



TBU President's Memo

Shane Stagg, President

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Special Education: In September, District 13 OSSTF filed a grievance regarding the DDSB Special Education program delivery model asking teachers to deliver face-to-face and online at the same time. Our position is that the Board is contravening Reg. 298, Operation of Schools, by establishing a learning environment that does not allow for suitable supervision and instruction of students. We also maintain that this is in violation of our collective agreement as the Board is not exercising its Management Rights in a reasonable fashion. The Board provided a written response last week. In its explanation the Board states that after a period of adjustment, staff and students are now “thriving”. This prompted District 13 to reach out to Special Education teachers across that Board asking them to provide details on whether they and their students are, in fact, thriving. The response has been clear that they are not. The evidence describes teachers that are frustrated by a model that does not allow them to meet the needs of both face-to-face and online students. They report that despite tremendous efforts to provide programming to both groups of students at the same time, they are unable to provide the level of education that students expect and deserve. While these circumstances are predictable, the scope of the challenges as described by the messages from members is remarkable. Special Education teachers should take note that the Board’s response also indicated that synchronous delivery is not required. The Board as well, has committed to reviewing the Special Education model including gathering data through a survey to stakeholders. Members are encouraged to complete this survey with the same honesty they have shared with the District.

Live Streaming of Classes: Teachers have been receiving requests to consider live streaming their classes. While currently not required by the DDSB it is being suggested as a solution for teachers to try. This model of teaching is in place in other parts of the Province and some small class placements in Durham. Teachers considering this approach must be aware that colleagues both in Durham and across the Province that are experiencing this are begging for something to be done to put an end to it. Attempting to deliver instruction both face-to-face and online at the same time creates problems with lesson delivery, assessment, and student supervision, and can pose a professional risk. It has been described as the cognitive equivalent of texting while driving and teachers describe it quite simply as doing two jobs at once and impossible to sustain effectively. This school year will be a marathon. It is critical that teachers establish teaching methods that they can see through to the end of a successful year.

Online Classes: Members should be aware of vulnerability in online class meetings and the potential of having classes recorded and even shared online. During online lessons, teachers should remain mindful that an observer can use a separate device such as a phone to record the screen. This content can then be shared on social media where it can quickly receive a million views or more. Even if the video captures a teacher handling a situation perfectly - even if the Board agrees that it was handled perfectly - the comments made by others around the world can be unsettling at best and frightening at worst. Once a video is posted online and shared multiple times it goes beyond the control of anybody to reign it in. If a small clip is taken out of context it can misrepresent a situation. If an issue arises during an online class where either your privacy or that of a student could be compromised, members are encouraged to remind students that the online classroom is not a private setting. If a student begins a conversation that should be confidential please remind the student that

you would be happy to assist with a private conversation outside of the online classroom. Act calmly and with a professional tone at all times. Contact an administrator for assistance when necessary and immediately if you learn that any portion of an online class has been recorded or shared.

Covid Absence Scenarios: The Board has been updating its handling of absences due to Covid scenarios. Codes have been created to better reflect the circumstances of absences and Ability Management has updated its requirement for an Abilities Form. The following is a summary of the most recent information.

Coding due to COVID
Effective November 27, 2020

Situation	Example	Coding	Pay
No symptoms, Isolating, Work from home NOT possible	Morning classes need a supply teacher to replace you	034 Quarantine	Full salary
Symptoms, Work from home NOT possible	Morning classes need a supply teacher to replace you	018 Illness	Sick days at 100% or 90% pay, See below for documentation details
Symptoms or No symptoms, CAN work from home	Afternoon virtual classes and online assistance periods where teaching is done remotely	190 Self-Isolation <i>Not an actual absence</i>	Full salary as you are working during this time; This appears to be a tracking mechanism rather than an absence code.

Please note that all arrangements for absences and working from home must be coordinated with your Principal. It is only your Principal who is able to change your absence to the Quarantine code. Otherwise, absences will be under sick leave.

Documentation for Sick Days due to COVID:

If you have symptoms, any absence will be coded as sick leave. After contacting your Principal, you are advised to contact the Ability Management Department at shortterm.absence@ddsb.ca or (905) 666-6119/(905) 666-6112 to discuss your situation. If they are aware of your absence from the beginning, and have discussed it and tracked it with you, then you will not be required to provide the Abilities Form from your doctor to support your absence if it extends beyond two days. If, however, you are not in touch with Ability Management and your absence extends beyond two days, you will be expected to provide an Abilities Form completed by your doctor. Please note that, as usual, the onus is on you to provide the form, not on the Board to request it. This means that the Board could ask for the form months after the fact and you would be expected to provide it or else have the pay for those days clawed back.

To be clear, for any COVID-related absence or alternate arrangements, you must contact your Principal. If you have COVID symptoms, you have to also contact Ability Management within the first day or two.