

From: Ian Hillman

Date: Tuesday, January 25, 2022 at 8:29 PM

Subject: Briefs on Day Custodians and Technology for Education Assistants

Dear Trustees and Senior Management,

Technology for remote learning and virtual meetings have become the new “normal.” Availability of technology has been an issue for CUPE staff. Teachers have been supplied laptops by the District. Education Assistants who are in the classroom to support students and teachers were not given this technology. After many meetings and great co-operation between the District and CUPE a solution was found. The District and the Union were able to use, on a one time basis, funds from the Learning Improvement Fund to purchase iPads for all Education Assistants in the District. It was a proud moment and I believe not done elsewhere. This enabled Education Assistants to have technology available to be able to supplement learning with their students. Who new how valuable this would be when Covid hit in the Spring of 2020. Since Covid, essentially all memos, policies, absence reporting, injury reports and processes have gone online. So the need for Technology was already an issue. The use of Technology has become a necessity, not something nice to have. It is evident all staff must be provided technology by the district. Not only for Education Assistants but all staff. The Learning Improvement Fund is given to districts on a yearly basis by the Province. Unfortunately the fund has only increased slightly from year to year. As the number of Education Assistants has increased substantially the strain on the fund has increased. Currently, the fund is used to give Education Assistants one hour per week for Preparation and Consultation time. There is no extra money available from this fund to fund technology. The district has to find funds to do this.

In the 2020-2021 school year the district received \$669,476.00. To give 420 Education Assistants one extra hour per week costs \$576,870.00. To provide three extra hours per week to 22 Learning Services Education Assistants cost \$90,651.00 for a total cost of \$667,521 leaving a surplus of \$1,955.00.

This school year the district has 451 full time Education Assistants. Due to this increase, the fund is spending more than \$58,000 than the District is receiving in annual funding. There is money in reserve to continue paying the extra hour but not forever. Considering the shortage of Education Assistants and issues with recruitment and retention the District needs to maintain this extra hour to have an advantage over other districts in being able to hire Education Assistants. Therefore the District needs to fund ongoing Technology needs for CUPE staff. Not from the LIF fund.

Day Custodians in Elementary Schools.

As the Pandemic continues, Daytime Custodians in Elementary Schools are scheduled to be eliminated by the District. Ask any parent, staff member and students how grateful they are to have had Day Custodians in their school. But that, unfortunately is set to end soon. The cleanliness of the schools and corresponding safety and feeling of being safer cannot be stated enough. In addition to the protection against Covid, we have seen a reduction in other illnesses and corresponding decrease in absenteeism by staff and students since the implementation of Day Custodians. All thanks to the hard work and dedication of these Custodians. They are the unsung protectors of everyone in the K-12 sector. They are integral to keep our schools safe and clean. Custodians have been cleaning and disinfecting our schools on a continual basis keeping the virus in check. They are regularly cleaning desks and other high touch areas. They keep our washrooms clean and supplied with paper towels and soap.

They patrol the school grounds for hazards and help with school functions. Most of us remember our Custodian when we were kids. They were there for us. Custodians need to be in the schools not only for the pandemic but whenever the school is in session during the daytime. I cannot imagine the fear and anxiety that would effect parents, staff and students if you do non continue to fund these valuable caretakers of our schools. Removal of day Custodians will bring back serious Health and Safety issues for the School Community. The standard of cleanliness cannot go backwards. The District needs to make a commitment to staff, parents and students to keep day Custodians. Thousands and thousands of staff and students need the safety and security they provide.

Sincerely yours,

Ian Hillman

President, Cupe Local 716, Richmond School Board Employees Union