

Good day:

I was unable to get a slot to present to the committee in person, despite leaving a message Tuesday evening and being told Wednesday morning that I was "on the list". I am pleased to have the opportunity to present my submission in writing. I do understand that this current Liberal government is not solely responsible for the situation our education system is currently in; however, they have a chance to truly make a difference. Passing the Act Respecting a Teachers' Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements will not make a positive difference.

I am very concerned about the An Act Respecting a Teachers' Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements. The very points that Premier McNeil cited to lead to the recall of the legislature without the established 30 day waiting period were not something the Act could change: this bill will not give back athletics or other volunteer activities, in fact, it may make it even less possible for these things to happen.

One issue that has not been much discussed is that of the weight of curriculum. When new initiatives come from the Department of Education, there are sometimes a few days in-servicing but the majority of time spent on learning the new curriculum is the responsibility of the individual teacher. In grades 4 - 6, a new streamlined curriculum was introduced in September 2016. There was one day of professional development in the spring of 2016. Some outcomes were removed, some were consolidated and others were changed. This new curriculum was designed to allow teachers to focus on literacy and math, providing more time for these priorities. However, a new subject was added: ICT: Information and Communication Technology. In grade 4, this meant 8 brand new outcomes. These are all brand new outcomes and require much research and planning on the part of the teacher to implement. It is one more example of adding to the teacher's workload without proper support.

Here is one of the grade 4 coding outcomes:

Students will understand and apply the basic concepts of computer science, including algorithms, abstraction, and computational thinking.

Performance/Assessment Indicators

- Organize a sequence of events into a series of steps (CT, CI, Com, TF)
- Predict the behavior or outcome of a simple coding sequence. (CT, CI, Com, TF)
- Recognize and suggest solutions to simple errors in a sequence of code or instructions. (CT, CI, Com, TF)
- With support use "if" statements and loops to construct a set of statements to be acted out to accomplish a simple task. (CT, CI, Com, TF)
- Recognize that computers are machines and are limited to the conditions that are created for them. (CT, CI, Com, TF)

I know that many teachers were not sure of the meaning of these outcomes. I don't know how many MLA's or parents would know what these mean, let alone how to teach them! I have had to educate myself. I attended 2 and a half days of technology in-servicing at MSVU on my own time this summer as well as 1 day of board in-servicing and 8 - 10 hours on my own practising

with devices and internet research. The amount of work required to be able to teach this properly is incredible. When you add the challenges of students with special needs, ADHD, IPPs, behaviour issues, etc., this becomes an almost impossible task, but I am a teacher, so I soldier on, thinking of the 1 or 2 students who may be brought back to a love of learning through technology.

There were substantive changes in the social studies outcomes in particular. We were not provided with a curriculum guide to support these new outcomes. In health, there has been a focus on sexuality over the last number of years. However, there is not curriculum guide to support the other outcomes which comprise two thirds of the curriculum. This means that I need to research to find support for these outcomes. I also need to find resources at different reading levels, resources which appeal to visual learners, auditory learners as well as those with behavioural, mental health and emotional needs.

As an elementary teacher of almost 30 years, I try to work from the positive to deal with situations involving students. I love to learn and teach and my students are often on my mind. I am determined to be positive in this letter supporting teachers in our fight for classroom supports which will allow us to meet the needs of all of our students. A narrative works well for students, and so I have composed one about what I do most weekends. The content is not exact for reasons of confidentiality, but the number and breadth of situations I ponder is.

