

# WORKING “TO-THE-RULE”

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### What does “work-to-rule” mean?

Working “to the rule” means performing our regularly assigned duties (“the rule” meaning those duties that are required) during the normal workday. It is meant to highlight the unpaid work educators do before and after school, on weekends, and during our lunch and planning periods.

### Why do this now?

Because educator lives are not disposable. The Board is responsible for protecting the health and safety of educators, but now we are being forced to return without being immunized to deliver a learning model that will not improve educational outcomes for our students. The Board of Education can and should overturn its decision to return students until educators are immunized.

### Won’t work-to-rule hurt students?

The Superintendent’s hybrid learning plan is a poorly conceived plan that will not improve the quality of learning for most children. Educators are simply unable to provide the same level of instruction when their attention is divided between in-person and virtual learning. Putting the lives of educators at risk to accede to a political stunt will ultimately hurt students.

### What activities are impacted during work-to-rule?

[See the full list of activities.](#) Work-to-rule is also an opportunity to enforce the contractual rights that we already have, not just withdraw from volunteer activities.

### What if my principal asks me to do something on that list?

If you haven’t already committed to a voluntary activity, politely and professionally let them know that your contract gives you the option to decline the request. A statement like this works well: “My contract gives me the right to decline that request, and because the Union is engaged in a work-to-rule for a safer workplace, I’m declining that request to support my colleagues and my students.”

### Is this a strike?

No, strikes in Maryland are prohibited. Because working to the rule means performing our regular duties, we are not withdrawing our contractually required labor.

### What if we all call in sick at once?

That is not an option. Legally speaking, a “sick out” or “blue flu” is considered a withdrawal of labor like a strike and it is therefore also prohibited in Maryland.

## I'm an untenured teacher. Can I get in trouble for doing this?

No. Working to the rule means performing your contractual duties.

## What should I do with my work at the end of the day?

Keep a running list of the tasks you are not able to perform under the time constraints of the regular duty day. At the end of the day, send your administrator the list and ask him/her what you would like them to prioritize for the following day. Put up an auto response on your email after the end of your duty day, and let parents know that you will respond to them during the regular duty day.

## I'm healthy and I don't personally have concerns about returning in-person. Why should I work-to-rule?

We have to stick together as educators, and a work-to-rule effort will *only* be successful if *everyone* participates. We're fighting for procedures that protect us if there's an outbreak in our building, more vaccines for educators, and to protect ourselves from bullying by statewide officials.

## What else can I do to support our union's efforts?

Many of our members have come up with some great ways to show our solidarity:

- Wear a 🤒 mask during class and during meetings with parents so they can know what it will be like in the hybrid learning model. Spread the word with your colleagues.
- Change your Facebook 📷 photo to the "[I AM HCEA](#)" photo frame so that

our families and community sees all of us as both teachers *and* union members.

## How can parents and families support our efforts?

- Email the Board of Education ([boe@hcpss.org](mailto:boe@hcpss.org)) and demand that they allow staff to be immunized before returning to schools.
- Use our [Facebook Profile Frame](#) to show your support for Howard County Educators.

## DO'S AND DON'TS

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| ✓ DO's   | ✗ DON'Ts   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Meet in the school parking lot together (maintaining social distance) at the prescribed start of the teacher day. Walk in the building together, as one.</li><li>✓ Meet at the lobby at the prescribed end of the duty day. Walk out together.</li><li>✓ Only take work home that is necessary for you to plan adequately for delivery of instruction.</li><li>✓ Have your PTA representative explain to the PTA (or CAC, or Booster Club, or all) why we are calling for these actions, and how they can support educators.</li><li>✓ Contact the Association regarding voluntary after-school activities for which you have made a commitment to determine your obligations to continue.</li><li>✓ Support each other as best you can with ideas or materials that will require no unpaid time.</li><li>✓ <b>Continue to meet all contractual and instructional obligations during your duty day.</b></li><li>✓ Encourage colleagues to join you. If they chose not to be involved, a simple statement such as “I know you support us in your heart” will suffice.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✗ Participate in illegal activities such as sick outs, work slow-downs, vandalism, etc. Working to rule means you perform your normal duties during your contractually-defined workday.</li><li>✗ In any way break your paid extra-curricular contracts. In working to the rule, you need to honor all contracts you have with the Board of Education.</li><li>✗ Use instructional time to discuss work to rule activities.</li><li>✗ Block access to your school if informational picketing is occurring.</li><li>✗ Carry signs on sticks if informational picketing is happening.</li><li>✗ Participate in actions that would cost us the public support we've worked hard to build up. We should not alienate parents when we're fighting for safe schools.</li></ul> |