

School board will investigate parent's complaint

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"We'll be looking into it and talking to people who can confirm or deny what happened," she said. McFadden couldn't release the teacher's name, citing confidentiality rules for the board's personnel investigations.

In a phone interview on Monday, Mat-tear said that she initially thought about anonymously contacting the school about the incident, but when other parents began communicating their concerns about the posters, she spoke with a *Toronto Star* reporter Friday night.

"I don't want to target this particular teacher, because I think he's a fantastic

teacher, but I think there's a much bigger issue in schools in general of some teachers using the classroom as a pulpit for their political beliefs. People are afraid to bring it up because they're concerned about how it will impact their children. We as parents need to be more direct with our kids about what's being discussed in the classroom," she added.

"I would just like the teacher to explain to the class why what happened last week was not appropriate, and if not the teacher, at least someone from the school."

McFadden said the board has a "verbal policy" with both the elementary and secondary teachers' unions that prohibits dis-

cussion of the labour dispute beyond the answering of simple questions.

"There's absolutely no politicizing of the issues in the classroom," said McFadden. "I've not had one case where that's been suggested, except for this one."

The school's principal Lisa Coffey referred questions to the HDSB.

A handful of parents said their children reported that a male art teacher wrote a list of slogans at the front of his Grade 7 class on Thursday and asked his students to choose one to write on a poster.

Options included "My Teacher Taught Me About Democracy (And it's not Spelled Bill 115)," and "My Teacher is Being Bul-

lied, and I Won't Be a Bystander," said Mat-tear, a mother of four with two daughters at the school.

Mattear said she visited the school principal on Friday to formally complain.

"She (Coffey) said that she'd had a talk with the teacher" and that she would address the matter, said Mattear.

According to what Mattear heard from her daughter, the teacher collected the posters at the end of class, ostensibly to use as part of the planned "day of protest" against the government's imposition of employment contracts under the controversial Bill 115.

—With files from *Torstar News Service*

Cancelled school protest a headache for parents

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

Pedestrian and vehicle traffic outside George Kennedy Public School in Georgetown was just a fraction of what it usually is last Friday afternoon.

Even though a massive one-day protest, that would have forced public school boards to close their elementary schools was stopped at the last minute, classrooms at George Kennedy were half-filled—at best—on Friday, said students and parents after the bell sounded at 3:40 p.m.

The promised job action by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), representing 76,000 public elementary school teachers and support workers across the province, was quashed by the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) early Friday morning.

The OLRB deemed the labour actions as unlawful following a 13-hour hearing that began Thursday afternoon. The OLRB hearing was called after Premier Dalton McGuinty challenged the potential labour disruption.

Parent Arthur Sousa picked up one of his two boys at the end of classes Friday, but his son in Grade 3 didn't attend school that day because arrangements had been made for him to spend the night at a friend's house. Sousa didn't learn until after 7 a.m. that teachers would, in fact, be in class on Friday and rushed his son, a Senior Kindergarten student, to school, only to find a scant few students in the halls.

"This has thrown my whole day for a loop and it's still costing me money because one of my kids didn't go to school," said Sousa.

"This is the (provincial) government's fault. The teachers are having their rights taken away from them and this should have been settled in December. It's gone on for too long. The Catholic schools are all done. What's taking these guys so

long? I don't get that. The sad part will be when people start pulling their kids out of public schools and putting them in the Catholic system. They're going to lose their funding and that's pretty stupid."

Buses were also delayed due to the inclement weather Friday morning that just added to a frustrating day for some parents.

"The only inconvenience was the fact that the kids had in their minds that they had a day off, and then transitioning them back to the fact that they were going to school was a bit of an uphill battle," said one parent, who didn't want his name published.

And while it appears that the threat of further one-day protests has been eliminated for the foreseeable future, extra-curricular activities are still on hold as part of the labour dispute, despite McGuinty's pleas to the teachers' unions to lift the boycott.

"I don't particularly blame the teachers," said Cathy Hammond, whose daughter, Clare Dean, was one of six in attendance out of what would normally be a Grade 5 class of 22. "I think there were some strong-arm manoeuvring tactics going on there. I know some teachers in that position and honestly, they weren't too happy with what the union pulled, because they were told by higher-ups not to do it and the union basically said, 'No, we are doing this.' A lot of parents I've spoken to are saying, 'What side do you take?'"

—With files from *Dominik Kurek, Metroland Media Group*



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