

Dear Honourable Dianna Whalen and members of the Law Amendment Committee,

My name is Kelly Banks and I am a grade 4/5 teacher at Sycamore Lane Elementary School in Lower Sackville. I have been a teacher in the Halifax Regional School Board for 9 years and a resident of Nova Scotia for my entire life.

I wish that I had the opportunity to speak to the Law Amendment Committee, however I do appreciate you taking the time to read my following thoughts about my passion ... my students!

Classroom conditions need to improve for ... **my students.**

Though I appreciate that Bill 75 maintains current class sizes with caps in elementary school, I am here to explain that simply providing class caps is not enough.

I currently have 20 students in my classroom. This is below the current cap for a grade 4/5 classroom. However, it is challenging to meet the needs of my students on a daily basis, because it is not about the number of students in a classroom. **You also need to take into account the diverse needs of each individual student in one classroom.**

Let me tell you about some of the needs in my classroom:

- It is a combined class with two different grades and two different curriculums. I am responsible to teach, assess and report on 14 different courses (7 per grade level).
- I also have 4 students on Individual Programs Plans (IPPs):
 - One is on an academic and social IPP. He has autism and is non-verbal. He has an educational program assistant (EPA), but spends most of his time in the learning center due to possible violent outbursts. The plan was for this EPA to help other students too, but when this EPA is out of my room, which is very day, I have no other support.
 - One is on an IPP for social and behavioral skills. This student needs prompting throughout the entire day because he struggles with social situations. However, when prompted he immediately becomes self deprecating. I need to consistently find the balance between teaching appropriate social behaviors without breaking his confidence.
 - The other two students on IPPs are academically so far behind that they are still working on grade primary and grade one outcomes such as letter recognition and numbers to 50. I have never taught lower elementary and have never had any PD on how to teach these essential skills. I don't have an support in my classroom, therefore the majority of my time is spent working mainly with these students for them to have meaningful learning experiences.
- I am sure you have heard from other presenters during the Law Amendment Committee the amount of additional paperwork and documentation on TIENET required by me for all four students on IPPs .
- I also have 7 students on adaptations:
 - One of these students has adaptations to help prevent his sever behavior interruptions. His adaptations require me to manage his behavior plan, break schedules, calm down routines and alternate work locations.

- I have three students with adaptations who use technology which requires a great deal of additional amount of my time planning to successfully integrate their technology into my lessons. One student uses an iPad for all subjects because his hand writing is illegible. The other two use a chromebook with the Read and Write program to help with spelling and organization of their writing ideas. But, I have had no PD on how to use the Read and Write program. I had to spend personal time learning how to use this program.
 - I have a student with adaptations for scheduled bathroom breaks. I need to remind him to go to the bathroom ever 45 minutes or else he will have an accident.
 - Then there are two more students on adaptations who require frequent check-ins, directions broke down into single steps and extra support, which I can rarely provide.
- Then there is a student in my class who is suffering from anxiety and needs support and my compassion to help her feel safe and comfortable at school in order to keep her at school.
 - I also have a student who is currently transiting from a female to a male.

Have you been keeping track? I have just described 13 of my 20 students who have severe learning needs which are extremely time consuming both during teaching as well as planning.

- On top of all these needs I have 7 other students whom have their own needs such as friendships break down on the playground, parents splitting up, pets or grandparents passing away, no lunch to eat, no school supplies, etc. These needs are rarely meet because they don't seem as big as the other needs in my classroom. But to a 9 or 10-year-old these are big needs, and I am sure they perceive that I do not have time for to them, which breaks my heart.

Like I said before, my students are my passion. I am here to plead for their needs. I am pleading for you to consider the importance of not only class caps, but to take into account the importance of considering the diverse needs of each individual student that is placed in one classroom with one teacher. As much as I want to give 100% to each and ever student, I am only one person.

When you are asked to vote on this bill, think about the students in my classroom and ask yourself ... does this bill address the classroom conditions to help meet the needs of all students? NO! So, I am asking you to please vote no!

Thank you for your time.

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