



## STA Connection March 30-April 3, 2020

### Welcome back...to what?

For most of us, spring break was no break at all, and March felt like it lasted about three months. Now people are back at work in a world full of uncertainty. If you feel as though you don't know what you are doing, and are making it up as you are going along, you are not alone! Everyone feels like that, including school districts, as we all do what we can to figure out how to provide education in a completely different way, in an environment of vague and sometimes contradictory information, and a situation which changes daily.

Our advice to you is to be gentle with yourselves, your colleagues, and above all, your students. The task before us is difficult and will take time. A colleague in another school district which returned from spring break last week, advised that "slower is better". Many students are experiencing trauma and great stress at home, and schooling may not be their most important priority. So please try to have realistic expectations of what will be achieved at home. Of course, at the other extreme, there will be parents who expect you to have instantly transformed your classroom into an online course. To give you some context, the Ministry of Education has said that "It is expected that students will be connected with their teachers no later than mid-April". Please keep that in mind if you are receiving pressure to deliver course modules or extensive learning materials this week. The mandate of the District for this week is communication with students and families, with that communication involving providing some guidance for what things students might do at home for their learning. So although the District is saying that you should provide an idea for an educational activity the student could do, it could be quite simple, and certainly does not have to be a work package or project. Your administration should be supporting you if you are experiencing unrealistic demands to be producing learning materials this week. If they are not, please let us know at [sta@surreyteachers.org](mailto:sta@surreyteachers.org).

Contract teachers are thankful to still have jobs, and the ability to work from home, but our colleagues who are Teachers Teaching On-Call are facing great uncertainty and financial insecurity. Although the STA is advocating for the District to provide some relief to this important employee group, the rest of this school

year (beyond dispatches that were in the system for April) for them is up in the air. We are still in discussions with HR about what scope there will be for TTOC work to replace teachers who are unable to work, and will provide more information when we have it.

Above all, in this time, please take the steps you can to keep yourselves and your families healthy.

## Cancelling Absences and TTOC Dispatch Issues

Over the break there was a lot of confusion about cancelling absences and dispatch issues. Some teachers were able to cancel absences (because of trips being cancelled, medical appointments and procedures being postponed, etc.), but then the District froze the system to prevent further cancellations. The District has told us that they will honour all dispatches that were in the system for April, whether or not they were cancelled by the teachers who logged the absences. What they will do is, for that day, assign the TTOC who was in the dispatch to report to the school principal and do the work that gets assigned. However, when an absence is cancelled, it is apparently very difficult to trace which TTOC had been attached to the absence, so that they can be provided with work for that day. That is why the employer froze the system for cancellations.

### Based on these factors, we have this advice:

1. If you are a TTOC who had a dispatch that got cancelled, please contact [dispatch@surreyschools.ca](mailto:dispatch@surreyschools.ca) with any details you remember about the dispatch (school, teacher, date).
2. If you are need to cancel an absence, please email Lisa Watson the following:  
**Subject:** Please cancel my absence  
In the body of the email:  
**Name:**  
**Employee #:**  
**Reason for absence:**  
**Date(s) of absence:**  
**Is there a TTOC in the assignment** (yes, no, I don't know):
3. If you are a teacher who cancelled an absence before the system got frozen, please help out the TTOC who was in that dispatch by emailing [dispatch@surreyschools.ca](mailto:dispatch@surreyschools.ca) with information about the date and name of the TTOC (if known). That will help make it possible for them to have alternate work for that day.

## Protecting Privacy



Working in this context raises privacy issues, both for students and for yourself.

You may be asked to reach out to families via telephone. In order to protect your personal phone number:

- If you're using a landline, press \*67 before dialing out, and your number will be blocked from the display for free
- If you're using an iPhone, go to settings, phone, show my caller ID, and then disable the show my caller ID.
- If you're using an Android device, instructions may vary. Google "hide my number" and the name of your device in order to find instructions.

Where possible, it is best to do your work using school district equipment, rather than with your own computers or tablets. If you do not have such equipment, please contact your principal to request that it be provided. Using district equipment to do your work avoids issues connected to having students' personal information on your own devices. In that case, however, please be careful to avoid syncing your personal information (e.g. photos) with the district device. And to further protect your privacy, you should restrict your own personal internet activity to your personal devices.

## **How to have structure when working at home: Daybooks are still relevant!**

We are certainly in a very strange "new normal" in our teaching careers! Each of us is finding our way in this preparation week as we figure out how we are going to be in contact with our students, what content we are going to be able to deliver at a distance, and what we will be spending our working days doing, exactly! Since teachers are required to have a daybook in their classrooms, we suggest that maintaining one at home can be helpful for many reasons.

**Here are some tips to help establish a new work routine that helps keep us going:**

- If possible, make a space in your home for work – it can be helpful to have this separate space away from your relaxing area or eating area so you can feel like you are "going" to work.
- Don't feel like you need to work much longer hours than usual! Take care of yourself so you have the capacity to care for your students and your family.
- Make a home daybook of some kind where you keep brief notes of what you have done and what you are planning to do. This could be as simple as a page for each day where you note on-line team meetings you attended, students you called, and other activities you did.
- Work out your week plan with REASONABLE AND DOABLE as your guiding concepts! Parents and kids are stressed by the pandemic and all the changes. Be gentle with expectations on them and on yourself!
- Without our daily school routine it can be easy to forget to log on to meetings we are invited to. Make a note of these coming up!
- Make notes of lessons or activities you assigned – if kids lag in responding to you, it will be easier to backtrack and catch them up when they do.
- This daybook/ logbook can be super helpful if you need to be replaced for illness or some other reason – Much easier to email them a day work plan if you have organized notes. (Note: the issue of when people will be replaced by TTOCs is one that we are working on with the District.)
- Searching for things "somewhere in my inbox" can be frustrating, so a few notes can do wonders.

