A Voice for Ontario Teachers in Disaster and Emergency Planning: A Case study of Teachers' Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic

S. Cowan, J. Paterson

Acknowledgments

Abstract

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic revealed a stark disconnect within the Ontario education system between the decision-makers at the system level (the Ministry of Education and school boards) and classroom teachers tasked with implementing these decisions. Interviews for this study provided primary and secondary school teachers in central and southern Ontario an opportunity to share their experience teaching during an extended public health disaster. The teachers focused the conversation on their frustration at the top-down decision-making from the school board and Ministry of Education and expressed that their needs as teachers were not adequately considered in the planning and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They explained a range of impacts resulting from the lack of inclusion in the decision-making, including the erosion of their ability to carry out classroom planning, the deterioration of the quality of education delivered, and the harm to their well-being. The findings of this research recommend that one way to address this gap in the Ontario education system and mitigate the damaging effects, such as those experienced during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, is for meaningful consultation between classroom teachers and system-level decision-makers. The sentiments expressed by the participants in this study are a call for emergency practitioners within the Ontario education system to do better when it comes to including the voices and needs of teachers in preparedness and response efforts during extended public health emergencies.

Keywords: Ontario, teachers, COVID-19 pandemic, disaster and emergency management, public health, planning, response

A Voice for Ontario Teachers in Disaster and Emergency Planning

Classroom teachers are resilient, but at what cost? Safety and resiliency are two aspects of emergency management, but ones that may have been compromised in the Ontario education system during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.[3] The COVID-19 pandemic provided an excellent opportunity to understand the classroom-level effects of the top-down emergency planning currently observed within the Ontario education system (Government of Ontario, 1997; OACP, 2007; Education Act, 1990). In Ontario, school boards are responsible for creating, maintaining, and carrying out emergency plans in the interest of staff and student safety (Education Act, 1990; Government of Ontario, 1997). With the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19)[4] virus and its declaration as a pandemic in early 2020, the Ontario Ministry of Education and school boards responded by developing alternative education delivery formats to comply with local public health guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2021a; Ministry of Education, 2021b). At various times throughout the pandemic, these alternate delivery formats included in-person, online synchronous and asynchronous formats, and a hybrid model mixing virtual and in-person delivery. The evolution of these guidelines continues to develop in consultation with the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Education, local school boards, and local health units.

Teachers were frequently required to adopt and implement changing guidelines and alternate delivery formats to maintain educational continuity for students (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). The variability and frequent changes observed can be attributed to a lack of pandemic preparedness within the Ontario education system. Further, competing priorities between the

---

[3] The authors would like to recognize the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of writing.

[4] The COVID-19 pandemic and virus are described throughout this paper referred to by participants as "COVID".

Ministry of Education, Public Health Ontario, and individual school boards created barriers to the decision-making process. This resulted in reactive and, at times, conflicting decision-making that directly impacted teachers in Ontario. Ontario teachers' unions and associations frequently vocalised that teachers have not been adequately consulted, nor have their needs been considered in the planning and policy decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic (Brown et al., 2022; Vinet-Roy et al., 2021). Despite these calls for inclusion, teachers in Ontario were negatively impacted by sustained system-level decision-making.

A review of existing literature regarding emergency planning and response within the education system revealed that most school planning is concentrated on extreme weather and seismic activity,[5] violent incidents, and individual medical emergencies (Kano et al., 2007; Lindle, 2008; Olympia et al., 2005). Prior to the onset of COVID-19, there was limited research on the potential or actual impacts of a pandemic on the education sector. Of this research, most focused heavily on influenza pandemics, stemming from the 2009 H1N1 pandemic (Awofisayo et al., 2013). Within emerging COVID-19 literature, researchers have focused on the impacts on the general student population, as well as inequitable impacts for parents, administrators, and students with different educational needs (Bhamani et al., 2020; Hauseman, C. et al., 2020; Pollock, 2020; AlAteeq et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). This trend seemingly mirrors the lived experience of Ontario teachers in feeling unheard, with a few notable exceptions. Through conversations with Ontario secondary teachers regarding remote learning, Cooper et al. (2021) found that system-level policies were poorly communicated to teachers. Specifically, Cooper et al. (2021) highlighted the difficulties of transitioning to an online environment and identified negative impacts on the socio-emotional well-being of teachers. Similarly, Farhadi & Winston

---

[5] Within much of the reviewed literature, extreme weather and seismic events are often referred to as "natural disasters." The authors of this paper have moved away from the use of this terminology to align with a more holistic understanding of what has been referred to as natural hazards in the past.

