#### EXPERIENCES AND IMPACTS OF THE HYBRID MODEL FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

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#### National Discussion on the Future of Scottish Education #TalkScottishEducation

- ✓ The future is more digital *and* more human.
- The importance of learning, teaching, teachers and their work remains vital.



Secondary School Teachers' Experiences of Implementing Hybrid Learning and Quadmester Schedules in Peel, Ontario

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## **Context of Hybrid Learning in Ontario During Pandemic**



- Shift to emergency remote learning. Over time, Government requirements for instructional time and use of synchronous online teaching issued.
- Summer 2020, Ontario Ministry of Education required schools to operate according to one of three models: a) fully in person, b)
  hybrid/blended or c) fully remote. Parental choice was provided and students were permitted to switch models throughout the year.
- All parents/carers in Ontario continue to have right to request universal online schooling for their child.

## Methods

- In Fall 2021, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) District 19 (Peel) circulated an email to members asking for their experiences with the combined implementation of the quadmester schedule and hybrid learning, and the overall impact of the pandemic.
- Hybrid teaching involves a teacher simultaneously teaching students in-person, in-class and students online, at-home.
- Quadmester involves students being divided into two cohorts and each attends school for one week, taking two courses for one week and two other courses the next week, so four courses are completed by students over the span of nine weeks instead of five months as would be the case in a normal semester.

## **Research Questions and Analysis**

- **Q**uestion 1: How has the hybrid model impacted teaching?
- Question 2: How has the hybrid model impacted students' learning?
- Question 3: What impact did the quadmester model have on teachers?
- Question 4: What impact did the quadmester model have on students?
- Question 5: How has teachers' health been impacted by these measures?
- Question 6: How has students' health been impacted by these measures?
- Question 7: What other impacts of the response to the pandemic were identified by teachers?
- Analysis of all written responses (87 participating teachers)



Putting Teachers' Voices and Their Students' Experiences at the Centre of Education

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"If anyone making decisions actually does want the education system to be a vehicle for social change, please invite us frontline workers to tell you what needs to be done and undone"

(Teacher response)

# How as the hybrid model impacted teaching?



# Finding 1:

## An ineffective and inefficient approach to teaching

- No respondent expressed having positive experiences with the hybrid model.
- Teachers needed to prepare and teach differently for online and in-person students, particularly challenging for practical activities.
- Difficulty of engaging students online at home and students in-person in class at the same time.
- Setting up online and in-person classes plus technical issues took time away from instruction: "The rate at which the class is able to move through the curriculum is about 50% the rate at which it would be if we just taught in person".
- Negative impact for teaching quality: "Coming up with a lesson plan that will work remotely AND in person results in degraded quality".
- Difficulties of monitoring and engaging online students who limited their participation (camera off, not engaging in discussions or chat function).
- Concerns an emergency response was becoming permanent.

#### Finding 2: Challenges of conducing appropriate online student assessments

- Technical issues preventing students participating in or submitting assessments, or teachers being able to access submitted work.
- Teachers cannot fully monitor academic integrity for students working on assessments at home: "Assessments at home cannot be monitored for academic dishonesty students are complaining about the integrity of exams if students are at home".
- Challenges of evaluating all students adequately and fairly: "It is quite impossible to be TRULY fair in assessing in a hybrid model".

#### Finding 3:

# Increased workload and lack of adequate support to effectively provide the hybrid model

- Teachers who responded reported:
- Significant increases in their workload with the hybrid model.
- Lack of training on how to design and implement hybrid teaching.
- Issues in access to technology and technology support staff affecting capacity to do their job.
- Lack of supports to equip students to navigate hybrid teaching and learning.
- Challenges of inconsistency of attendance when students moved between inperson and online learning.
- Feeling overwhelmed with range of duties in teaching and supervising online and in-person students and attending to other administrative and teaching duties.

How has the hybrid model impacted students' learning?

# Differences in engagement between in-person and online students

- Challenges of engaging online students: "How to engage students who log in and do not participate at all - teachers cannot mark them absent even though there is no way to know if they are actually at their computer. These students work through posted material and submit work asynchronously."
- Limitations on engaging online students in practical activities requiring supervision: "It's not possible to do personal demos for the students at home (anywhere from 4 to 10 students on any given day) as I have to supervise the rest of the classroom full of students who have never done proper labs in person before...A few of my online students do not respond or show me anything."
- Changes in how teachers interact and move in classrooms due to hybrid: "My students aren't as engaged because I can't move around the room the same way."

#### Loss of shared student community

- Students not developing peer relationships and experiencing a shared coherent community: "The students aren't building relationships with their peers either. The two groups are fragmented and separated from each other. And students in both groups are afraid to be brave, or have difficult conversations, or try out new ideas because they simply don't know who is watching them. 'No way am I showing that to the kids in class," or "Miss, I'm not doing that on screen I don't know who is watching at home'."
- Teachers becoming translators and using digital and in-person techniques to build community: "Any time I do try to build connections between the two groups, I spend much of my time artificially 'translating' between them. 'You can't see at home, but Jayden is laughing', or 'Sophie is clapping in the chat'."

