

➤ Story #1 (Elementary):

Ok I know that we are only 2 days into the school year, but already I feel defeated. We have always risen to the occasion, but at what cost? I have NO TIME for myself. I have been working NON-STOP since we went back for our first teacher day. I left school Friday and literally started crying uncontrollably because I finally allowed myself to succumb to the feeling of being overwhelmed. I am teaching in person and Online at the same time. Since Wednesday my phone, email, and text messages have NOT STOPPED. Parents call and text whenever it is convenient for them, even if that means 11:30 pm or midnight. They expect immediate responses. Most of my parents have been understanding, but several coworkers have reported the parents getting aggressive or sending multiple texts until the teacher answers. I stayed after school the first day until 9:30 pm communicating back and forth with my online learner parents. Today [Sunday] it is 9:45 pm and I am still adding content to the LMS page (that's with my team splitting up duties and sharing each other's pages so that no one has to do every single lesson for every single day). Teachers have always gone above and beyond, but this is INSANE. We are chasing an impossible task, and even though the LMS pages are almost finished and ready to go for the week, I still have NO IDEA what I am actually teaching. None of our common planning has focused on discussing content of lessons, just uploading of content onto the LMS. I feel like I am completely ineffective, and my students are just expected to be robots that sit still and stare at a screen all day. This IS NOT teaching. I am angry, I want to quit. I mean I basically cried my whole drive Friday on the way home and ALL DAY yesterday. Other teachers in my building have the same issues, they are feeling defeated as well. If the district doesn't do something to help with this situation, I have a feeling they will lose A LOT of good teachers. This is NOT what I signed up for when I wanted to become a teacher. I am sure you have been getting thousands of emails similar to this, I just needed to paint the picture of what almost all the teachers in my building are feeling right now. This is so frustrating.

➤ Story #2 (Elementary):

I grew up in Fort Wayne and later moved away for college. After college, I spent a couple of years planning my move back home, hoping I would be able to have FWCS be the home for my career. Now that I'm here, however, I have been left shocked and stunned by the clear lack of competency shown within the district on several issues. I already am unable to see a future for me within the district and have spent my first weekend looking for different teaching options in the community.

Let me begin with my greatest concern: a global pandemic. My students are 6 and 7 years old. They do not have any understanding of how to keep their distance. My first two days were filled with endless reminders to keep masks on, stay in seats, and keep your hands to yourself. Still, I spent both days less than 6 feet away from students at all times. My desks are barely 3 feet apart--let alone 6 feet. We do not have enough time or training to properly sanitize things throughout the day. We are being forced to continue to pull students and provide small groups in cramped areas. We are being told to take our masks off and use ineffective face shields to teach phonics. We are being guided to work extra hours, losing sleep as we weaken our immune systems and put ourselves at even greater risk. Let me be clear: it is not safe for schools to be open. Period. I am not prepared for the death of one of my students or their family members. No amount of "SEL" training on neuroscience or breathing techniques will help them or me in such an instance. I am not prepared for the death of someone in my life due to my being exposed at school and carrying it home.

Finally, my last concern is simply the sustainability of current practices and policies. Teachers in the district are under an enormous amount of stress. Lacking guidance, transparency, or attention, teachers feel helpless and worthless. I have teammates who have given decades of their lives to the district, devoting their entire spirits to our schools. These same people have spent each day the past week crying because they feel completely unprepared and useless as they consider retiring early. This is unacceptable. We have new teachers, like myself, who have been given ZERO guidance on district policies or procedures and are being thrown into the mess of everything right now. I have spent the past week rethinking my career and looking for other positions.

➤ Story #3 (Secondary):

Here is one thing I would like the superintendent to know. I have been teaching 16 years and I handle stress well. I am beyond my breaking point already with being overwhelmed as I know many are. I have five (actually 10 because they are split) in-person classes with between 15-19 students (an ideal class size when only half of the 30-40 students enrolled in each class show up at one time), then I have an additional virtual class of 65 students, and this number continues to go up daily. This would be difficult under normal conditions, but we are in anything but normal conditions. Now we have to learn a new platform for attendance and grades that is not user friendly or intuitive. Then put on top of that taking everything I would do in class and creating accessible online materials for all my students, plus trying to teach them in person how to use this technology (which is also not user friendly or intuitive for them). Then there's the cleaning after every period, and also helping my students keep their morale up because they are feeling the same anxieties we are without the years of experience to know how to deal with them. Then add to the fact that I have two children at home who are completely virtual, so now I have to come home and teach them how to do these same things. Now add life into the mix. I know it's not anyone's problem, but this stress is adding to other marriage issues. If I am feeling this overwhelmed and helpless, I know others are too. It's only been two days, we haven't even gotten to course content, and I am so overwhelmed I am ready to break. I know I will not be able to continue like this, nor will many others.