(2021) examined how policy enactment and interpretation have impacted the experiences of Alberta teachers and have failed to account for the needs of teachers. This paper builds on the existing literature by creating space to explore the impacts experienced by teachers at the classroom level because of organisation-level decision-making in the Ontario education system during the COVID-19 pandemic. The inclusion of teachers' perspectives and experiences is extremely valuable as school boards and educators prepare for increasing disasters and emergencies in Ontario.

COVID-19 in Ontario During the Interview Period

The constant evolution of the COVID-19 virus required a dynamic response in every sector. Regions in Ontario experienced variable COVID-19 transmission rates and case counts throughout the pandemic. During the period discussed with participants (March 2020 - March 2021), examples of public health measures in Ontario schools included:

- Masking for all staff and students,

- Limiting gathering size and contact through smaller school cohorts,

- Maintaining social distancing of 2 metres, and

- Frequent sanitization of classrooms.

Between March 2020, and March 2021, two province-wide school closures occurred. In the fall semester of 2020, logistical decisions about education delivery formats were the responsibility of school boards, with Ministry of Education approval, while the closing and reopening of schools in the winter 2021 term were mandated by local public health units (Gallagher-MacKay et al., 2021).

Participants in this study represented a diverse range of geographic areas, experience levels (7-28 years teaching), and grades and subjects taught (Appendix A). Most participants

taught in-person or via a hybrid model when allowed, except one participant who taught

exclusively online during the pandemic. Participants were located in Simcoe Muskoka, Toronto,

and Peel - three different public health units within Central and Southern Ontario.

Materials and Methods

Elementary and secondary teachers from across Ontario were asked to participate in this

study. Participants were recruited through public social media posts and targeted recruitment

emails based on recommendations from key informants. The sample size was limited to ten

participants, using convenience sampling. The following inclusion criteria were used in

recruiting participants:

- Teaching is their primary profession (full-time, contract, or supply),

- Teach in an elementary or secondary institution,

- Currently employed by an Ontario school (private or public), and

- Taught between March 2020 to March 2021

As this study was specifically interested in the experiences of teachers, the following groups

were excluded: teaching assistants/aides; administrators; childcare providers; librarians;

custodians; and other staff members employed within an educational institution.

Data collection took place during the period of school reopening between February 16

and April 12, 2021. Written consent was obtained from each participant and reviewed before the

start of each interview. Interviews were conducted using Zoom video conferencing, began in a

structured format asking for demographic information including years of experience and

grade/subject(s) taught, and then proceeded with an unstructured discussion that began with the

prompt: "Please describe your experience teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic" (Appendix

B). Each interview lasted approximately one hour. All interviews were transcribed and reviewed

by the researchers for accuracy. Interview data was anonymized by assigning participants a pseudonym and by removing possible identifiers such as school names. Transcripts were read by each researcher independently, and emergent codes were captured through inductive analysis. Codes were then compiled by researchers and were classified into four themes: teacher's ability to plan for the classroom, quality of education delivered, lack of institutional support, and wellbeing.

Results

This section identifies the main themes derived from the interviews.[6] These themes are amplified further to illustrate the major impacts on the delivery of education resulting from teachers being excluded from the system-level decision-making on the delivery of education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Impacts include:

- Hindered classroom planning,

- Diminished quality of education,

- Frustration stemming from a lack of institutional support, and

- Harm to the well-being of teachers.

Hindered Classroom Planning

All participants stressed that the classroom planning process is foundational to successful teaching. Chris[7] described planning as an ongoing effort throughout their career, "In my experience as a teacher, you['re] never done planning and learning and getting ready to be a teacher." Pursuant to this, participants frequently discussed that the reactive decision-making and frequent changes to mandates hindered their ability to plan effectively. Chris described the

---

[6] In many cases, portions of the conversation with each participant are quoted.

