

To: ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local Members
From: Craig Smith, President, ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local (ETFO TVTL)
Date: October 7, 2022
Regarding: **Weekly Update (3)**

CUPE Strike Vote

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) voted 96.5 % in Favour of strike action. The ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local (ETFO TVTL) supports our CUPE Local 4222 and Local 7575 colleagues and stands in solidarity with them.

Diagnostic Assessment

Once again, there appears to be a concerted Board-driven effort to collect “data”, in violation of Policy and Program Memorandum (PPM) 155, Diagnostic Assessment, and the provisions of the Collective Agreement.

- The application of diagnostic assessments is determined by the Teacher to support program and student learning in the classroom.
- There should be no administration mandated system/class-wide assessments or mandated due dates.
- Teachers are strongly advised to follow PPM 155, Diagnostic Assessment and to uphold Collective Agreement Articles C2.5 (Professional Judgement) and C9.00, Diagnostic Assessment.

Progress Report

The Local office has received hundreds of emails, texts, and phone calls about the Board-created mess that is Aspen. Here is an example of one that we forwarded to the Director of Education:

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am writing to you because I have significant concerns about the new Report Card System and its rollout. Not only has our school board tried to roll out a new report card system with little to no training, but they have also provided us with an inferior product.

Here are a few of my concerns:

Concern #1: Insufficient training & a late rollout

We were given a total of 10 minutes and 30 seconds to understand and master a new report card system. The 10-minute video we were shown didn't cover all the different facets of the report card system (e.g., where and how to save comments to the comment bank, how to change pronouns, etc.). We also didn't have an opportunity to explore the program or ask questions. Our “training” was provided a mere 15 days before the report cards are due to the office!

That leaves us with 15 days to learn a new program and write reports (on our own time)! This is totally unacceptable! I am a professional who takes great pride in the way I communicate with parents and report on my students' progress. Why am I being put in a position where I am unprepared to do my job?

Concern #2: The new report card system is far inferior to the last report card

Our new report card system is missing many of the useful features that were offered by our old report card system. Without these features, writing the reports will definitely take longer. It is also very frustrating to be given an inferior product without knowing the rationale for the change!

Here are some examples.

- The comment box no longer alerts you when it is almost full. Instead, the entire comment will disappear and not be saved. We are being told to write our comments in Word or Google and then copy and paste them into the program in case the program loses our comments. This is ridiculous! Also, why are we being asked to do twice the amount of work?
- We are no longer able to create comments where the name of the student and the student pronouns automatically change. Why is this? We had this on our last report card system. Again, this requires more time on our part.
- The report card system is not easy to navigate and I no longer have the option of seeing the entire report card at once. I must work in one box at a time.

As teachers, we've made **a lot** of concessions over the past few years to make things work. Enough is enough! The rollout of this program assumes that teachers will find the time to "figure it out on their own time". The lack of training and the speed at which this is being pushed through shows no regard for the well-being and mental health of teachers. Our board spends a lot of time "talking" about our mental health but moves like this speak volumes. I hope ETFO will stand up and be a voice for us since we've been given no voice in this decision.

Here is the response from Sheila Powell, the Superintendent responsible for Aspen:

Thank you for reaching out to Director Fisher and Associate Director Culhane about ETFO's concerns with Aspen and Early Progress reporting. Please find below responses to each of your questions.

For the most part, the Early Progress report card set up was done at the system level as we know that office staff, who have done progress report set up in previous years, are just learning the Aspen software. There was one step that was not completed centrally that we asked schools to complete. Some schools misunderstood the need to do this prior to their staff meeting occurring which is where the mis-step occurred.

Any school that reached out was corrected centrally and provided access prior to the start of day on Tuesday, October 4, 2022.

We have learned that 30 schools did not complete the set-up process mentioned above prior to the staff meeting which would have caused access issues for the hands-on practice component. Staff in 100 schools did not have access issues. All staff were able to access the videos and SharePoint materials.

"The Collective Agreement is the rule book, not a guidebook."

For your reference, the training materials are linked below for you:

Written Documentation

<https://tvdsbo365.sharepoint.com/teams/theSISStaffResourcesandSupport/Shared%20Documents/Forms/All%20Resources.aspx?id=%2Fteams%2FtheSISStaffResourcesandSupport%2FShared%20Documents%2FReport%20Cards%20%28Elementary%29%20%2D%20Guide%20%2D%20theSIS%2Epdf&parent=%2Fteams%2FtheSISStaffResourcesandSupport%2FShared%20Documents>

Video Training Materials

<https://web.microsoftstream.com/video/8d4f7722-8313-4d9b-8cba-668a2756c94a?referrer=https:%2F%2Ftvdsbo365.sharepoint.com%2F>

In addition, four optional drop-in support sessions for those who have questions or wish a little more direction from our Learning Coordinators is available, virtually, Friday, October 7 – October 17, 2022 at various times throughout the day. No registration is required and sessions are open to all that wish to attend. If you would like to attend an Aspen office hours Q&A session yourself, please let Darlene Robertson know - she is happy to share the link with you.

