



STA Connection September 28-October 2, 2020

Covid concerns continue

We are working hard to bring forward concerns from Surrey teachers to district administrators and to Fraser Health. There are schools where teachers feel relatively safe now that we have settled into daily routines, and there are schools where teachers continue to be alarmed and anxious, given continued exposure notices and many unanswered questions.

One concern involves contact tracing, and whether teachers will be informed if students in their classes test positive. Both the BCTF provincially, and the STA locally, have called for teachers to be contacted by public health authorities when students test positive, to ensure that the contact tracing process is accurate. These discussions continue.

We are meeting regularly with District personnel on a range of health and safety issues. As you will see below, Gavin Slade-Kerr, our Health and Safety Officer, has been asking the questions and providing answers to members each week in this memo. We will continue advocating forcefully and seeking needed changes for the health and safety of our members during this time.

FSA postponed, hurray!

We are thrilled that our pressure worked and the FSA tests that were scheduled for October are postponed. Of course, a pandemic is not the time to hold standardized tests for so many reasons. As you well know, we have been running yearly campaigns to ask parents to withdraw their children from these Grade 4 and 7 tests. We do not believe a census test is necessary to gauge the efficacy of the school system, and we are concerned about harm to children who get stressed and anxious when writing them. There are also concerns about time spent doing the test that takes away from instructional time and monopolizes the computers in the school for an extended period. Worst of all, the results are not used

to provide extra staffing or supports for “needy” schools, rather, we see the results being used by such entities as the Fraser Institute to rank schools, causing damage to morale in the schools. We continue to urge the government to abolish the tests altogether.

Orange Shirt Day

Wednesday, September 30 was Orange Shirt Day. This is a day set aside for remembering the treatment of Indigenous peoples at residential schools in Canada. Indigenous children were forcefully removed from their homes and taken to residential schools. At the schools they were not permitted to speak their own languages and often forced to do menial work. Many were subject to physical and sexual abuse.

Residential schools are not something from the distant past: the last residential school closed in 1996. The residential school system traumatized Indigenous people and prevented the transfer of culture from generation to generation. As part of truth and reconciliation, it is vital to remember the terrible wrong done to Indigenous people through residential schools. We must take this understanding with us as we work to reconcile settlers and Indigenous peoples.

Our commitment as teachers to taking action for real truth and reconciliation continues every day of the year. We know residential schools were sites of harm, and as educators we have the power to make schools sites of healing, truth, and understanding. It takes all of us, and will take time. Let’s continue our important work in this area with energy and enthusiasm.

We know many schools make this an important celebration within your school year. If you were able to take a socially distanced group photo in your school, we would love to share in a future edition of the STA Connection or an upcoming Advocate.

Provincial election called for October 24

Your PAPR (Political Action Public Relations) Committee met to discuss strategy for the upcoming snap election. We encourage all teachers to vote, and we remind members that voting by mail will be a popular option this time. Information is easily available at elections.bc.ca. We will be organizing a very limited campaign on education issues to inform members of the different parties’ platforms relating to our concerns. Look for an easy to share grid in an upcoming STA Connection, and via our social media. If you are keen to help with this work, please contact Julia at 1vp@surreyteachers.org.

Executive Retreat



Your STA executive met last week to have one chance to get to know each other in person (with physical distancing!) so that we can provide more unified leadership throughout the school year. It was fantastic to actually meet in person, as our meetings will be virtual going forward. We spent time talking about the level of stress and concern among members, and helping new executive members know how our bylaws, constitution, and procedures function. We even took a few minutes for a socially distanced photo op! All of us are doing this work in service to the membership.

Length of lunch hour at Elementary

Human Resources has assured us that, at this point, all elementary schools should have a lunch time of no less than 45 minutes (supervision-free). If that is not happening at your school, please email Mark Keelan, Grievance Officer, at grieve2@surreyteachers.org with details.