# Increasing inequities in students' experiences and in meeting their learning needs

- Limitations of hybrid model and teachers having to split attention between classroom and online could create inequities in experiences, especially for students participating online.
- Particular concerns for students who have additional needs, such as English Language Learners and students identified as having Special Education Needs: "Students who need the most support such as ELL/LD are underserved. Teachers are not able to devote extra time in class to support the students as they are splitting their attention between in class and online students".

#### Inequities in students' access to and use of technology

- Over 40% of respondents mentioned technology issues which hindered students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to provide support.
- Need to find free or low-cost digital learning solutions that work for all students in all locations.
- Encouragement of outdoor learning but no access for online learners to participate.

How has teachers' health been impacted by these measures?



#### Deteriorating mental health

- Over 80% of respondents explicitly stated they were extremely tired, stressed, anxious, and feeling their mental health was deteriorating: "The mental fatigue that we are experiencing as a result of hybrid teaching is indescribable".
- Breakdowns, feelings of defeat and isolation: "The reality of the situation is teachers are having breakdowns; breakdowns are taking the form of locking themselves in the bathroom and crying, closing the classroom and putting the blinds down and crying or laying on the desk with their head down".
- Workload and demands prevented teachers from attending to own mental health. Attention to wellbeing was seen as hollow: "We keep being told to "take a mental health webinar", as if we are the problem ourselves. We are NOT the problem; the problem is the model. We do not even have the TIME to take a mental health webinar."
- Attempting to make the best of it: "while on the inside I am crying, I put on a happy face and make the best of it".

#### Negative physical health impacts

- In addition to the impact of the overall anxiety and stress induced by teaching during the pandemic, the hybrid model was also specifically mentioned by about 15% of respondents as having a negative impact on their physical health.
- Hybrid teaching changes how a teacher can physically move in their classroom: "Since our classrooms are not set up with monitors in front of us while we look at the students in class, I am constantly spinning around in the room to view what I am sharing on the screen to make sure it is not confidential, turning to look at the online meeting, and rotating to adequately supervise students in the classroom. Trying to do all of this from a seated position so that I can reply to students messaging in the chat and write on a digital whiteboard is very hard on my back and joints in general".
- Difficulty of having time for bathroom breaks, eating, drinking.

# How has students' health been impacted by these measures?



#### Deteriorating mental health

- Respondents were very concerned about their students' current and long-term mental health: "Students have expressed mental health is going down, increased anxiety and depression; they dread going to school because of the model".
- Students becoming demotivated and loss of enthusiasm for learning, concerns about students who were struggling or feeling overwhelmed.
- Particular concerns about online students and feelings of isolation affecting mental health.

What other impacts of the pandemic were identified by teachers?



#### Changing professional lives and working conditions

- The amount of work and stress levels experienced by teachers led many to feel demotivated and unable to perform their duties with the same passion and dedication as before: "It is the first time in a 20-year career, which I love, where I'm strongly considering a stress leave".
- Over 20% of respondents expressed concerns about not being fully able to meet their students' needs and frustrations about not being able to perform their job as well as they normally would, making them feel "like a failure" no matter how hard they tried.
- Respondents expressed that the quadmester and hybrid models made them feel "disrespected", "undervalued", "unappreciated", and even "abused", "betrayed", and "mistreated" by their employer.
- Many respondents expressed feelings of dissatisfaction at being unheard, unsupported, and under-valued by their employers.
- Several respondents appreciated the opportunity to share their voices and experiences through OSSTF D19's research.

#### Negative impacts on personal life

- Difficulty maintaining healthy work-life balance.
- Feelings of "failure" at work spilling over into feelings of "failure" in roles and responsibilities in personal life.
- Difficulty disconnecting from work and feeling of exhaustion impacting personal time: "Weeknights, I can't sleep. Weekends, I can't get up."

#### Considering leaving the teaching profession

- Almost 20% of respondents explicitly commented that they thought the current situation was not sustainable professionally and that they had a desire to leave the profession: "To be honest, it's making me not want to be a teacher anymore as it takes the soul out of teaching and learning. And for me to say that is pretty huge because normally I love my job."
- About 10% of the respondents stated that school board's measures had caused them to "no longer love teaching".





The responses from teachers identified the following impacts of the hybrid model for teaching and learning:

- It is an ineffective and inefficient approach to teaching and learning;
- It is challenging to conduct appropriate online student assessments;
- There has been increased workload and lack of adequate support to effectively implement the hybrid model;
- There were differences in student engagement between in-person and online learners (with online learners being more negatively impacted);
- There has been a loss of shared student community;
- There has been increasing inequities in students' experiences and in meeting their learning needs;
- There were inequities in students' access to, and use of, technology.

Concerns were also identified about teachers and students' health and impacts for teachers' professional and personal lives.



Teacher mental health during COVID-19 Pandemic Research Report



# The future may be more digital, but it absolutely must be more human.