

An open letter to all HRCE staff continuing to work during the CUPE 5047 job action.

From the parent of a child who is currently segregated from school and has been for the last 1 month,

Yesterday, I requested to be removed from my daughter's class list. This was so I would no longer be sent information on class activities and fun that she would not get to participate in, and thankfully, that was done.

I do wish to say one more thing though, and I hope this will be passed along to all the staff at the schools within HRCE and beyond, because I'm sure every parent of a segregated child feels something similar right now.

I never thought I would be so disappointed in this school community, but I am. I have nothing personal against any one person in the schools, I'm sure individually, you are good people. What I cannot believe, is the community that originally made my daughter feel accepted, like she was valued just as much as the next person, is now continuing as if nothing is wrong, as if this is all okay, as if there are not hundreds of children being denied their human right to an education at this current moment. Their schools have become the bullies that they ask others not to be. Their schools deny these children an education without any respect or explanation to those individuals as to why this is being done to them. That was left up to us, the parents. We appreciate that, I assure you.

Growing up, I was instilled with a few key values to follow in life.

- Work hard.
- Be kind, but fair.
- There is always someone who has it worse than you do.
- Fight for what is right, for what you believe in. Fight hard.
- Stand up for yourself and for those who can't.

I guess that was not the case for all of us.

You, within the schools, the teachers, the principals, and the administrative staff, have more power to demonstrate how valuable these children are than we (the parents and support workers) do. How valuable the support workers they need are. The support workers that they need to provide them with the education they have a right to receive. But you do not. You sit back quietly, afraid, I guess, and continue on as normal, while the parents and support workers give everything we have and then some. For a fight that should be everyone's fight - not just ours.

I am ashamed to admit that I belong to a community where ableism exists, where people like my daughter, like her amazing and hardworking support workers, the pre-primary students, their teachers, and all of the other supporting staff that, to me, would seem crucial to properly delivering on your promise of a quality education, are treated as if they don't belong, as if they are outcasts, as if they really are not people at all.

I hope you have a good summer, but I also hope you use the time to remember all of those you have forgotten and all the damage that is being done.

We might see you again in the fall.

Thank you,

Melissa Faulkner