[7] Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper to protect the identity of participants.

reactive decision-making they observed during the COVID-19 pandemic response, "Teachers have kind of felt that the government makes decisions and then, what one decision sounds like the best plan, a week later they do something different […] We've basically gotten used to being told that tomorrow, anything can change." Chris later described the numerous changes teachers had to adapt to during the first year of the pandemic:

> Imagine you go from the spring teaching, which had its own complexities, to this now, teaching the same course and it has to be done in 22 days. [...] By Christmas we were told we weren't going back [in-person], and we were in the red zone[8] and so we shifted again. [...] Then all of January I taught remotely online through a synchronous daily lesson. […] And in February - it was either 11th or 12th - we showed up back in the classroom and just pivoted again. So, [we] went from the online environment back to the human being, in-person, environment.

Andrea echoed the importance of planning and elaborated on the impact that the frequent changes have had on their ability to teach:

> The hardest part about this is not being able to plan anything - ever. […] It's the yo-yo[ing] that makes it so hard. There's no consistency. […] The unknown is always hardest. We're a culture of control freaks who like to plan everything. And when you have no control and can plan nothing, it is really hard.

In response to recommendations from the Ministry and school boards, some teachers were put in a position of having to plan for and teach in a hybrid model (in-person and virtual). Tim

---

[8] On November 3, 2020, the Ontario government implemented a colour-coded zone model which categorised regions based on local case numbers (Katawazi, 2021). The colour zones corresponded with a set of public health measures believed to be appropriate for the perceived viral risk. The red zone ("control") is the second highest of the five colour zones.

described additional frustration with trying to plan for this, "I got to come up with the lesson for tomorrow's asynchronous class and what the hell am I doing in my in-person class while that's going on? Your brain is just going in seven different directions". Overall, Chris summarised the impact of changing expectations from the Ministry and school board on teachers' ability to plan, "We've just thrown out the consistency that used to exist in our job. […] Now there's no sense in planning officially more than a couple days ahead. […] It has obliterated our ability to do long-range planning."

<u>Diminished Quality of Education</u>

Multiple participants expressed feeling like their ability to teach was hindered to the point of comparing their current practice to being a brand-new teacher. This sentiment conveyed feelings of frustration and inadequacy as participants attempted to cope with the prescribed changes while delivering quality lessons. Chris described how the transition to virtual learning impeded their ability to use their experience:

> Introducing COVID in my 11th or 12th year of teaching, in my experience, it was almost the equivalent to being pushed back 10 years and starting as a brand-new teacher. Your tools in the classroom are very different; the online environment doesn't present the same opportunities for human connection. […] You don't know how your audience is responding to your teaching […] there's a lot of not really being sure, or confident that what you've said has stuck or was understood by your students. So, in the online environment, I really do feel […] that we almost went from being seasoned teachers to brand new teachers overnight.

Tim echoed Chris' comments, emphasising that teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic was more challenging than early in their career, "first-year teach[ing], that is the worst year of your life. […] I'm working harder now than I did [in] my first year."

Despite their best efforts, most participants expressed concern regarding the quality of education they were providing. The exception to this was teachers who worked in alternative classrooms, such as play-based kindergarten or Montessori teachers. Chris expressed the shared experience of many participants who felt they no longer had the training and tools to provide quality education and experience for their students, "There were times when you felt like you were doing a bad job [teaching] because you just didn't have the toolkit or the experience to do what would be a good job." Robin, whose school had adopted students taking a single condensed class, explained they are unable to provide the same level of support to students, "you don't have the time to pick up kids that have fallen behind and they fall behind so quickly. […] If a kid misses a day, in my mind, they're missing an entire week of work". They later emphasised that the current teaching guidelines were not in the interest of students' learning, "This is not about kids learning - it is about me [meeting deadlines]."

Participants teaching experiential courses expressed additional difficulty planning and delivering the curriculum as the health restrictions did not allow the students to engage directly with the subject material. Meghan, a music teacher, explained, "Arts and music teachers, in particular, are trying to keep their programs going through a time when we can't even do 'the thing.' It's like teaching French without being able to speak French in class". Tim shared the difficulties they faced as a physical education teacher, "Now this course exists where 90% of it is effectively gone. So now you're just constantly struggling with [...] what am I doing? How am I going to teach this? What can I replace this huge chunk of course with?" In addition, multiple participants explained that the loss of experiential learning was detrimental to students and

described education now as "two-dimensional" (Meghan), having "lost the fun" (Chris), and was outright "boring" (Meghan).

