



STA Connection September 21-25, 2020

Week 3, lots of cases in Surrey schools

It seems like yesterday, and also ages ago, that we returned to school. So much has happened, and teachers have had to get used to so many changes. At the time of publishing this, we have seen COVID-19 exposures / cases in 16 schools in our district (in three schools, two or three exposures), which tells us that the virus is happening in our community and we all need to be very vigilant with trying to protect ourselves and our students. The union's position is still that the density of people in our schools and classrooms is too high, and that we need the possibility of better physical distancing to keep us safer. We don't have the power to prevent the school plan as it is from being implemented; forcing a change would perhaps require more direct action than our current advocacy can accomplish.

We at the STA hope that safe routines are being followed and people are settling into the cohorts. We hope you are not interacting face to face with many adults, and that you are taking the time you need to get used to all the safety measures.

Staff Committee Chairs Training

The school staff committee is the best mechanism we have for ensuring that teachers have a voice in how their school runs. We want to support you in having an effective staff committee at your site. Staff committee chairs are invited to a virtual after school workshop to discuss running Staff Committee effectively. This 45-minute session will help you plan the monthly routine needed to provide leadership for effective school-based decision making processes. Veteran or a rookie, all are welcome. Let's have effective staff committees in every school this year! Choose from Sept 30th , Oct 1st , Oct 6th or Oct 7th. 3:30-4:15 pm. Register via the following links:

September 30th: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_dBC8YaKATr67ewAjtMmSzQ

October 1st: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_2QwygDeKQAC26YJ5DAOWnA

October 6th: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_jLmPRSQcTY2euSvKPB0R3A

October 7th: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_SWVJJX_qQs2C8UVZP53Sew

Privacy and Safety in Covid Times

Being in schools in a pandemic creates a tension between the desire to know as much as possible about COVID-19 cases connected to the school, and the obligation to protect staff, student and parent privacy. We want Fraser Health to be more transparent with its processes, and also know that they are concerned about exposing people to backlash from rumours that may spring up or harassment on social media based on fear.

We know that members have serious concerns about how Fraser Health does contact tracing, and whether everyone is being contacted who should be. We are pursuing these questions with the District and Fraser Health about the process, so members' health and safety will be protected as much as possible under these circumstances.

Staff Rep Training



We have been successful in our bid to access full-day workshops and we are now taking registrations for the Fall 2020 Staff Rep Training. Please ignore any half-day training session you may have previously signed up for.

Training sessions for staff reps beginning with Role and Function of the Staff Rep on September 29 and 30, which is specifically for our brand new reps and Know your New Collective Agreement scheduled on October 13, 19, 21, 26, 27 and 28.

Role and Function of the Staff Rep: <https://rokiestaffrep-sept2020.eventbrite.ca>

Know your New Collective Agreement: <https://staffrep-oct2020.eventbrite.ca>

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.

Accommodations

Many members have requested a COVID-19-related accommodation to work remotely from home due to health concerns for themselves or members of their family, and unfortunately HR has not approved these requests. The options proposed by HR as an alternative to working remotely from home appear to include taking an unpaid leave, accessing one's sick leave, or returning to the worksite with the offer of additional PPE, such as a plexiglass barrier.

We continue to meet with the district to advocate for members who cannot return to the school site yet are eager and able to continue working remotely with students. We suggested to HR that when staffing the blended online assignments, they should consider those members who are seeking to work remotely, but the District requires that the online instruction be delivered from the school site and these assignments include increasing face-to-face afternoon sessions.

We are also sharing our Accommodations data with BCTF to bring to their discussions with the Ministry. If your request for an accommodation to work remotely has not been approved, and you have had to settle for an alternate option, please notify us at sta@surreyteachers.org.

Health and Safety



Masks in Hallways

Masks should be worn by all staff and students in hallways at all times, even when there is no one else in the hall. We have had exposures at 16 schools at the writing of this and need to remain vigilant about following the protocols to slow the spread of the virus. At the same time, some adults and students are not able to tolerate a mask, for reasons that could be highly personal. Please do not assume that someone not wearing a mask is deliberately defying the rules.

Meetings

Meetings are required to be virtual unless it is impossible to do so. This includes all meetings: staff meetings, committee meetings, school team meetings, even having lunch or coffee in the staff room. We all miss the connections we make when we get together, but limiting contact during this pandemic is an important part of keeping everyone safe.

Flu Shots

Flu shot information will be out in a Weekly Memo next month.

Due to COVID-19, the District will not hold their regular flu shot clinics at DEC this year but there will be other options.

Employees are encouraged to go to their local health unit/pharmacy, doctor to be vaccinated free of cost if they are eligible for the publicly funded vaccine. If they are not eligible, they may go to our District-approved vendor to be vaccinated free of cost. This information will be provided in October.

Non-enrolling teachers

Make sure you keep a list of who you have close contact with each day. This will be helpful to Public Health in determining who will need to isolate at your school in the case of an exposure.

