

TSU Weekly Wrap Up – October 9, 2020

By Pete McKay-TSU President

We've reached one of the milestones in the school year, Thanksgiving Weekend, and there is actually some news for which to be thankful this week.

Staffing/scheduling – Big concerns this week as to whether we will follow York Catholic and merge the virtual and day schools, requiring teachers to teach online and face to face simultaneously. The Board has indicated that it is one of many contingencies that it is looking at to deal with the shortfall in funding and the shortage of teachers. However, the teacherless classes are an elementary concern, as in York, not a secondary one. And then a trustee tweeted out, last night, that the scenario is not acceptable and would not happen, here. Virtual school teachers have raised a concern over the request for weekly submission of timetables. We remarked to the Board that it is responsible for providing teachers with timetables, not the other way around. The Board was not aware of this situation, as it had not directed it, and is looking into it.

But the BIG news this week came out this morning. After more than six weeks of us pushing for teachers to be able to deliver their synchronous online lessons from home, the Board put forward a recommendation for that to the trustees, last night. An email was sent to principals shortly after 9am indicating that this would now be the case. We urge everyone to consider privacy issues for yourselves as well as your students as you deliver lessons from home, particularly if you are using audio or video in any way. Not good for the kids to hear the next door neighbor through the window swearing at the dog.

Health and Safety – We continue to ask about PPE to ensure there is an adequate supply in the schools. If there is any question about this approach your admin to encourage them to also advocate for proper provision of it. PPE should be easily accessible, including for OTs. When arriving for a daily assignment, OTs should not have to walk through the school to obtain the PPE in the office, it should be provided for them at the door. The Board is addressing this with principals to ensure this is the case. Also from the trustees, everyone should be able to request plexiglass if they feel they need it. I read it on twitter so it must be true. The details of this will have to be seen, and whether it is supposed to apply to secondary as well as elementary is not yet known.

Emails – A number of people have expressed frustration this week, again, over the TSU emails. The platform is active and can be accessed by following the directions provided on the member section page of the website. If you have difficulty, there is a help number to call for assistance. Once you are in, you should reset your password and check your other settings that would have changed, such as forwarding messages to a personal email address. We do share the frustration and are working with USI to have a full transition completed as soon as possible, including the migration of old emails. In the meantime, no one would have missed any emails from us as they are either in the TSU email, or were sent through the Reps to Board email accounts.

Bargaining – The Initial Proposal meeting notice went out to you this week, following the approval of the proposal by OECTA and the TSU Executive. It will be held on October 13 at 4:30. Check the email for further details. And the LCBC is meeting/has met, today, to finalize things for Tuesday.

Budget and Finance - The Committee met last night and will do so again next Wednesday. It began the review of the budget requests and is attempting to balance those out with the financial realities, i.e. there's never as much money as people want. However, there should also be less money required due to the inability to hold functions and meetings at this time. Silver lining anyone? The process will continue next week, in preparation for the General Budget Meeting on October 29.

SSSAC – The first meeting of the year was held with the Board and much of it dealt with the virtual school situation. Again, TSU is not sanctioning anything that is being done outside of the CA, but did need to gather information and provide input to the Board over various concerns.

Johnson Insurance – TSU has had a decades long relationship with Johnson who have provided us with financial support over that time as well as teacher oriented insurance products. We have been very lucky to have worked with Cathy Turner, whom many of you know, for as long as I can remember. This week she announced to us that she is retiring at the end of the month. While we are very happy for her to be able to explore new ventures, she will also be missed.

After a stressful first six weeks, it is definitely time for us to take a break this weekend and focus on what we have to be grateful for in our lives.

Have a great weekend.