
From: Mary Cobb [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2017 10:38 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Submission for Law Amendments Committee

Hello,

These are the words I was not given the opportunity to share at the Law Amendments Hearings.

Sincerely,
Mary Cobb

I ask that before I start you take a moment to let go of the politics and open your heart and mind to the struggles of Nova Scotia's teachers and students. We have never been this vocal and this desperate to be heard... we need our Leaders to be bold and courageous and advocate for us - we do not need a legislated contract that does not address the needs of our students.

Teaching is both a calling and a passion project. I love to teach, I really love teaching science and most importantly I love my students. I have many inspiring memories from my teaching career that will always be held close to my heart. However, the last few years of my thirteen years in the classroom have been increasingly challenging. This is largely due to unmanageable class sizes filled with significant needs and increasing administrative demands unrelated to teaching. After a particularly difficult year that included a class of 38 students I knew that I simply could not keep up with the workload. I was feeling increasingly negative and drained and very discouraged. I felt as if the system was working against me and that my voice was not being heard. I knew that if something did not change I would run the risk of becoming the kind of teacher I promised myself I would never become. I had too much respect and care for my students to let that happen.

So I did make a change, I am currently a full time student on an unpaid educational leave. I did not make the decision to take time off from teaching lightly, there were many heartfelt and painful discussions with family and friends and several tears shed. I felt significant guilt for "jumping ship" and leaving the challenging career I love so dearly behind without sticking it though to find a solution. But maybe my solution is to study, research and reflect in order to return to the system more informed and better able to speak up for change.

I am aware of the privilege of my situation and appreciate that not all teachers could afford such an opportunity. It is because of this privilege that I feel a responsibility to speak up for colleagues, students and parents facing their own struggles with Nova Scotia's education system. I honestly never realised how disempowered I was as an educator until I started to study within a different field. I had been spoken down to for so long that I lost my sense of autonomy as a professional. I had no say in educational decision making despite having thirteen years of classroom experience. As a graduate student I am developing a newfound independence that has been encouraged and supported by my professors. I have grown stronger, more confident and have reclaimed ownership over my professionalism. To say it simply, I have found my voice.

I want to use my voice to say that real changes needs to happen in our classrooms, we simply must do better for our students. We need to bring teachers into the decision making process and our educational leaders must stay in touch with the everyday realities in the classroom. Those in charge should visit Nova Scotia classrooms, speak to students and teachers and be brave enough to make changes that will free up teachers' time so they can return to what they do best, teaching! We need the system to care for, encourage and support teachers the same way teachers care for, encourage and support their students. Teachers are asking for help - please listen to their voices and act in order to improve Nova Scotia's education system for our most precious resource, our children!