TTOCs

If a TTOC contracted COVID-19 at a school, they would be covered by WorkSafeBC. If they were forced to isolate from being a close contact, there is presently nothing in place for them for compensation, although the BCTF and STA are advocating for teachers to be paid during forced isolation. TTOCs can protect themselves against this by ensuring 2m distance separation from students and staff whenever possible. We are suggesting that they form a 2m radius space for themselves in a classroom that students are not to enter.

Buses

It has come to the STA's attention that buses are often used for picking students up from different schools on a single bus. We strongly recommend that teachers who have students arriving on a bus ask the drivers what other school's students share the space at the same time. This will assist in contact tracing in the case of an exposure.

Training for Joint Health and Safety Committee Members

The District offers in-house training for all our H&S committee members, so there is no need for them to register for training outside of the district. They will be sending information for staff soon on how to register for these sessions soon.

Room Inspections

We've always argued that it made the most sense to do the inspection during instruction to get a true picture of the health and safety needs of the classroom. Some joint health and safety committee members were able to get coverage for this duty. However, it may be a better idea in light of the pandemic to ask each teacher to flag concerns with their classroom on the different areas of the inspection form, i.e. electrical, flooring, windows, ceiling, etc. The H&S committee member can come into the room when there are no students and gather more details on the issues.

Virtual School visits

The STA table officers have done hundreds of school visits in the last 3 years as a result of our push to be more accessible to members and to provide direct service, as well as to get to know our members and schools better. Now the pandemic has thwarted this campaign! We are keen to do school visits virtually, at the request of school staffs. Staff Reps, if you would like to arrange a virtual school visit, please contact repsupport@surreyteachers.org. We could be added to your school teams temporarily to be able to provide a virtual visit that way, or we could provide an STA Zoom link. Thanks in advance for organizing!

The Struggle is Real: Peer Support may be for you

Teaching is a very high stress profession with many layers of complexity. There are many reasons over a teacher's career where we may end up struggling and needing support. Teaching a new grade or subject, teaching challenging students, or personal physical and mental health issues are all valid reasons that can push us beyond our capacity without support. There is help available for those who feel they need the extra support through the Peer Support Program, a joint initiative between the STA and the Surrey School District. Peer support consultants can offer support, in a non-directive and non-judgmental environment. It is a free, confidential service provided through the STA.

If you are feel you are struggling, you can ask for confidential support before it becomes too overwhelming. If you aren't sure if the program is right for you, feel free to contact Kevin Amboe at services@surreyteachers.org for more information.

Application forms are confidential and available at www.surreyteachers.org/forms-resources/forms.

Volunteer as a Peer Support Consultant

As you continue growing in your teaching career, you may feel the desire to give back to the profession in the same way that others helped you at various points in your career.

The STA is currently looking for additional teachers who are interested in volunteering as a Peer Support Consultant. Responsibilities include providing direct support to teachers, participating in the development of plans-of-assistance, and training for peer consultants. Release time for work and training will be provided. At present we have a higher need for Secondary teachers.

Please return your completed [application](#) to the STA office by **Monday, October 6, 2020**. Application forms are confidential and available at www.surreyteachers.org/forms-resources/forms.

Feel free to contact Kevin Amboe at services@surreyteachers.org or phone (604) 592-8396 should you have any questions.

Mentorship Advisory Team

The STA Executive will appoint up to 3 teachers to the joint STA/SD36 Mentorship Advisory Team. The team will be made up of an equal number of STA and District appointees and will work with the Mentorship Helping Teacher to continue to evolve the Mentor36 and guide its operation.

The committee has regularly scheduled monthly meetings and release time is provided for the committee to do its work. It is very important to have teachers on this committee that have participated in mentorship, either as a mentee or a mentor; however, it does not need to be within Surrey.

If you are interested in this opportunity, please return the completed [CV form](#) to sta@surreyteachers.org office by **October 2, 2020**.

Please contact Kevin Amboe at services@surreyteachers.org if you have questions or need more information.

Teacher Inquiry Project Applications

Applications are now available online:

www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/ProD/TeacherInquiry/TIP_application_form.pdf.

Before submitting the application form, please also check out additional information on how to apply at www.bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx?id=49815.

General information on the TIP program is available at www.bctf.ca/TeacherInquiry/.

There are two new enhancements to the TIP Program this year:

1. Dedicated Teacher Inquiry project with a focus on equity and inclusion
 - A Teacher Inquiry project dedicated to the professional study of racism in schools/worksites and the broader community
 - While issues related to racism, equity, and inclusion may be part of other Teacher Inquiry Program projects, this project would ensure that there is a deliberate focus on the issues of equity and inclusion.

While applications are due at the BCTF on October 16th, in order to process applications and secure funding, they are **due at the STA office on October 12th**.

Application submission deadline: October 16, 2020