

Good evening my name is Val DiGregorio and I am the President of local 3155 representing International Language Instructors.

First and foremost I want to preface my comments knowing that these are extremely challenging times. I would like to share our heartfelt support and solidarity with you and your families. The health and safety of all of our colleagues, students, their families and our entire school community must be our number one priority.

I would like to underscore that IL has a 40 plus-year legacy with this board and we are committed to doing anything that will be of assistance in order to keep everyone safe.

We are into a new reality, a new normal. One that will surely test all of us in ways we never imagined. Given the fluid movement of this pandemic it is easy to overlook the huge shift that has occurred over the span of only a few weeks.

Learning has moved from face to face to distance learning. This kind of rapid change comes at a price. For possibly the remainder of the academic year our students have lost their experience, that sense of physical community which has always defined school.

As instructors, we are ready to work differently to prepare for a new way of delivering our program. We offer our dedication and commitment to the TCDSB family to find alternatives to face-to-face learning. Flexibility, creativity and out of the box thinking are prerequisites for great outcomes. We are up to the challenge and we have some great ideas to offer.

I realize that this is a period of anxiety, especially for those members of our community whose family and friends are in the areas affected by this situation abroad. As instructors from many countries in the world we know too well the harsh reality of what is happening across the globe. We hold our breath every time the phone rings so afraid of the news from one of our loved ones overseas. Worrying and being stressed about the future of our jobs and the IL program takes a back seat to all of this.

This evening, I am respectfully asking the Trustees to defer the proposed policy changes regarding IL.

This has been a very difficult and challenging time for everyone and I feel that any matters that are non-urgent could be deferred and re-visited at a time when appropriate consultation can occur and families are able to respond to changes appropriately. To do otherwise at this time of anxiety may be unfair, insensitive and affecting ones mental health.

Furthermore, I would like to request that ALL non-urgent matters be deferred. For your sake and the entire TCDSB community. Keeping our school communities healthy and safe and ensuring the continuity of essential operations, should be the only concern.

We are committed to working with the board during this time in doing whatever we can for our students.

I am asking Trustees to please defer any decisions on this policy until we are able to return to our regular routines.

On behalf of the entire Executive of Local 3155 and our members we would like to thank the staff and Trustees for your continued hard work.

This is a trying moment, but given the knowledge, capacity, faith, commitment, and resolve that marks our community, I trust fully in our collective ability to weather this period in our history. During this critical time we should be working together as a Catholic community to bring some sort of normalcy to our students and their families.

Even during this uncertainty, I have every confidence in our ability to pull together with kindness, care and concern for the common good.

Thank you, keep safe and God Bless.