Participants described feeling that the school boards and the Ministry of Education prioritised the continuation of education over the quality of education and facilitation of student learning. Meghan explained that this prioritisation resulted in poor and ineffective education delivery:

> The kids need to be in school, so whatever happens, there is at least better than nothing, but is that a good way to approach this? Probably not. Two years of education - or maybe next year too - are just going to go down the tubes.

Chris elaborated on this sentiment and described compromising the quality of education to meet the demands of the school board and the Ministry of Education:

> You're sending out a lesson and sometimes you feel like "This is junk, I wouldn't want to do this if I was a student." But at this moment, this is what we have to do in order to check that box [to meet] the expectation of our employer.

Robin reflected on the impact that this trade-off may have had on the students' education, and their feeling of uncertainty for their future, "I think this will come out years later - whether the [students] retention is any good. […] We don't know yet how that's going to affect the kids."

Lack of Institutional Support

Participants frequently stated that the burden of implementing the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education and/or school boards was placed entirely on the teachers with little support from the Ministry of Education or school boards. Chris explained that the reactive decision-

making, in combination with the lack of support, highlighted the detachment between decision-makers and classroom teachers:

> I feel like I've been supported by families and parents, but not necessarily by our government. […] It seems like there's a bit of blind decision-making that's pretty rash. […] School board directors, and superintendents, and the Ministry of Education bureaucrats, those people are quite distant from the classroom, and they often make decisions that sound like good decisions from their perspective in the education system but don't necessarily line up with the day-to-day operations of a classroom teacher or a student.

Emphasizing their frustration, Tim explains that no one is even asking the teachers what's going on, or what they need:

> Nobody has listened to teachers in this. Politicians have talked a lot of crap; unions are sending us emails that are honestly just out of touch. The board is making statements [...] This [interview] is going to be the first time somebody who's not my family [or] friends has asked me what's going on.

Meghan indicated that teachers attempted to ease the burden by supporting one another, but that the support of colleagues wasn't enough, "Teachers [are] helping each other do the work that someone else is downloading on us, but no one's helping us. […] The crux of this whole thing is that the expectations are impossible." Tim discussed feeling that the changing guidelines, a lack of support to adapt, and the expectation to continue delivery were unreasonable, "What they've done in this disaster and emergency scenario is make us responsible for our own training on our own time, while we're dealing with a disaster and emergency scenario in our lives." Later Tim added that:

I've gone a long way in terms of understanding how I can do this [virtual education] better, mostly through trial and error because we've been given […] jack shit in terms of training. […] We're not supported in any way, and then we're asked to do too much.

Meghan echoed the sentiment of poor support with implementing frequent changes:

We get these things thrown at us all the time. All of these changes, and we have to create them ourselves. I've had to create a whole different program [and] new content. I'm creating all new assignments, all new ways of delivering all of my information. […] Every single step, we have to reinvent it.

Harm to Teacher Well-Being

The erosion of the ability to plan a teaching program and its effect on the quality of education delivered, left many participants feeling stressed, frustrated and frankly exhausted. Participants expressed their commitment to their students but emphasised that it came with personal sacrifice. Chris discussed how these challenges, coupled with a lack of support, impacted their well-being:

What teachers do best is they make it work. Whatever we have to do, [...] [we teach], we coach, we mark, we plan, and we don't stop at the end of a bell. I think that teachers just made it work, and at the expense of their mental health.

Jenna describes having to choose between their own children and their students, "You've got multiple kids at home and then you're trying to work. It's like you're doing a bad job at one or the other. You can't be doing a great job of both." Participants frequently described having to adapt to the changing guidelines through significantly increased workloads. Joan explained the substantial amount of effort required to maintain the delivery of education for their students, "It's honestly been an exhausting year, to say the least. I feel like I've worked twice as hard. […] I've

worked so much harder trying to plan, [and] trying to make things engaging." This feeling of exhaustion and burnout was echoed by many participants, with Meghan explaining that they, "work every night until midnight." Jenna acknowledged that counselling was made available to them, however, it was inaccessible:

> Counselling is provided anytime for anyone. […] [But] when you are in the thick of it, and you need the most support, […] that's when you can't access it because you're just overwhelmed, and reaching out is one more thing that you just can't do.

