

Labour Disputes

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Tips and advice for Home & School Members:

- Employee groups may be instructed not to intervene/cross lines: this is good advice for parents as well.
- Do not involve children in taking sides: students need to develop and maintain a positive relationship with the school staff.
- Use this situation as an opportunity for you and your children to learn about the history of the labour movement.
- Be patient and understanding. It is important not to jeopardize relationships over a temporary problem.

As Home and School members we work to foster co-operation between the home and the school in order to obtain the best school experience possible for each student. Unfortunately, there are situations which arise that are out of our control. A school staff labour dispute is one such situation. No one is happy when labour disputes disrupt the education system. OFHSA members often wonder what direction/action they should take during such times.

Parents want what is best for their children and, because of that, may find it easy to be drawn into the conflict. The main objective of OFHSA members is to make all parties aware that the welfare and education of students is the most important focus of the education system.

Several Things You Must Keep In Mind

- Parents should always be advocates for the students.
- Parents should ask that all sides focus on the students. It is clearly not in the best interests of the students that their education be disrupted.
- Parents must take a neutral position. It is virtually impossible for parents to know what is going on at the bargaining table or to have a crystal-clear understanding of the bargaining process.
- Parents have the right to demand that the issues be resolved quickly.

It is the policy of the Ontario Federation

- That the terms and conditions of employment of teachers be negotiated by both trustees and teachers. (1992)
- That after a reasonable recognized period of negotiating time has expired, and no later than 60 days after ceilings and grants have been announced by the Minister of Education, settlement between school boards and teachers' federations should be by final offer selection or compulsory binding arbitration, the method to be selected by both parties in common or, failing that, by the Minister (1992)
- That OFHSA support binding arbitration beginning immediately following unsuccessful mediation between School Boards and their Teachers' Federations (1995)



Job Action

At times educational workers express their discontent through job actions other than full-fledged work stoppages and picket lines. Increasingly they use work-to-rule campaigns. Generally work-to-rule means that school staff perform only legally required duties.

Although this is difficult for students and parents, it is not a reduction of critical service, and should be seen as preferable to a strike.

Home and School Associations may find themselves involved when educational workers state they will no longer be involved in anything 'extra' such as assisting with programs or fundraising events. Whenever possible, maintain your distance from these situations. If that is not possible then consider the following:

- Consider putting your fundraising activities on hold. The job action may be of a short duration and you will avoid any animosity by being respectful of the situation. Home and School is not just about fundraising and here is your chance to demonstrate that fact.
- Plan ways to conduct your activities without requiring staff involvement: collect money and collate orders or distribute product from a member's home or a community centre. Hold meetings off-site.
- Keep in close contact with your school principal. They will have knowledge of what would be helpful and what would not. Do let your principal know if you have any concerns for the safety of students. At all times students should be adequately supervised.
- Other employee groups will probably have been instructed by their unions or federations not to intervene and not to pick up any of the responsibilities normally held by work-to-rule staff. That is good advice for parents too.
- Communicate with other parents to see how they are coping and to share ideas.
- Do not involve your child in taking sides or expressing frustration. Your child needs to develop a positive relationship with the school staff they work with everyday.
- Be patient and understanding. These situations are stressful for everyone. Don't jeopardize relationships over temporary problems.
- Contact your MPP to let them know of your concerns.
- Contact the OFHSA office with any questions or concerns you may have.