
Memo #16

Date: January 8, 2021

To: Members

Re: Remote Learning Update; OTIP News; Northeastern CDSB “Pink Listing”

Remote Learning Update

Yesterday it was announced that remote teaching in Southern Ontario would be extended another two weeks, except in one of our schools. In Parry Sound, St. Peter the Apostle which accesses the Parry Sound Health Unit is deemed part of Northern Ontario, and as such is being told to return face-to-face teaching beginning Monday, January 11th.

OECTA Provincial is trying to advocate on behalf of staff and students of St. Peter the Apostle.

The Board was made aware of this decision by the government and has asked that St. Peter the Apostle be included with its corresponding schools in Simcoe Muskoka.

Students with Special Needs: As with the December 21st announcement, the Ministry has continued with the decision to allow students with special needs (most vulnerable) access to the school. However, the government has decided to provide transportation to families. Therefore, schools may see an increase in the number of students with special needs with the extension of remote teaching/learning.

We are assuming schools may reach out to parents again to enquire about their child(s) needs and whether they will be attending school, over the next two weeks.

OECTA continues to pressure the government, questioning why if schools are closed, why are they requiring education workers to be present, especially during the increasing numbers of Covid-19

Emergency Daycare: OECTA has been pressuring the government to include education workers as essential workers during the pandemic in order for them to access Essential Worker Daycare. The government has finally acknowledged the hypocrisy of requiring education workers to either work from home or work location, while their own children are at home.

The government has changed their stance – somewhat – and are permitting teachers that are “**required**” to be a work to work with students with special needs (vulnerable students), and now the Board will be able to offer more locations for Emergency Daycare. More information will be provided by the Board.

Absences: As referenced in OECTA’s latest Covid-19 Update, teachers still have access to sick/medical leave. If a teacher is sick and cannot complete their teaching duties for the day, they are to use the same process as usual – ARC in sick/medical.

Similarly, if a teacher has a scheduled medical appointment, they can still go to the appointment and ARC in using sick/medical.

Unfortunately, the Board doesn’t have a process, yet that allows occasional teachers to access a teacher’s virtual classroom. Therefore, on those days, a message will be sent out by the school (i.e., principal) stating that the teacher is absent today, and asynchronous work will be available for students to access.

Similar to Emergency Plans, please have a few asynchronous activities available to post to your virtual classroom for students.

OECTA does not agree with this practice – the same practice the Board has chosen to use in the Virtual School Elementary (VSE) – and as such, both occasional and permanent teacher unions have filed grievances on the Board's decision.

Vaccine Priority: OECTA, and other education affiliates have been advocating the government that education workers be treated similar to other essential workers and be prioritized for receiving the Covid-19 vaccine.

Targeted Testing: The government seems to be ready to extend targeted testing in Boards beyond the limited areas of Toronto, and Peel. The government has not stated which regions or Boards. More information will follow once a decision is made.

Synchronous Teaching/Learning: With the extension of remote learning the Board and the Ministry has stepped up their insistence mandatory synchronous teaching/learning and stated the following in regard to synchronous teaching/learning:

All classroom teachers are required to have a virtual learning environment (Brightspace or Google Classroom) and continue with the delivery of the curriculum through this model.

PPM 164 clearly outlines the expectations around the number of minutes teachers are expected to provide both synchronously and asynchronously. There are also examples provided of the two different modes. Educators should use their professional judgement to determine the best way to deliver curriculum, **however there must be a combination of modalities including live teaching, to meet students' needs and not just one single method of curriculum delivery.**

As stated in previous messages, OECTA would prefer if teachers could use their professional judgment to when and how to communicate/teach with students. The Board is requiring teachers to be available in more than one way.

Teachers are being asked to have a daily or weekly schedule posted for students, and in some cases parents, to follow. It has been suggested that trying to keep to the schedule you and the students had during face-to-face instruction may be the best option.

Itinerant Teachers: The direction from the Board is as follows:

Itinerant (FSL, Drama, etc.) should be part of both of the synchronous and asynchronous time. Educators will need to collaborate and consult with each other to determine how best to make this happen. Following a similar schedule as the face-to-face school timetable might be the easiest way to manage this.

1:1 teaching during Remote Teaching: As we move into week two of remote learning, we are hearing of teachers who wish to engage in 1:1 teaching – for example, Reading Recovery, and SERTs.

OECTA does not encourage 1:1 teaching when the teacher is alone with the student, but realize that sometimes this does occur, and teachers need to place themselves in a safe situation and to protect themselves from situations where they could be referred for discipline by the Board or the Ontario College of Teachers. Therefore, teachers need to set up parameters to protect themselves if they choose to engage in 1:1 remote teaching.

Some suggestions:

If another adult – not the parent of the child/student – can be present.
Recording sessions for your protection

Use of Google Meet vs Zoom: It is recommended that all teachers move to Zoom to meet/teach with students instead of Google Meet. There are security issues with Google Meet that VSE teachers have experienced that will be avoided by using Zoom.

OTIP News

How to stay safe during an ice storm

When raindrops fall through a cold layer of air onto surfaces below 0° C, it creates the perfect storm: freezing rain. Although ice covered tree branches can look pretty, most Canadians know how dangerous an ice storm can be. Ice storms can cause car accidents, nasty falls and power outages from fallen tree branches.

Learn more at www.otipinsurance.com/article93.

Move over: How to safely respond to emergency vehicles while driving

Seeing flashing lights approach you as you're driving can be stressful. Some drivers panic and don't effectively move out of the way, causing delays for emergency vehicles. The acronym "L.I.G.H.T." will help you calmly and safely clear the way with five simple steps.

Learn more at www.otipinsurance.com/article95.

Northeastern "Pink Listing"

The Association is imposing a "Pink Listing" with respect to permanent teacher hiring in the Northeastern Catholic District School Board (see attached). The members of the Northeastern teacher bargaining unit (elementary and secondary permanent teachers) of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association is in a legal strike position. The details of the "Pink Listing" are:

1. In accordance with the Handbook, Policies, Strikes, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association is "Pink Listing" the Northeastern Catholic District School Board, due to impasse with local bargaining under the *School Boards Collective Negotiations Act*. The Bargaining Team for the Northeastern elementary and secondary permanent teachers' bargaining unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association have been negotiating with the Northeastern Catholic District School Board but have been unable to conclude a collective agreement.
2. As of Monday, January 11, 2021, OECTA is advising all members outside of the Northeastern elementary and secondary permanent teachers' bargaining unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association not to apply for or accept any elementary or secondary teaching position or elementary or secondary position of added responsibility in the regular day school programs with the Northeastern Catholic District School Board.
3. Until a negotiated settlement is concluded, and this notice is rescinded, any OECTA member outside of the Northeastern elementary and secondary permanent teachers' bargaining unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association who applies for or accepts a permanent teaching position or position of added responsibility with the Northeastern Catholic District School Board, while this notice is in effect, will be subject to the Discipline Procedure under OECTA By-Laws Section 2.188 - 2.251.

If you have any concerns, please contact the Unit office at 705-733-9625 or 1 800 558 4815