



## **STA Connection September 8-11, 2020**

### **Welcome back**

By the time you read this most or all of you will have entered your school building or worksite and started this unusual September. We extend our solidarity to all members as we all navigate the new reality of what schools are like during the Covid pandemic. We know you have questions about many topics, both personal and collective, and we are here to try to answer them if we can, or to encourage and facilitate advocacy for common concerns.

This year we believe the role of the staff rep(s), health and safety rep(s) and staff committees will be extremely important. If you have ever hesitated to get involved, please shed your hesitancy and step up with your ideas and energy to bring concerns forward and help solve problems. We need reps in the roles in every single school and worksite. Our union's effectiveness is based on our long tradition of active and informed reps, communication paths between members and their union, and maintaining our rights through upholding the collective agreement. Let's get through the pandemic better with solidarity, communication and actively supporting each other.

### **"Blended transition" model staffing process**

Principals have received information about the parent demand for this program and reorganizing schools to the extent required. Our position is that class size and composition limits apply to the elementary blended learning groups. The blended transition groups will mostly be assigned at each school from the staff at that school. In small schools or where there is low demand for the blended transition model, there may be some groups organized in a "regional cohort" that draws from more than one school. We understand that the intention at this point is that on Jan. 1, 2021 all students and teachers would return to their schools and classes would be reorganized; however, presumably this would be dependent on the Covid situation.

Many have asked how decisions get made about who will work in the blended transition program. Principals do have the right to assign work; for example, they usually decide who will teach split classes or which blocks of a course, and so it is in the case of assigning the blended program staffing, which are still classes, even though of course this blended transition model is not something we have seen before. At some schools, many teachers are interested in working in the blended program, but at others, someone may get assigned who would prefer a regular class assignment. However, in our collective agreement we have the right to Staff Committee, which has the mandate to advise administrators on most decisions at the school level, so the committee should be meeting to discuss this the assignment process. The process and considerations for this staffing should be shared transparently with the staff.

Please contact us if the process at your school seems problematic.

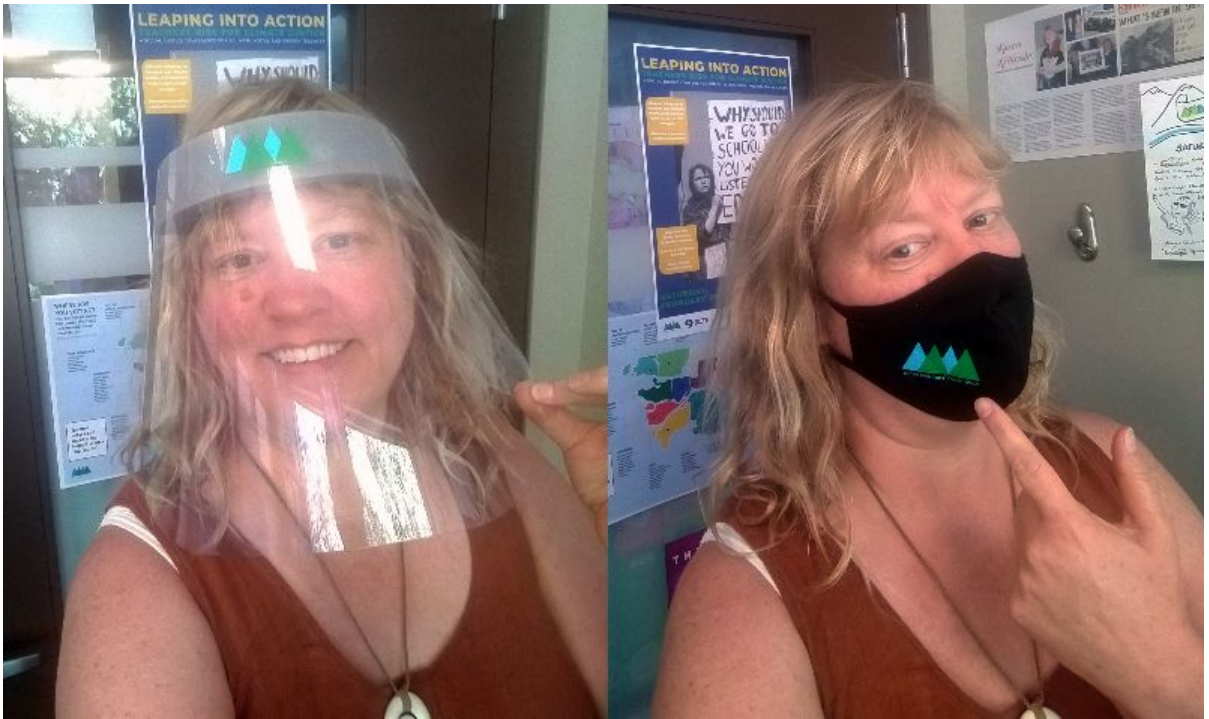
## **Accommodation requests, denials, and what next questions**

If you have requested a Covid19-related accommodation to work remotely from home due to your personal health or family member's health concerns, and if your request has not been approved by HR, we are collecting this data to share with the BCTF for continued advocacy with the Ministry. Please email us with this information at [sta@surreyteachers.org](mailto:sta@surreyteachers.org). We are working diligently to respond to members' concerns and will advise or assist you as soon as we can. Please remember there are many members with concerns and few of us here at the office, which will affect response times.