BCTF livestreams this week and next week

The BCTF is continuing to advocate at the provincial level for more robust contact tracing in the school Covid cases, and for other safety measures. To help get you more answers to your questions and provide you with a more fulsome update on the provincial situation, The BCTF will host another Livestream **Thursday, October 1, 2020 from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.**

You can watch it at <https://livestream.com/bctf/updates>. You will need to use the password bctf2020 to access the feed. Please submit your questions via email at covidquestions@bctf.ca. They will also be hosting **another Livestream on Thursday, October 8, 2020 that will focus on issues facing Teachers Teaching on Call.**

Failures to Fill

We all know that Failures to Fill in schools causes so many challenges. We continue to want Staff Reps to share with the STA when Failures to Fill are occurring. The STA has filed a grievance regarding the District's practice to direct non-enrolling teachers to cover failure to fill for classroom teachers. The STA is therefore collecting data to support this grievance by requesting that staff reps regularly report failures to fill. In an effort to make this task as quick and efficient as possible, we have created a new format for

reporting failures to fill. Please use [this link](#) to report failures to fill at your school. There is also a "report failures to fill" button on the right-hand side of our Surrey Teachers' Association website homepage for easy access.

School Staff Committees can help shape the method of coverage for Failures to Fill and come up with a failures-to-fill rotation plan!

Here are some considerations:

- Who is in the rotation (the rotation should include administration),
- Who is not in the rotation? (If you have a counsellor, LST, IST for only 2 days a week- what is the protocol?),
- Who requests to the teachers in the morning to provide coverage, and how is it tracked?
- When can a Teacher say – “not today, please skip me as I have X that must be done today.”?
- Is the plan to try and split up the filling with only doing 1/3 of the day per person, or covered by several teachers on their preps? When a teacher loses their prep time to fill a vacancy, that lost prep time is repaid to the teachers impacted.
- Teaching done by teachers that provide prep time is crucial to our students, and that lost time is not replaced.
- Work done by other non-enrolling including LST and IST is never recovered, and students don't get service, or the member still has all the work piling up.

Let's all try to minimize failures to fill– such as booking as early as possible for known absences.

When do we start work?

Many people arrive at work a long time before we are required to be at school. We use this time to prepare our class and ourselves. In the same way, many teachers spend hours after school long past the required time to be at school. The collective agreement defines the school day and the hours we are expected to be at the school site as:

***D.22.1 SCHOOL/INSTRUCTIONAL DAY**

- *a. The term "school day" means a period commencing fifteen (15) minutes before classes are first convened in the morning and ending fifteen (15) minutes after classes are last dismissed in the afternoon, AND
- *b. No employee will be required to perform supervision duties beyond the school day except where an emergency necessitates supervision to ensure the safety of students.

Two questions often come up about the school day:

- Do I have to open my classroom door before the second bell?
 - The answer is No. Some teachers do open it. In doing so, they are choosing to be responsible for students and actions in their classroom during that time. It is a possible risk if the teacher does not remain in the classroom during that time.
- When does morning supervision start and end?
 - It can only start 15 minutes before instruction starts which is usually the second bell. If your first bell is at 8:30 and your second bell is at 8:35, then the school day doesn't start until 8:20 so that is when supervision requires you to be there. While supervision officially ends at 8:35 in this example, teachers are usually moving towards their own classes as students begin lining up and not remaining in the areas they were supervising.

Secondary Quarter Reporting

The District has recently provided clarity on Communicating Student Learning for Secondary schools using newer language.

Currently you are working on the quartered system. The District is requiring that in each quarter, there be a "Point of Progress" (Sept. 28-Oct. 16 for first quarter) and then a "Summary of Progress" at the end of each quarter. The Point of Progress is an informal report. It can take many forms: it could be a written interim report, a phone call or email, or a meeting.

Under our collective agreement, there cannot be more than one formal and one informal report for each quarter:

F.20.3 REPORTING TO PARENTS

[...]

*c. In secondary schools with more than two (2) terms of instruction, the number of student progress reports for each student shall not exceed one (1) formal and one (1) informal report per term unless the teacher decides otherwise.

Please note that a parent-teacher conference counts as an informal report/Point of Progress, so teachers should not be expected both to provide an interim report and participate in a parent-teacher conference during a quarter. If there are parent-teacher conferences, and a parent does not attend, then the teacher would need to provide a Point of Progress in some other form.

Health and Safety



The STA met with District Facilities and were given more details about actions being taken to combat COVID19.

HVAC

Following directions given to schools as a result of the pandemic, all HVAC units have had their outdoor air intake increased from 10% to 25%. The CO2 detectors have been changed from 1000 ppm (parts per million) to 800 ppm, so that the outside air dampers kick in earlier. The operating hours for the HVAC have been changed from 8am-3pm to 6am-5pm. District Facilities has determined which of their machines can handle MERV 13 filters, which can handle MERV 11, and which need to stay at MERV 8.

