



Current Collective Bargaining Newsletter

Upper Grand ETFO

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Date: October 6, 2009

Attendance Support Program

In June 2008, Trustees passed an Attendance Support Policy. Its rationale states: "The Board has developed the Attendance Support Policy and Procedures to prevent or reduce absenteeism and to support employees when their absence rate exceeds the threshold set by the Board". The policy's prevention statement is as follows: "UGDSB will offer to assist employees who experience difficulty in achieving regular attendance".

During the current school year, the program will be phased-in across the system with approximately six elementary Principals being trained each month. Once trained, Principals are expected to examine Board prepared reports regarding Teacher absences and meet with a Teacher whose sick leave usage exceeds a threshold unilaterally set by the Board. The Policy states that "the purpose of the meeting is to confirm that the employee's use of sick leave is appropriate and to determine a path forward". Improved attendance is expected.



Effective September 1, 2009, the Board will implement the Attendance Support Program using the following graduated thresholds:

- absences of two (2) or more days, consecutive or isolated, in September may lead to a Principal meeting with a Teacher in October;
- cumulative absences of four (4) or more days, consecutive or isolated, during October to February may lead to a Principal meeting with a Teacher; and
- cumulative absences of five (5) or more days during the previous six school months, consecutive or isolated, from March forward may lead to a Principal meeting with a Teacher.

The Union is concerned that the Attendance Support Program may:

- restrict entitlements to sick day usage and possibly "frighten" Teachers into not using them;
- result in Teachers coming to work despite personal illness and potentially worsening their own health;
- encourage Teachers to disclose medical diagnosis or other personal health information to Principals that is private and confidential; and
- make Teachers feel that their professional judgement and integrity regarding absences are being challenged.

The Union maintains that an appropriate support program would rely on a communication strategy to promote wellness programs and facilitate voluntary access to the Disability Manager. The Board does need to investigate, on a case-by-case basis, situations where they have reasonable cause to suspect an individual of abusing sick leave benefits. The Union, however, advised against subjecting all employees to the same system-wide blanket of increased surveillance and supervisor intervention. Nonetheless, the Board is implementing its Attendance Support Policy and Teachers need to be fully aware of it.

The Board has posted a memo entitled "Introducing the Attendance Support Program" on First Class and will post a FAQ. The Board plans to hold information meetings for applicable worksites as the program is phased in. Future ETFO newsletters will provide more information and advice from the Union to Teachers regarding the Attendance Support Program.

Teachers make good, sound, professional judgements when using sick days and should continue to use sick days when personally ill. Teachers should also continue to use sick days to attend their medical appointments that cannot be scheduled during non-school hours. When using sick days, Teachers should indicate that they are "absent due to illness" as per Article 19.06 of the collective agreement; additional details are not necessary for short-term, incidental use of sick leave. Finally, whenever a Teacher is absent, the Teacher should maintain a personal record of dates and reasons.



Meeting with Your Principal

Whenever a Principal asks to meet with a Teacher, the Teacher is entitled to know what the meeting is about in order to best prepare for the meeting. A Teacher is also entitled to have Union representation present and may wish to seek advice from their Steward or Orchard Park regarding the need for Union representation. Finally, once a meeting commences, a Teacher may ask for a break and seek to reschedule the meeting to a later date in order to include Union representation.



Staff Meetings



Teachers should read Article 12.10.1 of the collective agreement to understand new provisions regarding regular staff meetings. In short, they can be once per month and are to be no longer than seventy-five minutes in length. Teachers are “expected” to attend which is different from “required” i.e. a Teacher needs to make an effort to attend and will normally do so, but when a Teacher cannot attend, she or he will make arrangements to catch-up and will provide advance notice to the Principal when possible.

Divisional meetings will proceed as per past practice, namely, once per month for thirty to forty-five minutes. Teachers are “expected” to attend.

Part-time Teachers should not be expected to return to their worksite to attend a staff or divisional meeting that does not immediately follow their scheduled teaching assignment. Part-time Teachers should also not be expected to attend more than a pro-rated portion of staff and divisional meetings and are, at any rate, not “required” to attend staff and divisional meetings.

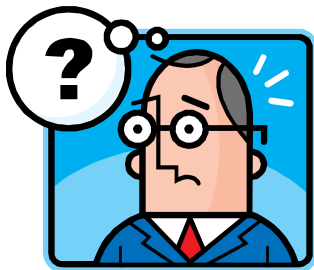
Professional Learning Communities

As discussed at Board-Union labour-management meetings, Teacher participation in a PLC that take place before or after school, during nutrition, lunch or recess breaks and/or during a teacher’s preparation time is voluntary.



Personal Days

In accordance with Article 21.05 of the Collective Agreement, a Teacher is entitled to one personal day without providing a reason but at the cost of a sick day. A Teacher may also apply for a second personal day under Board Policy 411 but a reason must be provided. The Board will only consider granting a second personal day under very exceptional or extenuating circumstances. Full details can be found at www.ugetfo.org under “Memos”.



A number of Teachers have contacted the Union’s office at Orchard Park to indicate that their request for a second personal day under Board Policy 411 was denied. The frequency of denials was discussed during negotiations last year and the Board is aware that the Union wishes to collect data in an attempt to determine what pattern exists regarding the granting and denial of the second personal day.

Whether denied or granted, Teachers who requested the second personal day under Board Policy 411 are asked to forward a copy of their 411 form to Doug Cook, ETFO, Orchard Park. For Teachers who have not retained a copy of their 411 form, please email Doug Cook and indicate your

1. name and school;
2. date of request, date of absence, date of decision to grant or deny the second personal day; and
3. reason as stated on the form.

No personal information will be disclosed – we are looking for a pattern regarding the granting and denial of the second personal day.