



Winter 2010

OSSTF *winter* Newsletter

Myths & Misconceptions - IN EDUCATION

by Brad Fisher, OSSTF District 20 President

Base Mark Myth: There is a board policy establishing 20% (29% at one school) as the lowest mark a teacher can report.

Reality Check: There is no such board policy, nor is there a Ministry policy restricting the range of marks to anything other than from 0-100%. A survey of TBU Council Branch Presidents showed that 7 high schools had a policy paralleling this, the rest had never heard of it. These policy decisions were made at the school level.

Check-out Time Myth: The Education Act stipulates that teachers must be at school 15-30 minutes before and after school.

Reality Check: Regulation 298 states that teachers must be at their teaching posts 15 minutes before the start of the school day, and 5 minutes before classes resume at the end of lunch. There is no legal requirement to stay after classes end, with the exception of 1 staff meeting per month. It's common and beneficial for Teachers to stay after school to help students and run activities, but it is voluntary.

One Size Fits All Myth: Teachers can be required to teach subjects that they are not qualified for, especially at the grade 9 and 10 levels.

Reality Check: Regulation 298 states that a teacher may teach outside his or her areas of qualification

only through the mutual consent of the teacher and the administration. For example, a teacher qualified in Biology and Physics cannot be compelled to teach grade 9 Academic English.

Arbitrary TPA Myth: Principals have a right to conduct a Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) for a specific teacher anytime they want and can disregard the 5-year cycle.

Reality Check: A significant arbitration ruling involving the Greater Essex School Board determined that a principal does not have the unfettered right to do a TPA without cause. The extra TPA must be "advisable", which is to say there must be pedagogical reasons that are articulated to the teacher. Furthermore, the teacher must be given a chance to address the concerns before any extra TPA can be considered.

Credit Recovery Myth: Subject Teachers are obligated to provide work, and do marking for Credit Recovery.

Reality Check: Ben Levin, Deputy Minister of Education, made it quite clear in his memo to the Directors of Education that the Subject Teacher is only obligated to provide a credit analysis to indicate in which strands of the course the student had not demonstrated competence.

Any teacher wanting an e-copy of the Deputy Minister of Education's Memo on Student Success and Credit recovery can contact Brad Fisher, President of the Teacher Bargaining Unit.

Teacher Voice on ASSESSMENT

The OTF Teacher Voice on Assessment (TVA) Survey has been activated at the following link: www.surveymonkey.com/tva. The survey will be active until Friday, March 19, 2010.

OSSTF/FEESO is an active participant in this survey and we encourage all teacher members to complete the survey. The information entered into the survey cannot be linked to any individuals or schools so we are asking all respondents to be as frank as possible. The completion time for the survey is approximately 20 minutes but some extra time may be required if respondents want to add more details in the comments section of the survey. The more complete the information that is collected through the survey the more relevant to all educational workers will be the resources that come out of the research phase of the project.

Not in my Community- The Convenience of Drugs

Contributed by Tara Ashley, Glen Abbey Resident & Abbey Park High School Teacher

It was with great shock and disappointment that I discovered a local convenience store I frequent has started selling bongs and pipes. These clear glass pipes are used for smoking illegal drugs, including marijuana, crack cocaine, and crystal meth. Scales for weighing drugs were disguised as cell phones and MP3 players. Fake cigarettes turned out to be vials used to hide cocaine or raw heroin. Since then, I have checked out many of the convenience stores and independently owned 'dollar stores' in the Glen Abbey area. With the exception of one or two they all sold products commonly used in the sale or use of illegal drugs.

Under current laws, these product are legal to sell to people 19 years or older. Bongs and pipes are only illegal when police find traces of drug residue in them. Otherwise, they are legal to sell and display in stores, often visible at the cash register for young children and teenagers to see. Manufacturers of pipes and bongs are no fools. They make products decorative, colourful, and attractive to market to kids. Several pieces have been described as works of art. It is not surprising that the stores with the biggest displays are also closest to a high school; coincidence, I think not!

Recent provincial legislation has banned tobacco power walls and other promotional displays in retail outlets; however, drug paraphernalia is out there for everyone to see. Do our provincial and federal leaders understand how incredulous this is?

