Students Say NO!

2019 Student Walkout
@WRDSB_SAYSNO

Monday April 1, 2019

Dear WRDSB Trustees, Superintendents & Leadership Staff:

As you are aware, recent changes to our public education system in Ontario will have a significant impact on the quality of education for students both across the province and locally in the Waterloo Region. Over the past month, the Ford government has announced several changes to our public education system, most notably including re-allocation and cuts of funds for special education programs and grants students rely upon, an increase in the average class size from 22 to 28 students at the high school level, and a mandatory four e-learning credits (one each year) for high school students to graduate. Other recent impacts to education include expected cuts to support staff, office administration, leadership & arts programming through re-allocation of funds to STEM programs, cuts to Indigenous learning curriculum & autism supports, and the province-wide classroom cellphone ban that lacks direction and clear regulation.

As students, we see the impact this will have on the quality of our education, with crowded classrooms, a lack of staff support from both teachers and educational assistants, unhealthy learning environments, and an overall failure to provide education that is suitable in the modern world. Looking toward the future, we as students have made the decision to fight for the education we deserve, ensuring all students have equal opportunity to learn and thrive in the public education system.

In response to these cuts, on Thursday, April 4th thousands of students from across the WRDSB will be walking out of classrooms at 1:15 PM in protest of these cuts and to show our disapproval of how the education system is being managed at the provincial level. Our student leaders have been working closely with high school administration to ensure our protests are safe, meaningful, and effective. We have also been working to educate both students and our wider community on these cuts, and how they impact the daily lives of students. Budget cuts to our schools are budget cuts to our future.

Following the 1:15 PM walkout, we are organizing a board-wide student protest at 3 PM at Kitchener City Hall. We have invited local MPPs and other community members to speak on how these cuts will impact education, and how we need to act as a community to reverse these decisions and ensure equitable education for years to come. We are expecting hundreds of students to attend the protest, and are also working with local media to share our message with the broader community.

We are informing you, as trustees, along with the Waterloo Region District School board of this protest to both spread awareness, and challenge you on how we work to ensure the best possible education for all students - no matter their circumstances. As student leaders, we encourage you to support the students who choose to exercise their legal right to protest in whatever way is appropriate and meaningful. We understand the politics involved in supporting initiatives such as this, however, we hope to emphasize what's at stake: the jobs of thousands of teachers across the province, and the quality of education for our future leaders.

Beyond support, however, we also challenge you as the decision makers of our school board to consider how we can take our message to the next level, finding creative ways to educate the public on these cuts. We want to see students thrive in the classroom, and have all WRDSB educators keep their jobs without sacrifice. We would be very interested to work with you to find ways we can educate our broader community, raise awareness, and ultimately reverse these decisions. We have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of thousands of students - and we hope you will join us in this mission.

As we prepare for the walkout and protest on April 4th, we have launched several initiatives that educate our student and community population.

- We have established a petition to stop these cuts on change.org, with nearly 50,000 signatures. We encourage all school board members to sign the petition and share it with others. chng.it/m7yfnrzYX6
- We have created a social media page to share information on the walkout and protest, @WRDSB_SaysNo. We are also working with the umbrella of provincial walkout organizers who estimate 100,000 students will walk out across the province on April 4th, @studentssayno
- Our leaders have made a video explaining why we are choosing to walk out, which is being shared among students. You can find it on our instagram: @WRDSB_SaysNo
- We have reached out to local organizations who are impacted by the government cuts and will have information booths set-up at the protest on April 4th at city hall.
- We are asking all students and WRDSB staff to wear red and black on April 4th in support of the protest and fight for education.

We appreciate your willingness to listen to the voices of students in our school board and look forward to working with you to help ensure the quality of our education for years to come.

Sincerely,

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