Twitter Thread by Kari Raymer Bishop

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A thread: Dear virtual teachers, I am also a virtual teacher, teaching Gr12 from home while also supporting my child in his Gr2 distance learning class. I have some things to share, from the perspective of an overwhelmed parent. 1/14

We believe in public education and do not want to join the Minister of Education in undermining our public education system. But honestly, and I hear this from a lot of parents, we could easily homeschool our kid for 2 hrs each day and actually be able to do our own jobs. 2/14

So you need to make it as easy as possible for us to hang in there. Or we won't. And parents will pull their kids from school and your system will be devastated. Here are some requests based on our current experience. 3/14

1. Connection is more important than curriculum right now. Please do whatever you can to provide our kids with connection to other kids. If they don't get to interact with others, they'd might as well just do homeschooling. Connection is the #1 thing you have to offer us. 4/14

2. Please smile. Be kind. Let go a little bit. If kids ask for show and tell, leader of the day, theme days etc, please go along with it. They are desperate for these fun things. We aren't seeing them in our class, even when kids ask. 5/14

3. Please post links to all the meetings and activities in one place. Brightspace is killing us. Don't make Nana hunt for everything. Keep it simple and make it easily accessible for everyone and you won't spend all class helping parents find things. 6/14

4. Please post an agenda with times for each activity so parents can ensure their kids are where they need to be. If we need to sit right beside our kids all day, it becomes very clear that we could just do this on our own, and in less time. 7/14

5. Please realize that Zoom fatigue is real and all the meetings are hard on our kids. Mine is crying about stress for the first time in his life. 8/14

6. Synchronous doesn't have to mean more of you talking at them while they stare at the screen. A kid who finished their work in 5 mins shouldn't have to spend the next 25 mins watching their classmates do their work. 9/14

If the Ministry mandates 225 mins of synchronous learning, insisting that your students sit in meetings for 260 mins each day is just way too much. More is not better. In fact, more is absolutely worse. 10/14

7. Please give these kids a chance to get up and move. They need a break between activities and would get it at regular school. Our kid's free time for food and recess is currently half of what he would get in regular school. 11/14

8. Please stop trying to make virtual school like your regular class and instead embrace the opportunity to build something entirely new. There is so much potential for great stuff in this realm. 12/14

9. Please get that if you can't create a program that works better than what we could do at home, parents will pull their kids out. Adjust your standards a bit, focus on connection and make it engaging for kids and easier for parents. 13/14

10. I hear about lots of good things going on in virtual classrooms. It is totally possible to make it engaging and meaningful and doable. And I know it is hard, hard work. Thank you to those of you who are creating classes where kids thrive and not just survive. 14/14

Thank you to @OECTAProv and @ETFOeducators for listening to a beleaguered parent.