Any internet interruptions that occurred at schools are beyond the board's control and the responsibility of the internet service provider (ISP). ITS staff do work quickly to notify the respective ISP of the service interruption, and ensure they respond to the outage in a timely manner. At this time, we have only heard of one school that had internet connection issues on Monday.

While TVDSB encourages staff to create individualized comments for each student, it is possible for teachers to use a Word document if they wish to create a comment bank.

We do not have concerns regarding the potential failure of the system. As with any software, it is possible that a teacher may accidentally delete a comment they are working on. Within Aspen, there is no a double check "are you sure you want to delete" box that pops up before a teacher could accidentally delete a comment, if they've selected the delete button. Saving comments in a separate document is not a requirement at all, but may be a safeguard feature if staff feel this would prevent any potential deletions as they are learning the Aspen software.

It is important that parents have Early Progress report information so that they understand their children's achievement and can determine if they wish to attend parent-teacher interviews, which are scheduled for mid-November.

For these reasons of clear and timely communication with families, we are not able to extend the timeline for the completion of progress reports. The Aspen tool for report card completion is teacher-friendly. Staff have been provided with a range of supports to access to gain familiarity with the Aspen software and to access throughout the report card writing process.

Secondary reports have not been delayed. Secondary schools complete two formal reporting periods in **each** semester (mid-term and end of semester). In addition, secondary teachers complete either an informal early progress or late semester informal reporting to parents for students who are struggling.

"The Collective Agreement is the rule book, not a guidebook."

Some secondary schools have moved to three-quarter reports (instead has informal first quarter-term reports) as schools are feeling that three-quarter progress reports are more supportive of student needs within a semester. There is not a system-wide change in secondary reporting.

Additional Support for Early Progress Reports

System Principal, Darlene Robertson, will reach out to elementary administrators to see if there are extenuating circumstances where we can provide additional supports for schools who need assistance.

This avoidable situation has been three years in the making. The Board bought an inferior report card program, fumbled the implementation of the new information system, and chose not to invest in Teacher training.

ETFO TVTL took Teacher concerns to the Director and requested real training and an extension of the due date. The Board responded that training was more than adequate and that there will be no extension regarding the due date for submission of Progress Reports. An inadequate and dismissive response from the Board that belies disregard for Teacher professionalism and disrespect for our time.

Teachers are advised to:

- Direct questions, concerns, and feedback on the Aspen Report Card/Progress Report program to their Principal.
- If the due date remains unchanged, request extensions as needed.
- Continue to communicate with parents.
- Use Professional Judgement, as defined in Growing Success and embedded in the Collective Agreement, and keep comments parent friendly and succinct.

The Board says it is all about relationships. The following Senior Administrators are sure to be keen on hearing how things are going with Aspen:

- Director Mark Fisher
- Associate Director Riley Culhane
- Superintendent Sheila Powell
- Superintendent Kevin Auckland
- Learning Supervisor Darlene Jackson

To reach them follow the "Contact Us" links on the TVDSB website (tvdsb.ca).

ETFO TVTL continues to fight on behalf of all Teachers and is consulting with ETFO Provincial regarding next steps.

Communication Protocol

Teachers are reminded that the **Communication Protocol** remains in effect, **from** Friday, October 7 at 6:00 p.m. **until** Monday, October 10 at 6:00 p.m.

The Board's **Disconnecting from Work Employee Procedure** came into effect on Thursday, June 2 in compliance with the **Working for Workers Act, 2021**.

Violations of the **Communication Protocol** and the **TVDSB Disconnecting from Work Procedure** must be reported to the Local office immediately.

It is the duty of the Local to:

- Defend the **Collective Agreement** and the rights of Teachers under it.
- Ensure that the provisions of the **Occupational Health and Safety Act** are enforced.
- Bring to the attention of TVDSB ongoing Teacher concerns, with the expectation that these concerns will be taken seriously and resolved quickly.
- Communicate with Teachers in a clear, concise, and timely manner.

Thank you for all your hard work in support of student learning and for your ongoing support of the work of the Federation. Have a safe and peaceful Thanksgiving Weekend.

For more information regarding this **Communiqué**, please contact the Local office by email at etfotvtl@etfothamesvalley.com or by phone at 519-474-3150.

c. *ETFO TVTL Released Officers*
Terry Card, President, ETFO Thames Valley Occasional Teacher Local
Elizabeth Kettle, ETFO Provincial CB Staff Officer