There is clearly a market for bongs and pipes, otherwise retailers would not be tempted to sell them. When I asked why the store owners were selling these products they said they're just selling a legal product and they can't control what the customer does with it. They are making a business decision to sell legal, but ultimately destructive products. The almighty dollar is all that matters and these products are highly profitable. It is for this reason that I doubt that they will make a responsible choice when faced with a 15 year old who wants

to buy a pipe. I have seen many kids with these products at school and they are definitely not 19.

If you are a business owner who chooses to sell questionable merchandise related to the drug trade, ask yourself this question: What impact does the selling of this merchandise have on the community? Drugs and crime are interlinked. When cars are broken into, people are assaulted or killed because of bad drug debts, and families are ripped apart by drug addiction, understand that you played a role by selling these items. You are supporting the drug trade and all of the problems associated with it!

In return, I, too, am going to make an important business decision. As a consumer, I refuse to support these businesses. I will not buy a single stick of gum or cheap ceramic bowl from them. Wallets are powerful economic tools and one person can make a difference. If enough individuals choose to take their business elsewhere, the owners will face a clear choice: support the drug trade or provide a beneficial service that supports their surrounding community.

I am under no illusion that banning or restricting the selling of bongs and pipes will somehow end or dramatically reduce drug use. Kids will find ingenious ways to build makeshift drug equipment if they can't buy it. By selling this type of merchandise openly in locations where people purchase their milk and newspapers, we are, as a society, condoning its usage for illegal and destructive purposes. Let's face it - we don't have to make it easier for kids to do what they shouldn't be doing in the first place!

Please, take a look the next time you walk into your local convenience/dollar store. If they are selling products that adversely affect our community, make your feeling known. Even if you don't feel comfortable with confrontation you can make a change by just talking with your feet.

Professional Development

Diversity & Equity Learning Series

Sponsored by OSSTF District 20

The facilitator of this series is Shakil Choudhury, a diversity and leadership consultant with more than 15 years experience leading and building teams locally, nationally and internationally. An award-winning educator and author, he specializes in anti-discrimination and equity issues, conflict resolution as well as emotional intelligence.

The Diversity & Equity Learning Series is a highly interactive and experiential series. By combining cultural proficiency strategies with emotional intelligence and conflict resolution, a deeply holistic approach has been developed that balances intellect with emotions, and internal factors with external forces. This methodology is successful in nurturing personal growth, learning - and unlearning - through the use of various theoretical lenses without being confined to a singular ideological position.

Location: OSSTF District 20 Office from
4:30pm – 7:30pm on the following dates:

- February 25, 2010
- March 25, 2010
- April 15, 2010
- May 20, 2010
- June 10, 2010

Dinner will be provided for all participants in the series, and those who successfully complete the series will receive certificates.

Please note, participants must be able to commit to all five sessions as each session will build on the previous one. In addition, only those who attend all five sessions will receive certificates.

For more information contact Ryan Persaud at persaudr@hdsb.ca
To sign up please email Lorie Wiersma at wiersmal@hdsb.ca



Chief Negotiator DESIGNATE

The Teacher Bargaining Unit (TBU) Council has approved the Hiring Committee's recommendation that Jim Young, currently the Head of English at Nelson High School, be appointed as the Chief Negotiator for a 2 year term commencing July 1, 2010. Jim brings a depth of experi-

ence to the position having served on 3 Collective Bargaining Committees, Staffing Advisory, and the Executive as Communications Officer and Vice President.

Over the next few months, Jim will be working to become familiar with the daily operations of the

District Office with the out-going Chief Negotiator Stephen Lindeman. Stephen has led us through two rounds of collective bargaining and has gained the respect of us all for his insight, skill and genuine concern for the rights of federation members.

by Brad Fisher

Former Premier Harris took the 'PAL' Out of Principal

by John Watson, TBU Health and Benefits Officer

Defining pal: informal

- noun a friend.
- verb (palled, palling) (pal up) form a friendship.

Over the past year one theme continues to emerge from conversations with members, "I thought what I said was in confidence" or that it was 'off the record'. Members have unwittingly given personal information with regard to their own position or the position of another member to school administrators in the hopes of gaining some favour or resolving the issue. It is a very dangerous ploy that has potentially very serious consequences for all members involved.

I have isolated the four major conditions where these conversations usually occur:

1. Imbalance of power – 'New Teacher Syndrome' (NTS)

Those starting the profession without the protection of permanent contracts are the most vulnerable members in the profession. They get pressure to volunteer and pick-up those areas where there is a shortage of volunteers. They are naturally, and rightly so, afraid to say no. Their rights as members are constantly eroded by the tide of fear for their jobs and careers. This group works hard to please and are unwittingly drawn into the PMY syndrome (Principal as My Friend).

