

Forcing teachers to volunteer kills spirit

BY GIANNI COLAVECCHIA
Staff Writer

Gary Boguski has coached high school sports for nearly three decades, encouraging students to put their hearts into everything they do.

But he believes coaches will no longer operate on this principle because of new legislation forcing teachers to supervise extra-curricular activities.

Last Wednesday, the province introduced legislation requiring high school teachers to carry out a bevy of duties, ranging from dances to chess tournaments.

Ontario Premier Mike Harris said teachers will welcome the legislation, but a quick check shows they and their students beg to differ.

Boguski, head of the health and physical education department at Bayview Secondary School in Richmond Hill, said the legislation could force teachers to supervise activities in which they have no real interest.

Teachers who have coached have done it because they have a love of the sport that they want to coach, he said, after helping students through a weight-training session.

"I think they (legislators) really have not looked at this the way they should,"

Ann Stong, vice-chairperson of York Region's Catholic board, echoed those comments.

She noted labour unrest has hit her board hard and said the legislation won't make teachers happy. As a result, she added, students likely won't get the best guidance possible.

"I'm not sure I like this. It's important to develop spirit and enthusiasm in school. You develop spirit and enthusiasm and then it flows to the student," she said.

Education Minister Janet Ecker has promised the legislation will not lead to situations such as art teachers being ordered to coach football teams.

The legislation will require school principals to assign any outstanding extra-curricular duties to teachers. Vice-principals will have a say in which teachers gets what activities.

The idea behind the move, government officials have said, is to end the kind of labour disruption that has marred the educational experience of students over the past few years.

In jurisdictions across Ontario, teachers have refused to take part in extra-curricular activities because of Bill 160, the controversial education legislation that has increased their classroom time.

York North MPP Julia Munro said Wednesday's announcement is an attempt to give students a higher standard of extra-curricular activities.

"The effort is to bring this to a situation that everyone can expect. In York Region, in both boards, there's been a tradition of providing excellent extra-curricular activities."

Samir Damani, an OAC student at Bayview, likes the idea. He said he became frustrated two years ago when teachers refused to coach sports teams.

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