

O.S.S.T.F. District 20

Fall Newsletter 2010

More Myths & Misconceptions IN EDUCATION

MYTH #1, If You Are Involved With The Federation, You Are Expected To Vote NDP.

OSSTF/FEESO does not dictate how its members should vote; nor does it have an exclusive political partnership with any one party. Our Federation strives to maintain good working relations with all the major political parties in Ontario. Through our lobbying efforts, we try to keep all politicians aware of issues facing our members. We promote the importance of public education and champion ideas and practices that benefit education workers and students. OSSTF/FEESO by its very nature is a political entity, but rather than siding with a single political party, we spread our influence across the spectrum. All members are free to vote as they choose.

MYTH #2, The Federation Protects Incompetent Teachers.

OSSTF/FEESO has no tolerance for incompetence or unprofessionalism. Such behaviours not only compromise the education system, but tarnish the good reputation of all education workers. Our Federation does, however, vehemently protect a member's right to a fair performance appraisal and due process. We recognize that members accused of unsatisfactory performance may have been unfairly targeted or that there may be underlying issues or conditions that need to be taken into consideration. OSSTF/FEESO protects every member's right to a fair process.

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OSSTF/FEESO

MYTH #3, I Pay My Dues To The Federation But Get Nothing In Return.

Members of OSSTF/FEESO pay one of the lowest dues rate in Canada; 1.3%. What do you get in return? Just *some* of the benefits and services that our Federation offers its members include: contract and salary negotiation, the handling of labour grievances and arbitrations, pay equity, pension advice, health and safety training, healthcare benefits, long-term disability, curriculum advice and lessons, educational resources, legal advice, professional development, political lobbying, international assistance, awards and scholarships, mediation, and the promotion and protection of public education. OSSTF/FEESO provides its members a broad range of services to ensure that their jobs are secure and protected.



Mutual Agreement Rule

when assigning Subject to Teacher without the AQ



Recent revisions to Regulation 298, Section 19, left intact the expectation that the assignment of Teachers in subjects where they did not hold the Additional Qualification (AQ) could only be done with the mutual agreement of the administration and the Teacher. In some restricted subject areas a Temporary Letter of Approval (TLA) is also required. However, under the new regulations a Board cannot apply to the ministry for a TLA to force a Teacher into an assignment where they do not have the AQ.

by: Brad Fisher
OSSTF District 20
TBU President

Consider the following examples:

- a. A Biology Teacher being asked to teach 12U Chemistry without the AQ.
- b. A Phys. Ed. Teacher being asked to teach Civics and Careers without the AQ's.
- c. A History Teacher being asked to teach the Native Studies course without the AQ.
- d. An English Teacher being asked to teach Grade 9 Geography without the AQ.
- e. A Math Teacher being asked to teach Grade 9 English.

The Teacher may accept the assignments with the administration's agreement if they are comfortable with it. However, the Teacher may decline the assignment offered by the administration if they are not.

The Ministry of Education recently held a series of 4 teleconferences for boards regarding the revisions to Ontario Regulation 298 section 19 and the Ministry's policies and processes for granting Temporary Letters of Approval (TLAs) which came into force on May 20, 2010.

Wendy Hirschegger, OSSTF Executive Assistant, participated in the teleconferences. She noted that:

"Some of the questions asked by the boards revealed that they hadn't really understood Reg. 298 section 19 prior to its amendment, and some seemed surprised to learn that a practice they thought was new, had in fact also been the case prior to the revision. For example, several didn't seem to realize that "mutual agreement" has always been an expectation whenever assigning a teacher to a subject area for which he/she doesn't have the qualification, and that in a few specific cases, a Temporary Letter of Approval is required. (The "mutual agreement" provision has always been there, but was added to the application form for a TLA-a board can no longer get a TLA to force a teacher to teach those restricted subjects without also having the teacher's agreement.)"

Growing Success Document

- Where do we go from here?



by: Amanda Irvine

GROWING SUCCESS DOCUMENT

These three words have become as familiar to us all as the planet Mars. We all know it exists...somewhere. We may even have had the time and opportunity to view or explore pieces of information on it. But most of us are ignorant as to its inner workings and what effect it will have on us in the future.

I'm here to tell you that you don't need to be a rocket scientist or an astronaut in order to feel fully educated on this seemingly elusive document and what is being done with it. Sure, I could simply instruct you to read it. But let's be realistic. While reading it directly has its obvious benefits, many of us simply have not yet had the time to read the document in its 160 page entirety. As a result, I'm hoping that within this article I can answer many of the questions you've ever asked yourself, or your colleagues, about the implementation of the Growing Success Document. You may remember receiving an email from Brad Fisher in the spring asking for volunteers who were interested in influencing policy around the Growing Success Document. I, along with 23 other secondary teachers within our board, responded in the affirmative. On a personal note, it was important for me to be a part of this team as I wanted to know my rights in the classroom. I wanted to know what actions I can take within my classes and be backed by both my union and my board.