Today I found an empty Wet Swiffer container on the shelf. I was going to recycle it and then I thought - maybe I could use this in my classroom? I have several containers that are almost nest together and I could use this when I put the students in groups and put math materials in them - and its free! I am browsing the internet for something else and think, Which book might interest Raj? A graphic novel? Maybe a non-fiction book about the skateboarding? I check the public library website and request a few likely looking ones. I think the reading level is OK. I hope that Maybelle is having a good weekend, she seemed upset at school this week but didn't want to talk about it. I send up a prayer for Bart who lost his grandfather and for Fred that his mom will actually show up for visitation because she didn't two weeks ago and he cried all day Monday. I wish we had a guidance counsellor at our school to support him. I hope that my call home about Terri lying about hitting Ellen on Friday didn't cause Dad to take away all of her privileges for the weekend, but the call had to be made. I will make sure I give her some positive feedback on Monday and see how things went. At Walmart, I consider buying the Avengers metallic stickers. They are almost \$7 for a package - but maybe I can motivate Claire to read more with these as rewards. I should really call Luis' Mom and tell her about how hard he has been working in math and then I can let her know that I have been reading the questions to him and gently suggest we should investigate his needs in reading - maybe mid-afternoon would be a good time. What day next week can I fit in the call to Chris' psychologist about some of the situations I have faced and my responses? Maybe there are more effective ways to respond. The school psychologist is only in once every two weeks and her focus is on testing, so it will be months before I can consult with her. I really need to find time to touch base with the learning center teacher on Monday to set up a time for him to come in and talk to the class about George and why he hits them sometimes and what knocks things off of their desks. I really need to start that 'to do' list for Monday. I want to give a give a quiz in math on Thursday. Half of the class is ready for a quiz on all the multiplication facts, a quarter of them are ready for a quiz on the facts from 1 to 5. Rory

and Charles are ready for the 2 and 5 times tables. Larry is working on doubles on his math IPP and Sue is working on all addition facts on hers. Oh yes, I must not forget a shorter quiz for George but with larger print. I have to check out the new technology outcomes again. I have no idea what *'With support use "if" statements and loops to construct a set of statements to be acted out to accomplish a simple task'* means. I wonder if my grade 4s do? I should research it online and send an email to the tech person at the board. It will be a while before she has the chance to get back to me with new outcomes in technology from primary to 6.

And this is before I even start my planning for the week. The academic, social, mental and emotional needs of students have increased exponentially during my teaching career. The supports for students have stayed the same or decreased.

As an elementary teacher I can tell you what I need to support me:

- 1) more EPAs in the classroom - not just for flight risks and toileting but for academic support of those on IPPs (Individualized Program Plans) and those working below grade level but not low enough for an IPP
- 2) hard caps in class size
- 3) a suspension of SSP (Student Success Planning) to allow us to use the time to actually focus on the students who need us the most
- 4) a freeze on standardized testing- start with 2 years. Most teachers in grade 4 and 6 spend September 'teaching to the test' as directed by the EECD. Teachers had to sign a form stating they did just this
- 5) more psychologists and guidance counsellors hired to support a student population with more and more mental health, social and emotional issues
- 6) a freeze on new curriculum and initiatives of any sort so we can work take time to thoroughly explore what we have and implement it.
- 7) report cards where teachers can say what they mean in language that parents can understand for literacy and math and one sentence each for science, social studies, health, art and information and communication technology for grades 4 - 6. With one hour per week for each of these subjects, it is very difficult to find enough to comment on for a report card. The same format can be used to save money.

If numbers 3, 4 and 6 are implemented, more money will be freed up for 1, 2 and 5.

I love learning and attend all school, board and province in-servicing. On my own time, I participate in least 1 - 3 days of in-servicing on weekends or in the summer each year. On my own time, I also attend on line professional development and read professional books. I read up on new curricula over the summer and plan on the best way to implement it. I enjoy using different approaches to teaching in my class. I am always up for a professional challenge. However, the multiple challenges of new curriculum outcomes without supporting guides, special needs students in the classroom without enough supports, emotional and mental issues which have students regularly visiting outside psychologists, reporting, recording, behaviour issues which require not only dealing with in class and communicating with parents but recording in PowerSchool stretch me to the limit both professionally and personally. Yes, I do have a family and children in the school system.

For students, parents, teachers and a better future for Nova Scotia, please listen to students, parents and teachers and go back to the bargaining table. Do not take away our rights. Many students are very close to voting age and are learning about politics through this situation. What do you want them to take away from this?

Sincerely,
Anne E. LeBlanc