2. Empowerment – 'Bottom Feeders Syndrome' (BFS)

"The politics of education are so vicious: because the stakes are so low."

What would I be willing to do or say for the carrot that is dangled? What is the carrot that is presented? This could range from choices around supervision, time-tabling, classroom location, leadership opportunities or some other form of advancement that requires the principal's support. I have realized that the lure to minimal amounts of power or control in the profession is very powerful. This is due to the fact that teachers have been constantly disempowered since the Harris days and have lost virtually all control over their employment condition. A perceived small gain or degree of control is better than what exists with most teachers day to day.

3. Isolating another member – 'Deep Six Syndrome' (DSS)

The use of administration to settle old or new outstanding disagreements is another method that can have negative consequences. Those quiet conversations are really members making adverse reports on another member. So let's save the paper work and take it to the person in power hoping they will use the information in a manner that achieves the desired result. Pay back is always so sweet regardless of the cost to another member.

4. It turned on me and I was bitten by my own words 'Collateral Damage Syndrome' (CDS)

I sometimes reflect on a conversation where a principal has intended to clear up the issue and set the record straight. It was a pleasant meeting and I felt relaxed and encouraged to get past the issue once and for all. It is almost miraculous how those words placed in the context of the conversation were then spun in a totally different direction. It's not a good feeling when you realize that direction has you in the cross-hairs. In hindsight we all had times that we wish that we had never had that conversation.

You may be thinking that you have experienced one or more of these situations in your career and you would like a chance to do it differently. Going back to the situation what would you have done differently? You would have reserved comment or thought out the consequences that could flow from surrendering too much information to a 'friend'.

But you can ensure you are not victimized again in the future. You control that aspect of experiential learning. But more importantly there are those who have not experienced one of these scenarios. It is less painful to learn from the experience of others, than through your own.

Retiring?

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

M.M. Robinson Theatre

Thursday, February 25, 2010

6:30pm - 9:30pm



Electronic Communication- Some Practical Tips for Teachers

by Stephen Lindeman, OSSTF District Chief Negotiator



As professionals, teachers are held to a higher standard and, as such, must always maintain exemplary professional standards when using electronic communications. Inappropriate cyber conduct can result in disciplinary action against a teacher.

Teachers should have no expectation for privacy regarding anything that is created, stored, sent or received on the Board's computer system.

If you have been issued a Board-owned laptop computer, exercise caution with its use; it is not your personal computer and therefore you are not unrestricted as to its use. A Board-issued laptop is subject to the same considerations as a desktop computer in a department office.

E-mail

The Halton Board allows reasonable use of personal email on its computers, but does not permit commercial business endeavours or advertisements.

The Halton Board's Email Guidelines includes the following unbiased advice: "Always assume any message you send is a public record. Electronic correspondence is much easier to copy, file and distribute than paper-based communication, and can be searched for Freedom of Information requests." Remember that once a message is sent you lose control of it.

Be professional by using:

- a "teacher voice" when emailing students and parents
- a respectful and friendly tone
- correct spelling, punctuation and grammar (always proofread the mes-

sage for mistakes)

- email only when it is the best method to communicate (not the most convenient)

Also consider that:

- messages can be misinterpreted and deemed inappropriate
- your email can be used as evidence of your conduct
- if a teacher uses familiar and casual tone it could be construed as a boundary issue. It is imperative, therefore, that teachers always maintain professional boundaries with students.
- there may be unreasonable expectations from some students, parents and administrators that teachers will be available in the evening and on weekends if teachers send or respond to emails during those times
- electronic communication may generate additional workload for teachers

Never:

- send frequent emails to any one student
- use a personal email account to communicate with students or parents.
- provide lengthy, detailed responses to parents. Complex situations are better addressed through a phone conversation or a face-to-face meeting.
- send an email in anger in response to provocation. If an email is provocative, Administration should be asked how best to proceed.
- send or forward offensive jokes and/or pictures
- send confidential information electronically

Computers and the Internet

Never:

- visit a website deemed inappropriate (e.g., adult content, pornographic, racist). Usually any computer activ-

ity involving pornography will result in termination for a teacher. It could also lead to further discipline by the College of Teachers.