So starting on September 16th the following people made up District 20's Growing Success Workgroup led by Jim Young:

Samantha Grant
Tanya Andersen
Tom Butterworth
Rob Sargent
Ian Newell
Kathryn Patterson
Corey Trodd

Nelson
Pearson
TAB
OT
WOSS
IRHS
Pearson

Sheila Ross
Terry Warcholak
Kelly Caldwell
Sherrie Kerr
Stacey Ferrell
Ginger Major
Sunaina Sharma
Kelly McNight
Lisa Ashenhurst
Wendy Fitzsimmons
Iris Bagchi-Wu
Brad Yhard
Jeff North
Sarah Spencer
Helene Ally
Rick Pascoe
Amanda Irvine

Nelson
TAB
Abbey Park
Nelson
Milton District
R. Bateman
Pearson
Georgetown
Nelson
Milton
WOSS
IRHS
MMR
GA HH
BCHS
WOSS
ADHS

Note that within this group fourteen out of the eighteen secondary schools that make up our board are represented. We all came from different backgrounds, different levels of experience and have worked with different implemented school policies.

In preparation for our first serious group session, we were asked to read the specific chapters that dealt with Late and Missed Assignments, Cheating and Plagiarism, Lower Limit (on report cards) and Credit Recovery within the Growing Success Document.

When we first began to tackle these chapters, we were split into smaller groups in order to reread the Document and attempt to create a policy that worked within its parameters. This is often when the semantics of rhetoric and specific diction came into play. We would then come back together as a large group and read out our ideas. Once we discussed what we liked about each group's policy, we would split up once again in order to tackle the next topic. I know what you're thinking: 30 academics around one table attempting to create a unified policy? Well, I won't lead you astray. There were times when we would disagree. There were times when we only got through half of our material.



The recommendations created by our District 20 workgroup will be brought to the board's steering committee during the last week of October by five representatives of the workgroup: Jeff North, Corey Trodd, Stacey Farrell Bangerter, Lisa Ashenhurst and myself. The five of us were voted by our peers within the workgroup in order to meet and work with the board's steering committee until a recommended policy is created that satisfies both groups and is clearly within the spirit of the document.

There were times when we realized we should have bought Jim a gavel. But in the end, over the five weeks we had worked together we had come up with four unpolished recommended policies. We then used the last session in order to tidy it up, utilizing the skills of those in attendance that were wordsmiths, and finalized a copy of recommendations that we were all in agreement with.

Now, let me take a moment in order to explain this word "recommend". At the same time our group was meeting, the board's own steering committee was meeting in order to create policies that met the requirements as set out by the Growing Success Document. This group was comprised of many Administrators, many School Programs Leaders, and a few teachers (elem., intermed. and secondary) parents and Trustees. The intention was that the two committees would eventually come together to exchange ideas and collaborate in making one unified polished policy that will be presented to Admin Council at the HDSB. As a result, the "policies" that both our groups worked on truly have been only one step in the many that are employed before policy is written in stone. And while to an on-looker it may look like needless time and resources used, it most certainly means that the board has heard all the voices of the people involved before creating THE policy.

At the time of this newsletter's publication, our two groups will most likely have presented our recommendations to each other and perhaps will have even had the opportunity to present it to the Board. The plan is that come spring the approved policy will be presented to schools during a Professional Development Day. This way schools can work together to create their own implemented policies for September 2011.

All in all, there are a few things I learned during my experience working with the large Growing Success Workgroup. The first is that even when we are unfamiliar with each other, when put in one room teachers can be a lot like teenagers; our attention span is short if we're asked to sit in one place for too long and tend to whisper to our neighbour our thoughts or a little joke to lighten the mood. The second is that while we can have some strong opinions about what works best in a school or a classroom, when it comes down to it, all of us have the best interests of the students at heart. The third is that no one should ever, ever, attend a union meeting on a full stomach. The food is just too good to pass up ...even for a second plate. Seriously.

If I have piqued your interest in wanting to read the document for yourself, you can find it on the provincial OSSTF website under 'Resource Centre'.



Duties to colleagues



Legally....

The Teaching Profession Act, Section 18.1b (Duties of a Member to Fellow Members) requires:

“A member shall on making an adverse report on another member, furnish him with a written statement of the report at the earliest possible time and not later than three days after making the report.”

There are two exceptions to the Act. One is an allegation being made to the Children’s Aid Society regarding potential child abuse. The other involves suspected sexual abuse of a student.

