

news



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N O V A S C O T I A T E A C H E R S U N I O N

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Teacher shortage impacting most vulnerable students according the NSTU survey

(Halifax-Kjipuktuk, NS) Teachers are raising concerns about the ongoing teacher shortage and how it's impacting students, particularly the most vulnerable, according to a recent membership survey conducted by the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.

The poll completed by 1,936 members between October 21-31, indicates that 70 per cent of teachers have lost marking and prep time to cover for an absent colleague since 2022, similarly 29 per cent have been asked to supervise multiple classrooms simultaneously due to the shortage. Eighty-one per cent of teachers say they've felt pressure to attend school while feeling sick, or cancel medical appointments, because of a lack of teachers.

Teachers were also given the opportunity to provide examples of how the shortage is impacting their students as part of the survey. Many expressed concern that teachers who specialize in providing support to vulnerable students are often first to be pulled away from their normal duties to fill-in for a colleague.

As one teacher states: "Loss of specialist time in classrooms is impacting my most vulnerable students. Resource teachers, early literacy support teachers, (school) counsellors having to cover other classrooms while teachers are out means less intervention for those who need it most."

Another literacy support teacher describes: "I am one of the first people asked to cover for a teacher when substitutes are not available. This leaves the students I am supposed to be working with without support. The students I support every day are vulnerable for a variety of reasons and should not be at a disadvantage because of these shortages."

NSTU President Ryan Lutes says it's time the Province takes action to address the worsening shortage which is having a profound impact on our students along with school safety. The NSTU has been calling on the province to develop a teacher recruitment and retention strategy while also increasing pay for substitute teachers, who are currently amongst the lowest paid in Canada.

"The shortage is making it increasingly difficult for teachers to develop and prepare those rich learning experiences that leave a lasting impression on students. At the same time kids in crisis, or those who are the most vulnerable are not always able to get the enhanced one-on-one attention they require. Our kids can't wait, we need to address the shortage now, so every student can get the support they both need and deserve," says Lutes.

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