

Last March during a speech by OSSTF's provincial union president Paul Elliott, we learned that our District was one of seven school districts identified for local strike action as part of a broader labour relations strategy. We have always been committed to negotiating fair and fully funded local agreements and we have continued local bargaining in good faith.

Throughout this process, we have focused our efforts on keeping students in their classrooms and keeping students and parents informed of any strike action.

In May, the union began a partial withdrawal of service affecting tasks which were described as administrative. Last week, secondary school teachers received further clarification about the withdrawal of services and how it may be implemented. We are now beginning to see the impact of the service withdrawal. It goes beyond administrative duties and may have a significant impact on our students.

While students will still be in their classrooms, parents and students will be noticing some changes as a result of the service withdrawals. The union has advised its members that as part of the strike action, individual teachers can use their professional judgment to decide how to complete certain job duties. The exercise of professional judgment without consistent system direction means that the impact of the service withdrawal may be different by school and by class.

There are five major areas where students and parents may notice changes.

- **Final Exams/Summatives** - final grades of secondary students are based on term work (70%) and the final evaluations (30%). Teachers communicate the evaluation plan to students and parents as part of the course outline which is distributed at the beginning of the term. The union has provided direction to its members that as part of struck work, each teacher can use professional judgment to determine whether or not to continue with the planned evaluation tasks. We asked teachers to communicate any changes to their principal, but the union has advised teachers not to communicate with principals on this matter. Principals will do their best to post information about any changes to exam schedules on the school website. Students and parents should contact the teacher for further clarification.

- **Report cards** - final grades are entered into the District's student data system by teachers prior to the end of the school year. As part of struck work, the local union has directed their members not to enter marks. This will result in a delay in report cards for secondary students. The mark entry will have to be undertaken by principals, vice-principals, and supervisors (current and retired). Our priorities for mark entry will be grade 12 students (to ensure completion of post-secondary applications) and students in any grade who have failed a course (to allow for summer school applications by the July 2 start date). All other report cards will be delayed.

- **Graduation/Commencement ceremonies** - The receipt of final grades is a critical component for the preparation of graduation ceremonies. The local union has informed its members that they may continue to participate in graduation ceremonies to celebrate their students' accomplishments. However, the delay in mark entry as a result of the service withdrawal will be problematic in terms of informing decisions about academic awards. We are hopeful that teachers will submit grades in a timely manner so that mark entry can be completed and academic awards can be presented to students at the graduation ceremonies. If not, academic award recipients will be notified at a later date.
- **Credit Rescue/Credit Recovery** - When a student is experiencing difficulty meeting the learning expectations in a course, a credit rescue/recovery report is prepared by the classroom teacher and submitted to the Student Success teacher in order to ensure the provision of additional support for the specific learning needs of the student. Our data shows that approximately half of all students with failing grades at the midterm can be successful by the end of the term. The local union has provided direction to its members not to fill out credit rescue/recovery forms for their students in need. Nonetheless, our District's expectation is that our teachers will, at a minimum, provide verbal guidance to Student Success teachers so that our most vulnerable learners receive the targeted support they need.
- **Grade 9 Provincial Math Assessment** - Across the province, secondary schools administer the EQAO Grade 9 Provincial Mathematics Assessment between May 28 and June 14. In most school districts, this provincial assessment is also used as a summative task that counts toward the 30% final mark as it measures learning related to the grade 9 course curriculum. The local union has provided direction that teachers can decide whether their class will participate in the provincial assessment this year. As a District we believe that provincial assessments are an important source of data on student achievement. However, if individual teachers decide not to participate, their students and parents will not receive their individual student reports; as well, school and district level reports may not be available.

We have incredible teachers in the OCDSB who, on a daily basis, make important educational decisions on behalf of the students in their care. Like other professionals, we as educators work within parameters established by the government, by our employer, and by the standards of practice established by our own professional college. Without that structure, it becomes very difficult for us to ensure that all students in the District are treated fairly.

Our principals, vice-principals, managers, and supervisors will do their best to maintain stability for our students until the end of the school year. Unfortunately, at this time, I cannot guarantee the consistency of practice that parents have come to expect within our schools and across our District. But I can guarantee that we will keep students and parents informed of any strike action that affects students directly.

Thank you to everyone -- students, parents, teachers, and administrators -- for your patience during this challenging time. We look forward to having locally bargained

collective agreements that will allow our focus to return to teaching and learning, where it should be.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer