

Open Letter to Interim TDSB Director Kathy Witherow

October 30, 2020

**Interim Director Kathy Witherow
Toronto District School Board
5050 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario M2N 5N8**

Dear Interim Director Kathy Witherow,

The implementation of the TDSB's virtual schools is failing, as the provincial government has not provided resources necessary for its rollout.

Despite repeatedly bringing these concerns to the attention of the Board, the union continues to hear from teachers with virtual assignments that they are:

- lacking the necessary, up-to-date technology to properly implement remote learning;
- assigned to teach virtual subjects and grades for which they do not hold the qualifications; and
- missing essential resources and information from the Board, including accurate class lists and timetables.

On top of all of this, teachers with virtual assignments are being pressured by their principals to do the work of other bargaining units.

It is not in our members' job description to call parents on a daily basis when a student misses classes, nor is it the work of our members to transcribe attendance lists for administrators. These responsibilities are specific to that of the Board's Office Assistants.

Our teachers in virtual school are already overwhelmed and extremely stressed by the constant changes and insufficient supports. They will not do the work of other bargaining units.

"There is now the expectation that teachers track attendance, in addition to trillium in order to complete the survey for students who have been absent for multiple days. These increasing workload demands are too much."

- *ETT has received numerous messages from teachers with virtual assignments deeply concerned about the unending chaos and workload.*

In our virtual Kindergarten classes, many teachers are still working without the support of a Designated Early Childhood Educator (DECE), despite the fact that there are more than 70 DECEs Board-wide that have been instructed to wait at home pending assignment.

Why have these DECEs not been deployed to the Kindergarten classes that desperately need them?

The union recognizes that many of the problems regarding virtual learning have been downloaded on to the Board by the Ford government, with its lack of funding and direction. However, it is imperative that the TDSB call out this government for these failures and take action to ensure that teachers have the basic resources to support student success in their virtual classrooms.

To add insult to injury, the union has recently learned that the Board has provided additional monetary and lieu time compensation to its administrators.

According to a memo sent by the Board, this additional compensation is being offered to Principals and Vice Principals as a result of the “unprecedented demands of this year’s school opening.” As teachers and education workers have not received any such compensation, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the Board does not value the extraordinary efforts undertaken by our educators under the most difficult of circumstances to support student learning.

“The TDSB’s decision to remunerate principals and vice principals for their work during the closure and reopening, while ignoring the heavy lifting done by teachers, is insensitive and inequitable.”

- *One of many messages ETT has received regarding the TDSB’s unfair decision to only compensate administrators.*

Our members and the Board’s other education workers have exemplified goodwill and invested endless hours into this new teaching and learning reality. They deserve to be recognized and compensated fairly.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Brown
ETT President

CC: TDSB Trustees
Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Stephen Lecce, Ontario Minister of Education
Sam Hammond, ETFO President
Toronto MPPs