The law covers all members of the teaching profession: elementary and secondary; private and public schools; teachers and occasional teachers; your child’s teacher; all members of the Ontario Teachers’ Federation!

The legal definition of ‘adverse report’ has been interpreted to be one which can negatively impact a teacher’s employment. School board policies require school and senior administration to notify employees when adverse reports are made against them which may lead to discipline or some other adverse impact on the employee’s employment, subject to the legal exceptions noted above.

As a federation member....

The by-laws of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation include the following duty of members to other members:

5.2.1.2 “A member shall upon making an adverse report on another member, furnish that member with a written statement of the report at the earliest possible time and not later than three days after making the report.”

Morally and ethically....

Every human being has the right to be treated with the respect described above. Non-unionized employees in Halton, students, parents all fit in this category.

In conclusion

If you have a concern which is serious enough to report, follow the required channels. If you have a concern which you are not prepared to bring to the attention of the person involved, keep it to yourself.

When you hear the beginning of an unprofessional discussion, speak up and stop the discussion or leave the room. When people get in the habit of behaving professionally, we can all feel secure in knowing that we will be treated fairly when we make mistakes.



Your Retirement Gratuity Plan

by: **Jim Young**
OSSTF District 20
Chief Negotiator

Thursday, February 24th Retirement Workshop, 6:30 p.m. at M.M. Robinson, to register, please CHATT Lorie Wiersma.

The parachute may not be exactly golden, but it's worth remembering that secondary teachers in Halton do have a Retirement Gratuity Plan. The details can be found in Article 13 of our Collective Agreement. Here's a brief overview.

You are eligible for a retirement gratuity if you are retiring from teaching and have at least 10 years of continuous service and teaching experience with the Halton Board immediately preceding your retirement. You also need to have at least some accumulated sick leave credits.

The maximum amount of the gratuity is 50% of your final year's salary. To receive the maximum amount, you need to have completed 15 or more years of service and you need to have 200 days of accumulated sick leave.

If you have between 10 and 15 years of teaching experience and/or less than 200 days in your sick-leave bank, you are still eligible for a reduced gratuity. The formula for computing your gratuity can be found in Article 13.

The Gratuity is not a 'freebie.' It comes only after a teacher has put in a significant number of years with the Board and, at the same time, maintained a good attendance record. By the time you receive your Gratuity, you will definitely have earned it.

We all know someone touched by cancer.

There is help.
A cancer diagnosis means uncertainty, questions, anxiety and fear. CAREpath provides your own personal oncology nurse, backed by leading oncologists, to guide you through your diagnosis, treatment and into post treatment living.

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 **CAREpath**
THE CANCER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



November, 2010

Long Term Disability Insurance – Should you still be enrolled in the Plan?

This letter is part of our annual process to ensure that those members presently enrolled in the LTDI program are eligible to receive benefits under the programme. If you no longer meet the requirements of the plan you are paying for insurance that you cannot collect. To put it another way, you are paying money to the insurance company that would be better served in your pocket. The rules of eligibility are clear: you can no longer participate in the Long Term Disability Insurance programme if you:

a. Retire

Once you submit your retirement letter you should also request from OSSTF D 20 a LTDI withdrawal form so that we can withdraw you from the plan. In order to withdraw from the plan prior to retirement, you should have enough sick days to get you to retirement (minimum of 90 sick days) You can obtain the withdrawal form by emailing john@jwatson.ca and request the form which will be returned to you by email. You simply print the form and complete and return in the Board courier to the attention of John Watson at the OSSTF D20 office. I will complete the remainder of the paper work for you.

b. Are reaching the age of 65

Upon reaching the age of 65 the LTDI plan no longer will pay out benefits to you. At this point you should contact me at the District office to be removed from the plan. You can withdraw from the plan up to 194 working days prior to turning age 65, depending on the number of sick days you have in your bank.

c. Have earned an unreduced pension of 60%

Once you have reached 29 years of CREDITED service with OTPP, and you have the 85 factor and you have 194 CSL days you would not be eligible to receive benefits. The waiting period is up to a maximum of 194 days depending upon the number of CSL days you have. If you have between 29 and 30 years of service you should contact us to review. There is a difference between qualifying years of service (20 working days in a year will earn you a year of service) and the actual number of days that you worked and paid into the pension plan (credited years). The best way to ensure you have the right number of CREDITED years is to register on the OTPP website and create a login account. You then can check your years of service and credited years of service. This is important as only you can access this information. Qualifying Years of Service are used to calculate your 85 factor and Years of Credit are used to calculate your pension percentage. You need 30 years of credited service and the 85 factor to earn a 60% unreduced service pension.

If you are unsure if you should be enrolled in the long term disability insurance programme please contact John Watson at the District office and I will gladly discuss your individual situation.

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