



ATU BULLETIN

Tie your shoes, pack a good lunch, and remember that we're all in this together

DATE: Dec 1, 2021
TO: All Members
FROM: Doug Smuland ATU President
RE: ATU Important Updates

Greetings Members,

Several recent issues and events have created questions for members that have not yet been addressed. For many of these items, the state of emergency has altered the previous practices of the District and have left members with questions regarding items such as leaves and prep time. The ATU and the District have been in communication about some of the changes you are experiencing, and I wanted to provide some background to decisions that have influenced your lives.

Working in Chilliwack

In view of the current emergency-related road closures and associated commuting delays between Chilliwack and Abbotsford, our District recently sent those members who reside in Chilliwack a request to express interest in being dispatched as a TTOC to work in the Chilliwack School District until transportation issues improve. Given there was not sufficient interest in the plan and too many logistical hurdles to overcome, it is unlikely that the ATU and the Abbotsford School District, along with the Chilliwack Teachers' Association and the District of Chilliwack, will reach an agreement to allow for the exchange of teachers between the two districts prior to Christmas break.

The resulting *Letter of Understanding* would have created an agreement wherein teachers could have decided on a weekly basis to place themselves on a casual list to be deployed to teaching assignments in the other district. Among other conditions expressed in the contemplated LOU, our members would then have continued to be governed by the policies, procedures, collective agreement, and insurance of the Abbotsford School District, and they would continue to be represented by the Abbotsford Teachers' Union.

Members who elected to be on the temporary casual list would have had the ability on a weekly basis to elect to remove themselves from this casual list and return to their continuing position in Abbotsford.

If a teacher did not wish to participate in this temporary arrangement, they would have been expected to report to their regular teaching assignment in Abbotsford. The ATU was hoping that the two districts would see a benefit in having the parties continue to review options for these teachers, including the application for leaves with pay.

However, given the limited expression of interest in this plan, the expectation is that the current District bussing of teachers from Chilliwack and their expectation that teachers who are able will continue to work in their schools is the plan for the foreseeable future.

Loss of Preparation Time

The state of emergency along with the School Act allow for principals to require that supervision and safety of students be addressed as needed, including alterations of the normal practice of prep time allocation if the situation warrants.

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In the times before the rains, elementary teachers should have had 110 minutes of prep time that must be provided each week. This has not been occurring for all teachers over the past three weeks. Middle and Secondary teachers are allotted 12.5% of instructional time as prep when averaged over the school year. This too has not been provided to all teachers as scheduled.

The District has assured the ATU that the prep time that teachers sacrifice due to the lack of available TTOCs will be restored to teachers. This restoration will come either in the form of time in lieu or as a monetary payment (teachers choice). The trouble with the time in lieu option, is that there is no foreseeable future when there will be an abundance of TTOCs available to restore the lost time. As a result, teachers will likely need to consider a payment for the loss of prep given the current state of emergency. This is not an arrangement that should or will continue once normal returns. Members are encouraged to please ensure that all your lost prep time is documented.

“Pivoting”

There is nothing like good Ed-speak jargon that gets trotted out in a bulletin or staff meeting to annoy everyone that is subjected to hearing it. Teachers being asked to pivot from face-to-face instruction to online learning is one such term.

As you are aware, this “pivot” can be an enormous amount of work for some members and certainly is for those who haven't yet had to undertake this type of instruction before. In the current context we are unable to contractually prevent this “pivot”, but teachers should not feel helpless either. While advice to not work beyond one's normal hours of work may be deemed as being trite in these circumstances, teachers should also be cautious not to go beyond what is reasonable in respect to class preparation.

If you are struggling with this direction, reach out to your administrator and request supports that may not yet have been provided or are not adequate. If the stress and calamity of the pivot have broken you, please remember that you can access supports through CA sick provisions or District EFAP opportunities.

Concurrent virtual and Face-to-Face Instruction

For several reasons this practice should not be occurring in your classroom. Teachers should have the expectation that they are either assigned to be teaching students online or face-to-face, but not both simultaneously. If you have been directed to do both, please contact the ATU.

ATU General Meeting & Bargaining

The previously scheduled Staff Representative meeting set for December 15, 2021, will be changed to a General Meeting. This meeting will determine the objectives for this round of local bargaining. If you have questions or suggestions for items that you would like to see included or wish to be a part of the Bargaining Team, please contact Jennifer Brooks.