Good luck everyone, remember we are still in the first few days of what will be many weeks. Take the time to think through your work routines!

## What about videoconferencing?

Many people are asking about whether they can use videoconferencing with students. At this point, the District is saying that they don't want teachers doing two-way videoconferencing with students. They see that it can be a valuable and powerful tool. They also say that they want to proceed slowly and thoughtfully, to ensure that teachers are not openly accessing student homes without safeguards such as parental sign-off, boundaries on timing, appropriate locations within a home, and so on. So they are not saying that it will not happen, but that they want to take some time to develop such safeguards.

There are other issues for teachers to consider, both about videoconferencing and other bandwidth-heavy tools. Students may lack the technology to engage in such activities, or their families may have limited data. Or, for some families, it may feel threatening to have someone who works for the state to be able to see into their homes. So please bear these sorts of issues in mind as you approach your planning the learning opportunities for your students.

## Peer Support is Available!

Need some help with your on-line teaching? Please feel free to reach out for Peer Support. Peer Support is a voluntary program through which teachers help teachers with an aspect of their professional work. It's a confidential collaboration between you and the consultant. To begin, a peer support consultant will talk with you about your areas of interest or concern. Together you will generate ideas about what kind of assistance would be most useful to you. Your peer support consultant can help you in these challenging times. Interested? Please contact Christie Weigel, the Professional Support Services officer, at 778-928-3810.

## Do I have to teach online?

Although most teachers are adjusting their practice toward online delivery, it is not the only option. And it is not mandatory. Both the Ministry of Education and the Superintendent have stated that teachers can have flexibility to use paper-based resources with students, which could be particularly helpful where there are technological barriers. Please note that there can be logistical challenges in terms of making copies and getting packages to students, but there should be solutions to those problems. If you feel that your professional autonomy is being restricted by pressure to teach in a given way, please contact the STA for support at [sta@surreyteachers.org](mailto:sta@surreyteachers.org).

## Professional Development Applications

With school closures resulting in limited access to district mail, we will be accepting professional development application via email. Please email applications to Donna Stewart at [accounting@surreyteachers.org](mailto:accounting@surreyteachers.org). Please note that we will not be accepting applications in person at the STA office. If you have questions regarding Pro D, please email Erin Coleman at [pd@surreyteachers.org](mailto:pd@surreyteachers.org).

## STA Convention

The Convention Committee has met and discussed plans for the May 1<sup>st</sup> STA Convention. We will be going ahead with a re-envisioning of this valuable pro d event and are looking into ways to move the keynote and workshops on-line. If you are a presenter, please watch for a brief survey coming out shortly.

Please watch the STA Convention website for updates as we move forward <https://staconvention.ca/>. The committee can be contacted by email at [convention@surreyteachers.org](mailto:convention@surreyteachers.org).

## Health & Safety

During the Covid-19 pandemic there will be an abundance of Health & Safety sites and resources with information. Remember to stick to reliable sources for guidance on COVID-19 to keep yourself informed and updated:

- [BC Centre for Disease Control](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [KIDS and COVID-19 Q&A](#)
- [Novel Coronavirus Q&A from HealthLinkBC](#)

## Rest in Peace Ron Schell



We are sad to announce that Ron Schell, who most recently worked as an Integration Support Teacher at Adams Road Elementary, passed away on Saturday.

Ron's family gave their permission to share the following information:

"On Monday March 2nd in the evening Ron went into the hospital and was quarantined with pneumonia and influenza. That Friday on March 6th he had a heart attack and suffered a cardiac arrest, It was 9

minutes before they got a pulse back. Ron was then put on life support and was in a coma. Sadly, the test results came back stating he would no longer be the Ron we knew and loved. On Saturday March 21st at 1:36pm Ron passed away with his family by his side, and took his last breathe at the end of the song "Have I Told You Lately" by Rod Stewart.

We are all heartbroken and wanted to make sure everyone who knew and loved Ron is informed. Please tell the ones you love, that you love them. You never know when it may be the last time. To remember a loving Father, Husband, Son, Uncle and Friend, if you wish, feel free to write a few words that you will cherish forever to remember Ron. As a family we would love to read them, reflect and connect us all so we can support each other during this time.

A celebration of life will be held at a later date when we are all able to connect. ♥"

Our condolences go to Ron's family, friends, colleagues, and students.



We are so proud to be Surrey Teachers and we know there are amazing things happening around the district that we would love to hear about. In the spirit of acts of kindness, we would love for our members to send us a "shout out" about a colleague who inspires you and who you think deserves recognition, whether it is for their kindness, a great resource they shared recently, or an awesome lesson they teach.

**This week's shout out goes to Navpreet Ganda from Rick Kumar:**

*"I wanted to shout out Navpreet Ganda at École Salish Secondary! This year I've been working alongside her supporting her Grade 8s and her dedication and commitment to Science and French Immersion are astounding! Her students are happy to come to class and she is always seeking out new opportunities for them to immerse themselves in the subject and incorporate the First Peoples Principles of Learning. French field-trips are especially hard to plan, but her dedication to instruction and worldly opportunities en Français c'est très magnifique! Thank you for all the hard work you do and your increased union involvement Navpreet!"*

Thank you Rick, you and Navpreet are now entered into our monthly draw for a \$25 Indigo! gift certificate. Please submit your "shout outs" to Angela via [communications@surreyteachers.org](mailto:communications@surreyteachers.org) to spread the kindness around our local and for your chance to win a gift card too!