Thoughts as We Head into Summer

Maria De Berardinis, President

We are nearing the end of a very unique and troubling school year. This time of year is always busy and stressful with marking, final reports and school activities, but this June, the year end pressures have been compounded by the funding cuts by the provincial government, the subsequent displacement of staff and the uncertainty of what lies ahead.

Although summer will offer many a much needed reprieve from the stressors of this year, some of those stressors will follow us.

Our system has been hit with unprecedented funding cuts, not only in their depth, but in their speed. The change in class size, the elimination of system enhancements and cuts to a variety of programs has resulted in the declaration of 179 secondary surplus. Through attrition, many teachers have been recalled and the remainder are being placed through the surplus process. For teachers who have been declared surplus, this year has been fraught with additional worries and concerns. We acknowledge their frustration and anxiety as they are uprooted from school communities and programs they love.

If this was all we would have to weather, as difficult as it has been, we would start to breathe a sigh of relief. But the cuts will continue because the Board has moved class sizes to 24:1 from 22:1 for next year, but in four years the system will have to move to 28:1. Further intensifying this situation will be the requirement for every secondary student to take at least one e-learning course per year starting in September 2020. These may not be our credits to deliver. More disruption to students, staff and the system in general is inevitable.

Bargaining has begun with OECTA Provincial giving notice in May. While we always enter negotiations in good faith, many are not confident this provincial government understands the needs of a strong, publicly funded education system—or cares. Many members have expressed concerns about the uncertainty of potential job action in the next school year. At this point there is no news about what may happen in the fall; the process will have to unfold in due course.

Heading into the summer with so much uncertainty, it is imperative we do use our time over the next two months to rest and re-energize so that we will be ready physically, mentally and emotionally to counter the challenges we will face. Taking time for ourselves and finding time to do what best revitalizes us will be essential. We will need our energies intact for the fall.

God bless you and your families.

Are you receiving email updates?

Members are reminded to ensure they are signed up to receive emails from both OECTA Provincial and DPSU. (Please note: You should be using a personal email for this purpose.) Email will be the Association’s and the Unit’s main mode of communication for timely and important information. Members are encouraged to check their personal emails on a regular basis over the summer. (Contact OECTA Provincial at 416-925-2493 and DPSU at 905-564-7211 if you are not on the email distribution list.)

Stay Informed Over the Summer

- Go to Know.More.ca for key messaging and resources
- Check the OECTA Provincial website for information, resources and links
- Follow Provincial on Twitter (Catholic Teachers @OECTAProv) and Instagram (Catholic_Teachers)
- Follow DPSU on Twitter (dpsu oecta @dpsuoecta) and Instagram (DPSU OECTA)
Is a Teacher Strike Likely in 2019?

John Hynan, Teacher Welfare Officer

Some variation of “are we going on strike in 2019?” is among the most frequently asked questions posed to DPSU release officers in recent months. The honest answer is we don’t know at this stage. However, given that the Ford government has shown little interest in negotiating in good faith with the Teachers’ Unions, job action appears quite likely in 2019. It should be noted that no Union wants a strike. We invariably negotiate for agreements rather than strikes. In fact, a strike is always seen as a last resort and is only used when bargaining reaches an impasse.

OECTA, like all Teachers’ Unions in Ontario, is required to negotiate the 2019 round of collective bargaining under the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014 (SBCBA). The SBCBA provides for two levels of bargaining - central (provincial) and local (unit) and requires separate central and local strike votes.

A strike vote is a vote by Union members to determine if they are willing to initiate a collective work action (work to rule, rotating strikes, all out strike etc). In order for its members to legally go on strike, OECTA must hold a strike vote prior to any job action.

While a strike vote provides OECTA bargaining teams with some necessary leverage at the bargaining table, it doesn’t follow that a strike is inevitable. In fact, history tells us that having a strong strike vote early in the bargaining process actually decreases the chances of a strike and can encourage the parties to settle more quickly.

A strike is a job action that can take a number of forms. For example, work-to-rule is a form of strike action. Work-to-rule may mean focusing on teaching and not participating in extra curriculars such as after school clubs and sports; not completing report card comments; not marking or prepping outside the instructional day etc. There are occasions, however, when we are forced to resort to more disruptive job action such as rotating one day strikes and/or all out strikes. As with strike votes, history shows that the more effective the job action the shorter the duration of the strike and the better the outcome.

Should any form of strike action be deemed necessary members will be kept informed and up to date through local and provincial communication channels. There will be frequent updates provided through print publications, emails and information meetings.

An OECTA Bargaining Update, dated March 15, 2019 states: The strength of our Association rests with you, our members. An engaged, unified membership is essential to make sure the government knows that we, as a collective, will do whatever it takes to stand up for our students, ourselves, and our profession. We need to prepare ourselves for the possibility that standing up for our students, ourselves, and our profession may well involve strike action in 2019.
The collegial and collaborative process, which brings teachers together to arrive at fair and equitable timetables, is protected by Article 13.018 D (c) of the Secondary Teachers’ Collective Agreement: “Through the co-ordination of the Department Head, a collegial and collaborative process will be used to generate the department timetable proposal to the school Principal.”