> Adding to the harm of their wellbeing, many participants expressed feeling unsafe in the classroom environment and the inability to implement certain public health guidelines. John explained their experience in the classroom:

> There's no way that [the students] could possibly be keeping any safe distance from each other, and me from them. So, we hope that the masks help, but certainly we can't maintain the kind of distance that is continually recommended. It's just not, it's not being made possible with 30 plus students in a room.

Tim emphasized the severity of the situation by comparing schools to long-term care facilities:

> The only difference between schools and long-term care is our patients are asymptomatic and their patients die. [...] And the government has refused to acknowledge it. […] They are playing Russian roulette with everybody that is in a school and their families.

Referring to the whole experience, Meghan reported abnormally high levels of stress in themself and in their colleagues, "a teacher was crying at our union meeting, in front of all of her colleagues. That is not normal behaviour. Everyone's very stressed. […] Teachers are going on leave."

Discussion

Disaster and emergency planning is commonly considered at the organisational level (Martel, 2019; Roher & Warner, 2006; Hébert, 2016). However, the literature rarely considers the consequences to the teacher that arise from this form of top-down planning. In Ontario, the curriculum is set by the Ministry of Education, and teachers are tasked with the delivery of through the development of lesson plans. As a sector, education relies heavily on the ability of teachers to develop and plan for the delivery of education - a theme that was central to COVID-19. To provide quality education, teachers rely on past experiences, previous lesson plans, and the knowledge of clear standardised expectations to guide their lesson plans. Participants expressed that all three of these aspects were disrupted during COVID-19. Although teachers are usually expected to create lesson plans, the act of creating a classroom environment that fosters the delivery of quality education is often minimised. In this study, teachers expressed working additional unpaid hours every day to prepare lesson plans and the classroom for students. The information learned through the conversations with teachers strongly indicates that the capacity for planning by teachers underlies their ability to respond and adapt quickly to disaster situations, and such capacity was significantly impacted by top-down decision-making by the school boards and the Ministry of Education. Participants described the perceived disconnection between the education system at the institutional level and individual teachers as a main source of the planning challenges. This study highlights the need for emergency and disaster planning to involve classroom teachers.

The reliance on planning has always been a constant in the teaching profession. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this need did not change, however, the ability of teachers to carry out traditional classroom planning was dramatically impacted. This was perhaps the most notable finding from this study, the COVID-19 pandemic upended any sense of routine, standards, and

expectations for teachers. Coupled with the reactive decision-making that has been evident at the system level of the education system throughout the pandemic, teachers' ability to plan has been significantly eroded. The changing policies and expectations outlined by those outside of the classroom effectively invalidated years of existing plans on which teachers rely. Participants explained that constant changes in guidelines from system-level decision-makers were expected to be implemented by teachers with little support. This resulted in teachers feeling unprepared, and unequipped, and needing to work extensively to fill this gap. Additionally, teachers who were interviewed described a significant impact on the quality of education delivered to students, as well as being damaging to both the teachers' and students' mental health and overall well-being throughout the pandemic.

Conclusion

The reviewed literature focuses on system-level responses to COVID-19, system-level preparedness, and individual preparedness actions. However, our analysis illustrated a phenomenon where collective decision-making at the system level undermined the individual's preparedness and ability to respond. The current approach to view emergency and disaster preparedness and planning within the education sector as something to be carried out at a system level appears to be misguided. Conversely, approaching planning solely at the level of individual teachers may also be inadequate. Traditionally, the education sector has thought of system and individual planning as separate phenomena; this disregards the fact that they are intrinsically linked. The consequence of ignoring this relationship impacts not only the overall continuity of education but significantly diminishes the quality of classroom education and the well-being of teachers. Policymakers and emergency managers must recognize the relationship between system and individual-level preparedness within the education sector to better prepare for the next prolonged disaster. Further, this preparedness and planning must be informed by the needs

and lived experiences of teachers so as not to exert a toll on the individual teacher's workload, performance, and mental and physical well-being within the system. As is commonly understood by emergency managers, "It is not if the next disaster will occur, but when." The Ontario education sector needs to engage with teachers in preparedness and planning efforts now to prepare for the next incident.