## **Supervision during lunch?**

We have received calls informing us that principals are planning to have teachers supervise lunch eating with their classes so that older students don't enter the cohorts, or so that kids are not eating in a common area. According to our collective agreement we have a duty-free lunch break, so teachers are not required to do supervision during that lunch break. HR tells us that they have reminded principals of the need to respect the duty-free lunch in making plans for supervision of students at lunch. If, because of health protocols, teachers are required to supervise when students are eating their lunches, then it would have to be during instructional time.

## **STA face shield and mask distribution to all members**



In the summer we ordered STA-branded face masks and shields, and we have enough of these for one of each per STA member. We have communicated with our reps at each site on Tuesday, asking them to find out from members in their site the number of STA face masks and face shields requested. Reps will be facilitating the distribution in their sites. If you don't have a rep in your school or the rep has not initiated the request process, perhaps offer to help as they may be overwhelmed with all their start up duties. We hope by early next week all requests will have been filled.

Masks and face shields for TTOCs will be distributed at pick up points after school hours, and TTOCs will have received an email outlining this process from Dana Ebtakar, our new TTOC rep on the Executive. If you are a TTOC and you have not received this email, contact Dana at [ttorep@surreyteachers.org](mailto:ttorep@surreyteachers.org) to make sure you are on his distribution list.

## Health and Safety



**A message to members as to process**

Here are links to the 3 documents providing direction on health and safety protocols for schools, as well as information on how these principles and guidelines will be implemented at the school level:

- [Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#)
- [BCCDC's COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings](#)
- [WorkSafeBC's Education \(K-12\): Protocols for returning to operation](#)

**What to do if something is not right? Who do you call upon when you see a health and safety concern?** Please remember that our best path to advocate is through bringing our concerns to the attention of our administrators. **If you have a Health and Safety concern, notify your principal first.** The school-based Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee is the most powerful tool we have to address health and safety concerns at school. However, if you see or experience a health and safety issue or concern, the first step is to notify the Principal or Vice Principal for an immediate solution. If there is no resolution to your issue, the JOHS will meet to determine solutions. They are tasked with ensuring the health and safety of all workers in a workplace. Health and Safety Committees have official processes to make sure complaints are dealt with. Posting your concerns on social media may raise awareness but it is not a step towards solving the problem, so please inform your supervisor in an email with details!

We know that many of our members are feeling stunned, numbed, or overwhelmed with the return to school. You may be feeling concerned but having trouble determining how to respond. Here are four simple steps that might help you:

1. Are you feeling safe in your teaching? If not, what specifically is the concern? Physical distancing? Air quality? Cleaning agents? Begin an email.
2. What could help you feel safe? Plexiglass? A fan? More information? Add to the email with a request.
3. Send your email to your administrator.
4. If your administrator has solved the problem and you feel safe, great! If not, forward their response (or your email if there is no response) to the joint H&S committee at your school. If you don't know who that is, send it to your administrator and ask them to bring it to the next meeting of the joint H&S committee.

These steps may help guide your actions and will definitely help your joint health and safety committee determine the needs of the school. You can also email the STA Health and Safety Officer, Gavin Slade-Kerr, at [hs@surreyteachers.org](mailto:hs@surreyteachers.org) with your questions and concerns.

### **H&S Committees STA online forums**

We know H&S committee members have lots of pressure on them right now to answer questions and delve into issues being presented to them. Please feel invited to register and attend one of our upcoming H&S committee forums where you can hear information about processes, and also hear about what is going on in other schools.

Elementary H&S Forum: Wednesday, September 16, 3:30-4:30

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_KKwRFyWQgiaH0wQEY5ynQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_KKwRFyWQgiaH0wQEY5ynQ)

Secondary and all others H&S Forum: Thursday, September 17, 3:30-4:30

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_TBBY6RNERieVh\\_uzNC0dhg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_TBBY6RNERieVh_uzNC0dhg)

The forums will focus on membership requirements and responsibilities for the joint H&S committees, as well as suggestions for procedures of these committees during the covid pandemic.

### **Masks and Shields**

You will be provided by the District with two face masks and face shields will be available upon request. The advice from the Provincial Health Officer is to wear masks if physical distancing is not possible, but it is the right of all members to wear PPE at any time.

