enough hours in the day.

I said no to working conditions so that I could say yes to students. And these past few weeks, being in work to rule, have given me more time with them. Even though I'm there a lesser amount of the day, my time is more devoted to them. I have had more one on one time with my students than I have had in years. And I've actually had more time to plan because I have 20 minutes at the end of the day to devote to planning instead of 5 to 7 minutes after nonsensical and meaningless meetings.

I have two bachelors degrees and two masters degrees related to education. I have chosen to extend my education and learning so that I can do my very best to meet the needs of all my students. I am doing my part.

If you respect teachers at all, you will do yours: put aside your government agenda and let us do the job that we (and only we) are trained to do: make a difference in the education of children.