



Public Statement

Arbitration Decision Concerning Assignment to Home: School board's assignment was unreasonable and procedurally unfair

September 10, 2025

The Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) welcomes a landmark decision by Arbitrator Colin Johnston that underscores the importance of fairness and due process when school boards assign principals and vice-principals to home pending a workplace investigation. The Arbitrator found that the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board acted unreasonably when it placed a principal on home assignment for the majority of a school year, by failing to conduct a balanced assessment into the allegations raised against the principal.

In January 2023, the OPC released a public statement about [Assignments to Home](#), expressing concern that school boards had been assigning administrators to home pending investigation as a first resort, as opposed to a last resort. We stated, "While there are times and circumstances that require an investigation, that process should not be political, unnecessarily lengthy, unfair, unsupported or arbitrary. It should be conducted as quickly, efficiently and effectively as possible, respecting the administrator and the school."

As such, we were disappointed when the Hamilton-Wentworth board acted unfairly toward a principal in an assignment to home. We brought forward a dispute against the school board after the principal was removed from the school pending a workplace investigation. The board took this action without conducting a basic assessment of the relevant facts, relying solely on a single complaint from a parent, who alleged that the principal had mishandled a student discipline matter. The board's investigation ultimately concluded that all the allegations were unfounded; however, this did not address whether the assignment to home was warranted in the first place.

Arbitration Ruling

The Arbitrator found that the school board failed to carry out even a preliminary review prior to the home assignment. It relied only on the concerns expressed by the student's father, and neither consulted with the principal, nor reviewed school records that could have provided a

more accurate picture of the events in question. The Arbitrator stated that an employer should not “impose an indefinite suspension without some form of inquiry into the facts.”

The Arbitrator concluded, “on the evidence before me, I am unable to conclude that [the Associate Director] conducted a balanced assessment. She relied exclusively on the allegations raised by the father and the Advocacy Group without giving any consideration to counterfactual information.”

The board failed to consider less intrusive alternatives to the indefinite home reassignment. The Arbitrator concluded that the board could have reasonably allowed the principal to remain in the school during the investigation, possibly with restrictions. The Arbitrator also recognized that the assignment to home led to reputational harm for the principal, because of her sudden removal from the school, and the board’s failure to communicate that the investigation exonerated her of any wrongdoing.

Conclusion

This decision reinforces the tenet that principals and vice-principals are entitled to a fair investigation process, and that assignments to home must be used by school boards only after a fair and balanced preliminary inquiry into the allegations. The OPC supports the need for school boards to conduct investigations to uphold their responsibilities under the law. We encourage all public district school boards in the province to take note of this decision and ensure they act appropriately and fairly in similar circumstances.