



Media Release

For immediate release

Research reports condemn mandatory virtual learning, Ontario Government's pandemic education policies - Recovery strategies for student learning needed

TORONTO, May 30, 2022 — The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) released today two research reports, which it funded wholly or in part, that have documented the impact on student learning caused by virtual learning and the Ontario Government's underfunding of publicly funded education during the pandemic.

"Insufficient government funding led to elementary schools with untenable class sizes, quad and octomesters in high schools that increased learning gaps, long periods of virtual learning, and more 'disastrous' hybrid learning in both elementary and high schools," said Dr. Paul Bocking, author of *Schools, Austerity & Privatization in the Pandemic Era*.

As a result, a majority of families, educators and students found the over-reliance on virtual and hybrid learning negatively impacted the academic and social-emotional needs of students, according to findings in *The Implications of Virtual Teaching and Learning in Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools, K-12* authored by Dr. Lisa Bayrami. That was especially so for students living in poverty, students with special needs, students from single parent homes and English language learners.

"Virtual learning led to declines in student motivation and readiness to learn, active and interactive engagement, hands-on learning and attention span. It had an adverse impact on the development of social and emotional skills such as problem-solving, and student wellbeing including anxiety and stress," said Dr. Bayrami.

The hybrid model of teaching and learning, in which educators attempted to engage students in face-to-face and virtual settings simultaneously disrupted learning, increased learning gaps and reduced student motivation and engagement. Bayrami concluded that "hybrid learning is fundamentally flawed and not sustainable."

The Ontario Government's seeming intent to privatize aspects of publicly funded education was also addressed by the Bocking report, particularly legislation that would transfer responsibility for e-learning courses previously provided by school boards to TVO/TFO, which will also market courses to private schools and overseas markets. OTF believes this, and the Ontario Government's two mandatory e-learning course credits for secondary students, are privatization efforts that put profits ahead of student learning.

"On the basis of these findings, there is no place for mandatory e-learning courses and hybrid learning in publicly funded education. This policy has failed to meet the needs of students, teachers and educators," said OTF President Chris Cowley. "We need the Ontario Government to focus on in-person learning, and commit to reducing class sizes, which provides for greater student-teacher interaction."

Given the research findings, OTF is also calling on the government to provide necessary funding for recovery strategies to address student learning gaps through teacher-led initiatives, provide more mental health supports for students and respect teacher voices and professional judgement that were ignored by the government during the pandemic.

To access the key findings – *The Implications of Virtual Teaching and Learning in Ontario’s Publicly Funded Schools, K-12* – click [here](#).

To access the full report – *The Implications of Virtual Teaching and Learning in Ontario’s Publicly Funded Schools, K-12*– click [here](#).

To access the key findings – *Schools, Austerity & Privatization in the Pandemic Era* – click [here](#).

To access the full report – *Schools, Austerity & Privatization in the Pandemic Era*– click [here](#).

The Ontario Teachers’ Federation is the advocate for the teaching profession in Ontario and for its 160,000 teachers. OTF members are full-time, part-time and occasional teachers in all the publicly funded schools in the province— elementary, secondary, public, Catholic and francophone.

- 30 -

For more information, contact

Chris Cowley

President

chris.cowley@otffeo.on.ca

416.966.3424, 1.800.268.7061