They have ordered the filters and expect them within the next 3 weeks, and then expect them all to be installed in the 3 weeks following.

Plexiglass

Teachers such as LST and counsellors who are unable to find a space big enough to allow them to work more than 2m distance with students are entitled to plexiglass barriers. Contact Nancy Johnston in District Facilities. She is continuing to process applications and you should expect a response in the next few weeks.

Fogging

Some members are concerned about the fogging of their classroom, while other members are equally concerned about their classrooms not being fogged. The spray is Clorox 360 and has been approved by Health Canada as appropriate in fighting Covid19. It should not be ingested, however, so remove open beverages (like your coffee) and food from the area being sprayed and don't allow food to have direct contact with sprayed surfaces.

Portables are currently not being fogged because the machines are too heavy and awkward for the custodians. The process presently is a manual wipe to replace the spraying. The district is considering purchasing handheld or backpack sprayers and expects to have those in place in the next few weeks.

Questions about where and when to wear a mask? Here's a chart:

Hallways and all common areas

- All adults in Secondary and Elementary at all times
- All students in Secondary at all times

Classroom

- Cohort - mask not required
- Outside of cohort - mask not required if 2m distance maintained
- Students and adults in Secondary if 2m distance cannot be maintained
- Adults in Elementary if 2m distance cannot be maintained

Behind plexiglass

- Mask not required even if within 2m

Please note that even in situations in which a mask is not required to be worn (e.g. in a classroom with one's own cohort), it is safer for everyone if a culture of mask wearing can be developed in the school.

The Status of Women Wellness Project 2020

The Status of Women Committee will be continuing our Wellness Project for STA members this year. While it is not possible to hold the wellness events we held in the past with large groups, we intend to share information about wellness with the membership as much as possible. A survey will be sent to members soon to establish how best to meet the needs of members to stay mentally and physically well. We know that the system is under extreme stress and that we do not have a great deal of control over this situation. The best investment you can make is in your health. Forest Bathing or Nature Bathing is a simple process that reduces stress. Forest Bathing requires no special equipment, no costs necessary and can be done alone or in a group in a schoolyard or a local park. Forest Bathing is something that can also be taught to students.



Forest bathing, or shinrin-yoku, is simply spending time outdoors under the canopy of trees. In Japanese, “**shinrin**” means forest and “**yoku**” means bath, or immersing oneself in the forest and soaking in the atmosphere through all of one’s senses. Forest bathing became popular in Japan in the 1980s in response to workers’ stress in technology fields. According to Dr. Li a Forest Bathing expert at Nippon Medical School in Japan there is an extensive body of forest bathing research and the benefits to human health. Dr. Li says he is most excited about his work exploring the effects of phytoncides—essential wood oils or the “aromas of the forest”—on the human immune system.

A [2009 study published in the International Journal of Immunopathology](#) reported that phytoncide exposure in a controlled environment contributed to a “significant increase” in human natural killer cells, a type of white blood cell that is known to boost immune function. This finding is consistent with results from

studies conducted in a natural forest environment. Phytoncide exposure also decreased anxiety, depression, anger and fatigue. Dr. Li said the benefits can last up to a month. Experts believe that time in nature will also lower blood pressure and improve heart function.

Read more stories related to forest bathing:

- Peter Wohlleben's [The Hidden Life of Trees](#)
- Dianna Beresford-Kroeger Call of the Forest The Forgotten Wisdom of Trees. The film is available, free in BC, on the Knowledge Network
- [The Biophilia Effect: A Scientific and Spiritual Exploration of the Healing Bond Between Humans and Nature](#) Clemens G. Arvay [A Dose of the Outdoors](#)
- [Shinrin-Yoku, the Art of Slowing Down](#)
- Articles by Florence Williams author of *The Nature Fix*,
 - [Overcoming Barriers to the Outdoors](#)
 - [Why We're Hardwired For Adventure](#)
 - [Creating New Rituals, Outside](#)
 - [Free Your Mind and Go Outdoors](#)
 - [Our Public Lands](#)
 - [Our Connection to Water](#)
 - [The Awe of the Night Sky](#)
 - [The Three-Day Effect](#)
 - [Closing the Bravery Gap](#)
 - The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative Book by Florence Williams