



Op-Ed: Hybrid Learning

Educators can't be two places at once [School Board] must say no to the hybrid learning model

No one can be in two places at once. That's a fact of life. But somehow, educators are being expected to do the impossible in school boards that are implementing hybrid learning.

In this fractured model, educators' attention is divided between the children peering into the classroom through a computer screen, and those attending class in person. This means a single teacher could be teaching 15 students in person at the same time they are supposed to be supporting 12 students at home on screens.

Whether you call it a home school virtual learning model, a community learning model or a hybrid learning model, the result is the same: it is terrible for students. It disproportionately affects students with special education needs and other students who are marginalized, and compounds inequities that already exist for Black, Indigenous and other racialized students. There is no equity of access to programs in hybrid learning, especially for students who don't have reliable internet access at home or the technology to use it. Put simply, the quality of education for our youngest students is being eroded.

Because the Ford government is not keeping elementary schools safe by funding smaller class sizes, some school boards are being forced to cut costs by implementing the hybrid model. If school boards were properly funded, none of them would opt to use this model, which is born out of a situation where next year's per-student funding is even lower than it is now.

Some boards are trying to do the same with less. The province must provide adequate funding and relieve the pressure school boards are facing, but the responsibility also lies with school boards.

Some boards have managed to avoid the hybrid model. Wherever possible, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario urges boards to follow their example. Hybrid learning leaves many students behind, and puts educators in the difficult situation of once again adapting to a situation that leaves them with few viable options for providing high-quality, equitable public education.

The hybrid model looks more cost-effective, but if you look past the budget, the human cost is clear.

The government has repeatedly said that in-class learning is best, and educators agree. ETFO calls on the government to protect and deliver high-quality public education.

Educators will do their best. They have been putting their best foot forward for children in Ontario over the 14 months of this pandemic. It is the government that is putting everyone in the public education system in an impossible position, and it's students who will suffer.

School boards must keep hybrid learning out of Ontario's classrooms.

Ontario students must have access to high-quality education, and it is time for decisions that are rooted in the success and well-being of every child.