You may bring your own PPE if you prefer. You can recommend that your students wear PPE even if physical distancing, but it is not mandatory for them to wear masks in classrooms at this time.

All adults in elementary and secondary schools are required to wear masks in crowded hallways. We recommend that masks be worn at all times in hallways. Hallways in Surrey Schools are often less than two metres wide, making physical distancing difficult, if not impossible. Even if the hallway is empty, you never know if someone's coming around the corner, possibly a whole class! Not wearing a mask in the hallway also puts other staff in the position of perhaps having to remind colleagues to wear masks, which can lead to conflict.

### **Transparent Barriers**

If teachers are working on a regular basis within 2m of students (such as counsellors in a small office), the District is first required to try to find an alternative space to work. If none is available, the District must explore the possibility of remote teaching (calendar changes meetings with counsellors, for example) or transparent barriers. Only after these alternatives have been explored are teachers required to wear masks. If you feel you need a transparent barrier, talk to your administrator. The district has told administrators seeking plexiglass for their schools to contact Nancy Johnston in District Facilities. If you are not approved for plexiglass, the District Health and Safety Department has approved teachers bringing in their own transparent barriers, should you wish to do so. Make sure any transparent barriers you bring in will not harm anyone (by falling on a student, for example).

## **Mentor 36**



Teaching is a wonderful and challenging career! Often for new career teachers or changing positions, things can get overwhelming. You're working so hard and the learning curves can be steep. Chances are, you could use the assistance of a mentor. Mentor36 is our Surrey Teachers' Association – School District 36 joint mentorship program. We are committed to supporting professional growth and a sense of belonging for Surrey teachers through an opportunity for collaborative mentorship at every site in Surrey.

When teachers support one another, everyone benefits. Please consider joining the joint STA/SD36 mentorship program.

Many of us started teaching and a colleague informally became a mentor for us. We can help connect mentors with newer teachers that would like that boost of support to explore a new area or work on some specific challenges. Mentors and mentees work together in cohort learning groups within their family of schools. There are many opportunities for collaboration, sharing, asking questions, and supporting one another.

**For Elementary, SAIL, Learning Centres and Invergarry:**

Mentor 36 is currently accepting applications from mentees for the upcoming school year.

**Secondary Schools:**

Most secondary schools will serve their mentors and mentees through their own site-based mentorship program. If your school does not, please give your contact information to Sharon Lau, Mentorship Helping Teacher, and we will follow up in October.

For more information, and to apply, visit the Mentor 36 website at <https://mentor36.com/join>.

Please share this opportunity with anyone who might be interested. Questions can be directed to STA Support Services officer Kevin Amboe via [services@surreyteachers.org](mailto:services@surreyteachers.org).

## Hard deadline for Pro-D funding requests!

**Deadline for Pro-D Funding Applications for the 2019-2020 School Year:**

All applications must be received at the STA by **September 15, 2020**. Please get them into the courier this week, or email to [accounting@surreyteachers.org](mailto:accounting@surreyteachers.org).

## STA Awards

**Deadline for Applications: September 18, 2020**

The STA is offering 6 Academic Scholarships, 6 Bursaries and 2 Jennifer Wadge Social Justice Awards. These awards are available to students who graduated during the 2019/2020 Academic Year and are for the children of active STA Members. For more information and applications, please see our [Scholarship & Awards page](#).

## Staff Rep Training



We are planning our first training sessions for staff reps beginning with [Role of the Staff Rep](#) on September 29, 2020 AM and PM (2 sessions), which is specifically for our brand new reps and [Know your New Collective Agreement](#) scheduled on September 30, 2020 AM and PM (2 sessions), October 1, 2020 AM and PM (2 sessions), October 2, 2020 AM and PM (2 sessions).

Role of the Staff Rep: <https://rookie-training-fall2020.eventbrite.ca/>

Know your New Collective Agreement: <https://contractawareness-fall2020.eventbrite.ca/>

These SURTs will only be half-day release given that the workshops are now being delivered online (Zoom) this year. Newly elected members would attend the rookie training AND one of the other dates.

Please do not register for rookie training if you aren't a new staff rep, but please take steps to assist them in the registration process, it can be confusing for first timers.



*"I wanted to give a shout out for the STA connection, but I don't know the teacher. I went into the Welcome Centre and in my box was this little note that said "Spreading some kindness to you!" with this picture on the back from someone's student. I noticed the cards were in other boxes in the Welcome Centre too. A teacher must have got a list of our staff and had their class make these encouragement cards for each of us. What a creative idea! I loved it and wanted to thank you for thinking of unique ways to encourage others during this time! And thank you Shivam for the beautiful social distance picture!"*

Kris Hull

Teacher - ELL Bridge Program