- share personal information with students or parents
- share your login and password
- leave a computer unattended if you are logged on. Any use of that computer is your responsibility when you are logged on as the user.
- invite or accept a student to be your "friend" on Facebook. This includes students who may have graduated in the last several years. The College of Teachers considers the teacher-student relationship as existing for a period of time after the student leaves high school.
- post criticism of colleagues, administrators, parents or students on social networking sites
- post confidential images and information about yourself on social networking sites
- engage in on-line gambling using Board computer equipment
- download audio, video or text-based materials that violate copyright laws
- use Board equipment to engage in activities related to a personal business or a second occupation
- use teacher web pages for anything beyond posting assignments and to provide other information about courses such as due dates, homework, etc.

Even if improper use of computer equipment is limited to shopping, planning vacations, social networking, etc., the time used during the work day on such activities could help build a case for poor job performance or insubordination. It may also foster resentment from colleagues waiting to use the Board's computer equipment for its intended purpose.

Bill 157 -

Keeping our Kids Safe at School

By John Watson, TBU Health and Benefits Officer



This new law continues our ongoing efforts to make Ontario schools safer for students and staff. These changes require:

- all school staff to report to their principal incidents that can lead to suspension or expulsion
- principals to contact the parents of victims of these types of incidents
- staff who work directly with students to respond to incidents that have a negative impact on the school climate. These could include racist or sexist comments, graffiti or vandalism – incidents that are unacceptable in our schools.

What types of incidents must be reported?

The same types of behaviours that must be considered for suspension or expulsion must be reported.

Student behaviours that can lead to suspension include:

- Uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm on another person
- Possessing alcohol or illegal drugs
- Being under the influence of alcohol
- Swearing at a teacher or at another person in a position of authority
- Committing an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property at the pupil's school or to property located on the premises of the pupil's school
- Bullying
- Any other activities identified in school board policy.

Student behaviours that can lead to expulsion include:

- Possessing a weapon
- Using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person
- Committing physical assault on another person that causes bodily harm

requiring treatment by a medical practitioner

- Committing sexual assault
- Trafficking weapons or illegal drugs
- Committing robbery
- Giving alcohol to a minor
- Any other activities identified in school board policy.

These behaviours can lead to suspension or expulsion and must be reported when they occur at school, at school-related activities or off school property where it has a negative impact on school climate.

Who has to report an incident?

All school board employees are required to report in writing to their principal any incident that must be considered for suspension or expulsion. Board employees include:

- vice principals
- teachers and educational assistants
- all non-teaching staff, such as those involved in social work, child and youth work, psychology and other related disciplines
- administrative and custodial staff
- school bus drivers.

What happens when an incident is reported to the principal?

The principal determines what disciplinary action, if any, is required. If the incident leads to suspension, the principal will inform the parents or guardian of the suspended student. If another pupil was harmed, the victim's parents or guardian will be called.

What information is shared with the parents or guardian of the victim?

The principal can tell parents or guardian about:

- the incident
- the harm their child suffered
- what steps were taken to protect their

child's safety, including any disciplinary measures taken in response to the incident. The principal cannot name or provide any identifying information about the aggressor.

Does the principal always call the victim's parents or guardian?

There are exceptions. A principal is not permitted to call the victim's parents or guardian if:

- the student is 18 years or older or is a 16- or 17-year-old student who has withdrawn from parental control
- the principal believes that telling the parent(s) would put the student at risk of harm from the parent(s).

Does the principal have to call the parents of the aggressor?

A principal must call if the incident leads to a suspension. The Education Act already requires the principal to inform the aggressor's parents within 24 hours of the incident. Parents also receive written notice telling them the reason for and duration of the suspension and outlining the appeal process.

Who else must the principal call?

Depending on the incident, police may be called. Principals must follow their local police/school board protocols when involving police.

When board employees believe that a student may be in need of protection, they must continue to follow the usual procedure and call the children's aid society as required by the Child and Family Services Act.

If a student asks a teacher or other staff member not to tell anyone about an incident, does that board employee still have to report this to the principal?

If it is an incident that could lead to

...continued from Page 6

Bill 157 - Keeping our Kids Safe at School

suspension or expulsion and it happened at school or at any school-related event, then the teacher or any other staff member must tell the principal. If the incident occurred off school property and not at a school event, the teacher can direct the student to a community agency, such as the Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868, which provides a 24/7 confidential counselling service.

Reporting

Are teachers required to report serious incidents that happen off school property?