The Joint Timetabling Committee (2010), produced “Ensuing a Collegial and Collaborative Timetabling Process”, which can be found in the OECTA Staff Rep binder. Some key points from this document include:

- The collegial and collaborative process is to be transparent: from the collection of option sheets, to the issuing of timetables in June
- Administration has a responsibility to communicate information regarding timetabling to the staff as a whole and to individual teachers as needed
- Collegial means that every teacher assigned to a department has equal opportunity to access courses which she or he is qualified to teach
- Collaboration demands that every teacher accepts his or her share of the ownership of the departmental timetabling process
- The process does not guarantee that everyone, or anyone, will get a “perfect schedule”. It will however guarantee everyone has played by the same rules, everyone has had equal input and opportunity for consultation and, most importantly, everyone understands how (and why) decisions were made

Consider dedicating time to discussing as a department what worked and potential areas of improvement for next year’s timetabling process. Having a quick debrief now or at the outset of the school year to review and revise will save time next Spring when the department is looking to come to consensus on the collegial and collaborative timetabling model that will be used. The goal, of course, is to continuously improve the process so that all members teaching in the department have equal input into their schedules and there is equitable distribution of sections.

As the school year draws to a close, SAAC should continue to be engaged by the principal regarding changes to staffing and scheduling. Where there are changes, Article 13.018 D (e) of the Collective Agreement stipulates that “The Principal shall explain to the Teacher any change in teaching assignment when known”.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Unit office should you have questions or concerns.
Appreciation Dinner 2019

The Social Committee had a very eventful year that began with the annual DPSU Wine Tour in the fall. The merriment continued with our DPSU Christmas Party. It was a great time and wonderful to have so many teachers celebrate together. The Social Committee decided to expand our mandate this year to include opportunities for member engagement. In April, we hosted our first ever Brush and Brew event at the Orange Snail Brewery. Members completed professionally guided art projects, with local artist Cara Duke from Cara’s Paintbox while enjoying craft beers and dinner. We hope to expand our member engagement events next year. Stay tuned for fun ways to socialize and get involved with fellow DPSU members. We are excited to end the year with our Celebration of Retirees and 25 Years of Service Members this June. New members and ideas are always welcomed!

Social Committee Report
25 Year Recipients 2019

Retirees 2019
Beginning Teachers’ Committee Report

The Beginning Teachers’ Committee were very thankful for the opportunity to re-establish and revive this committee. One BT initiative was the “Beginning Teachers’ May Soirée”, that took place on Thursday May 2, 2019: bringing together over 40 Beginning Teachers! At the event, we enjoyed food, laughter, stories, and some well-deserved door prizes and loot bags!

The goals for this committee are to identify the concerns and needs of Beginning Teachers and to give them a platform to voice their opinions; this event made this possible! It also provided an opportunity for Beginning Teachers to socialize with their peers, with the BT committee, and with the DPSU Release Officers. Our goal for next year is to continue to support Beginning Teachers and to host our second Beginning Teacher Soirée! New committee members are always welcome!

The BT committee would like to thank all of the Beginning Teachers who attended our event, as well as the DPSU Release Officers and Tina Harrison for their support.

Status of Women Committee Report

This past January, members of the committee participated in the Women’s March along with sisters and community partners from across the GTA including DPSU’s own Human Rights members.

In May, the committee organized the second biennial Compassion Project. The aim for 2019 was to bring awareness to menstrual equity and to show solidarity to women and girls in northern Ontario Indigenous communities facing this important issue. Through the significant support of our school reps, who promoted the event in our schools, DPSU members filled an impressive 34 boxes with pads, tampons, menstrual cups and other personal items. Our partner, Moon Time Sisters Ontario, a grassroots project of the charity True North Aid, will be distributing the collection to northern Ontario Indigenous high schools, community groups, women’s shelters and local health centres. Once again, DPSU members generously showed their commitment to social justice through this initiative.

Looking ahead to next year, the Committee is currently working on extending our previous Financial Fitness workshop into a series of workshops. Look out for more information in the fall.

As always, we warmly welcome new members. Committee applications are now being accepted by the Unit. Please email us at statusofwomen@dpsuoecta.ca if you’d like to get involved in any capacity.
Carolyn Miller, Heath and Safety Chair

Through the 2014-2017 collective bargaining process, the Provincial Working Group on Health and Safety was established. This group is composed of representatives from school boards, teacher federations, education worker unions and the government and its mandate was to review system-wide health and safety issues and make recommendations to support resolutions to those issues.

One of the recommendations that came from this group is a “simplified and standardized reporting process that includes an online reporting tool to allow for the collection of more accurate and consistent data related to workplace violence and serious student incidents in schools.” School boards will be moving to an online system to report incidents of workplace violence by the end of the 2018-2019 school year.

At present, workers in Dufferin Peel use the GF390 to report workplace injuries, incidents AND incidents of workplace violence. Coming September 2019, an online incident reporting tool will replace the GF390. Here are some important things to note when using the new online reporting tool:

1. Workplace violence is defined in the OHSA as the exercise or attempted exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker, or a statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker. This definition of workplace violence is broad enough to include acts that would constitute offences under Canada’s Criminal Code.

2. Unlike the GF390 which is completed by a competent supervisor, workers will input their own information into the online reporting system. PLEASE PRINT A COPY OF YOUR PORTION (or print to pdf and save a digital copy).

3. Once you print and send your portion, your competent supervisor will be notified, and they will then complete their portion.

4. Please note, at present, DPSU – OECTA, through the Worker Co-Chair receives copies of GF390s for only lost time and injuries. This will not change with the online reporting tool.

The online reporting tool has been an agenda item at Joint Health and Safety Committee meetings this year and the Worker Co-Chairs recently met with the health and safety department at the board. We will have more information to share with our members in September. Until then, have a great summer everyone and be safe!