References

AlAteeq, D. A., Aljhani, S., & AlEesa, D. (2020). Perceived stress among students in virtual

    classrooms during the COVID-19 outbreak in KSA. *Journal of Taibah University*

    Medical Sciences, *15*(5), 398-403. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtumed.2020.07.004.

Awofisayo, A., Ibbotson, S., Smith, G.E., Janmohamed, K., Mohamed, H. & Olowokure, B.

    (2013). Challenges and lessons learned from implementing a risk-based approach to

    school advise and closure during the containment phase of the 2009 influenza pandemic

    in the West Midlands, England. *Public Health, 127*(7), 637-643.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2013.04.014.

Bhamani, S., Makhdoom, A. Z., Bharuchi, V., Ali, N., Kaleem, S., & Ahmed, D. (2020). Home

    learning in times of COVID: Experiences of parents. *Journal of education and*

    educational development, *7*(1), 9-26.

    http://jmsnew.iobmresearch.com/index.php/joeed/article/view/8.

Brown, K., Littlewood, K., Dobrowolski, B., & Vinet-Roy, A. (2022). Ontario's Teacher Unions

    Demand Schools Reopen Safely. *Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation*.

    https://www.osstf.on.ca/news/ontario-s-teacher-unions-demand-schools-reopen-

    safely.aspx.

Cooper, A., Timmons, K., & MacGregor, S. (2021). Exploring How Ontario Teachers Adapted

    to Learn-at-Home Initiatives During COVID-19: Blending Technological and

    Pedagogical Expertise in a Time of Growing Inequities. *Journal of Teaching and*

    Learning, *15*(2), 81-101. https://doi.org/10.22329/JTL.V15I2.6726.

Education Act, R.R.O., 1990, c E.2, Regulation 298: Operation of Schools.

    https://canlii.ca/t/562w8.

Farhadi, B., & Winton, S. (2021). Building a Plane While Flying: Crisis Policy Enactment During Covid-19 in Alberta Secondary Schools. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, *15*(2): 117-132. https://doi.org/10.22329/jtl.v15i2.6725.

Gallagher-Mackay, K. et al. (2021). COVID-19 and Education Disruption in Ontario: Emerging Evidence on Impacts. *Science Briefs of the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table*, 2(34). https://doi.org/10.47326/ocsat.2021.02.34.1.0.

Government of Ontario. (1997). *Fire code*, O Reg 213/07.

Hébert, L. V. (2016). *The concerns of Ontario elementary school teachers on school-based emergencies and emergency preparedness* [Major Research Paper, York University]. https://www.yorku.ca/laps/sas/wp-content/uploads/sites/202/2020/11/Lauren-Hebert.pdf.

Hauseman, C., Darazsi, S., & Kent, S. (2020). Collaboration, Communication and Wellness: Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Manitoba Schools. *International Studies in Educational Administration (Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management (CCEAM))*, 48(2). http://cceam.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ISEA-2020-48-2.pdf#page=76. *

Kano, M., Ramirez, M., Ybarra, W. J., Frias, G., & Bourque, L. B. (2007). Are schools prepared for emergencies? A baseline assessment of emergency preparedness at school sites in three Los Angeles County school districts. *Education and Urban Society*, *39*(3), 399-422. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124506298130.

Katawazi, M. (2021). *What Ontario's colour-coded COVID-19 system mean for each region*. CTV News. https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/what-ontario-s-colour-coded-covid-19-system-mean-for-each-region-1.5300201.

Lindle, J. C. (2008). School Safety: Real or Imagined Fear? *Educational Policy*, *22*(1): 28-44.

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0895904807311295.

Pollock, K. (2020). School Leaders' Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Two-Pronged

Approach. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, *48*(3), 38. Retrieved

from https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1210&context=edupub.

Martel, P. (2019). *The Social Construction of a Disaster Typology to Enhance Operational*

Emergency Planning for K-8 Public Schools in Southern Ontario [Doctoral thesis,

Wilfrid Laurier University]. Scholars Commons at Laurier.

https://scholars.wlu.ca/etd/2177.

Ministry of Education. (2021a). *Operational Guidance: COVID-19 management in Schools*.

Government of Ontario. https://www.ontario.ca/page/operational-guidance-covid-19-

management-schools.

Ministry of Education. (2021b). *COVID-19: Health, Safety and Operational Guidance for*

Schools (2021-2022). Government of Ontario. https://files.ontario.ca/edu-guide-to-

reopening-schools-en-2021-08-03.pdf.