If a teacher or any other school staff learns of an incident that will have a negative impact on school climate and could lead to a student being suspended or expelled it must be reported.

What happens if an incident is not reported?

If a principal learns that any member of the school staff has not reported a serious incident that could lead to a student being suspended or expelled, the matter could be dealt with as a human resource issue, consistent with school board human resources policies and collective agreements.

As well, all staff who hold teaching certificates, including teachers, principals and superintendents are governed by the Ontario College of Teachers Act, which sets out activities that are defined as professional misconduct and outlines sanctions.

Supporting Victims

School staff who work directly with students are required to support all students, including those who either instigate or are victims of serious student incidents. They will provide contact information about professional supports – such as public health units, child and youth workers, help phone lines – or other community agencies that offer the appropriate type of con-

fidential support. This could include, for example, a sexual assault centre, Kids Help Phone or the Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line.

Supporting all Students

School staff who work directly with students will provide those students wishing to discuss such issues as healthy relationships, gender identity and sexuality with contact information about professional supports available in their community.

Responding to incidents

All staff who work directly with students must respond to incidents that will have a negative impact on the school climate. This includes principals and vice principals, teachers, educational assistants and other non-teaching staff, such as those involved in social work, child and youth work, psychology and other related disciplines.

How will staff respond?

Responding may include:

- identifying the behaviour
- asking the students to stop the inappropriate behaviour
- explaining why it is inappropriate or disrespectful
- asking the students to change their behaviour in future.

What behaviour is not allowed?

We can all help make it clear what behaviour is unacceptable and create an environment in our schools where students feel welcome.

Examples of inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour include racist, sexual, sexist or homophobic comments, slurs and jokes or graffiti, as well as those activities and behaviours outlined on page two that can lead to suspension or expulsion.

Must staff always respond?

Staff must respond to all incidents, unless doing so would cause immediate physical

harm to themselves, a student or any other person. In these cases staff are expected to report the incident to the principal as soon as it is safe to do so.

Contact your school principal or school board to find out more or check out your school board website.

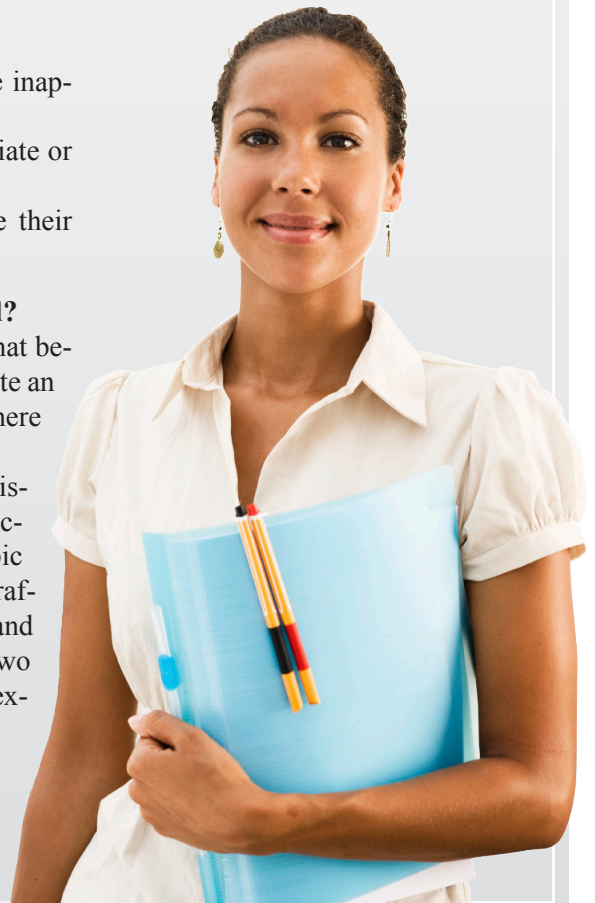
Learn more about the Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act and Ontario's approach to making schools safer by visiting Ontario.ca/safeschools.

Responding to Incidents

All staff who work directly with students must respond to all student behaviour that has a negative impact on the school climate, unless doing so would cause immediate physical harm to themselves a student or another person.

Reporting Incidents

All board employees must report to their principals incidents that can lead to suspension or expulsion.





OSSTF Contacts

OSSTF District 20 Executive 2009 - 2010

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		Communications Coordinator:	Veronica Kleinsmith
		Chief Negotiator:	Stephen Lindeman
		Health & Benefits Officer :	John Watson

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