Olympia, R. P., Wan, E., & Avner, J. R. (2005). The Preparedness of Schools to Respond to

Emergencies in Children: A National Survey of School Nurses. *Pediatrics, 116*(6): 738-

745. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2005-1474.

Ontario Association of Police Chiefs (OAPC). (2007). *Guidelines for developing and*

maintaining lockdown procedures for elementary and secondary schools in Ontario.

www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/memos/.../LockdownGuidelinesEn.pdf.

Roher, E. M., & Warner, M. A. (2006). Emergency response planning in schools. *Education &*
Law Journal, 16(1), 29. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/emergency-
response-planning-schools/docview/213005477/se-2.

Vinet-Roy, A., Hammond, S., Stuart, L., & Bischof, H. (2021). *Ontario's Teacher unions*
respond to Premier's request for input on school reopening. Ontario Secondary School
Teachers' Federation. https://www.osstf.on.ca/news/Ontario-s-teacher-unions-respond-to-
Premier-s-request-for-input-on-school-reopening.aspx.

Zhang, H., Nurius, P., Sefidgar, Y., Morris, M., Balasubramanian, S., Brown, J., Dey, A.K.,
Kuehn, K., Riskin, E., Xu, X., & Mankoff, J. (2020). How does COVID-19 impact
students with disabilities/health concerns? *Arxiv*.
https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2005.05438.

*Please note that the source material is no longer available online.

Appendix A: Participant Demographics

Participant Pseudonym	School Board	Grade	Subject(s) Taught	Teaching Experience	Teaching Model during the COVID-19 pandemic
Joan	Dufferin Peel Catholic School Board (DPCDSB)	9-12	English, drama & religion	7 years	Hybrid
Tim	Toronto District School Board (TDSB)	9-12	Physical education, drama & English	20 years	Hybrid
Meghan	TDSB	9-12	Social science & music	18 years	In person
Andrea	N/A Montessori school located in central Ontario	1-3	N/A	10 years	In person
Taylor	N/A Montessori school located in central Ontario	Pre K (3-6yrs)	N/A	20 years	In person
Shannon	Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board (SMCDSB)	6	N/A	26 years	In person
John	Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB)	9-12	Math	25 years	In person

Jenna	TLDSB	Kinder garten	N/A	20 years	Virtual
Chris	TLDSB	Grade 9-12	Environmental science & geography	12 years	In person
Robin	TLDSB	9-12	French	28 years	In person

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Each Interview is expected to take between 40-60 minutes, and will be conducted with two researchers present.

Opening Structured Questions:

- Which Ontario school board are you currently employed?
- Which grade and subject (if applicable) do you teach?
- How long have you been teaching (at any school board)?
- Please describe your current teaching schedule.
- Have you been teaching online (virtual/remote), in-person, or a combination (hybrid) during the COVID-19 pandemic?
    - Has your mode (online, in-person or hybrid) of delivery changed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic?

Open-ended Questions to Stimulate Discussion:

- Tell me about your experience teaching during this pandemic.
- Do students choose if they want to be online or in person?
- Do you feel supported by teaching colleagues, school administration, and school board?
- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, had you had experience teaching virtually?
    - Please describe your experience with virtual teaching platforms (e.g., Zoom, Google Classroom, etc.) prior to the pandemic?
- What challenges, if any, have you encountered teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How has the health guidelines and/or delivery mode impacted your ability to teach the curriculum material?
- Have you noticed a difference between the first and second (and third) wave of the pandemic?
- (If teaching online or hybrid) Are there any benefits of teaching virtually?
- (If teaching online or hybrid) How has technology helped or hindered your ability to teach?
- (if teaching online or hybrid) what platform are you using? (zoom, webex, google classroom…)
- (if teaching online or hybrid) Are there any aspects that you miss about being in-person at school?
- (if teaching in-person) Please describe the current PPE requirement for you when teaching in-person at school?
    - Have these guidelines evolved throughout the pandemic?
- Have you experienced any attendance issues throughout the pandemic?

Closing Questions:

- Is there anything that you would like to add to our conversation that we haven't had a chance to discuss?
- Is there anything we should have asked you that we didn't, is there anything else you would like to share with me?