

Hello all,

Eye Swayel

Here we are, it's May and June is upon us in only two weeks time. I wanted to touch bases again and talk about a few key things.

- Vaccinations, what we've seen and the hope we feel;
- The importance of still being vigilant even with vaccinations. E.g. face to face meetings.
- Test kits for schools, what they are and what you'll see;
- 107 recipients – long service including 2 people with 50 years of service
- What you've accomplished
- What June brings.

Vaccinations – please know that we are seeing a remarkable drop in the numbers of staff members who are reporting as testing positive for COVID. In the first week of April, almost 35% of positive cases in our schools were adults. From May 1st to 10th, it's 7%. Only on one day since May began have we seen more than 1 adult reporting positive in our schools. Clearly vaccines are working.

In addition to that we were thrilled to hear last week that all staff members will now be vaccinated. Bus drivers, our tech staff, anyone.

Beyond that, there is lots of talk and news provincially about children aged 12 and up being vaccinated quickly as well. For the first time in a long time, there is more than just a glimmer of hope on the horizon. We could be in a completely different place come June 30th.

Regardless, while we await news, it's still important to remain vigilant. This means yes, the health guidelines still apply, we still cannot congregate and we still cannot sit together and have lunch without masks. We must stay the course to get us through June. We still need your help and we know you're likely doing all you can. We just want you to keep your guard up a little longer.

Self- test kits in schools. Another tool in our kit was given to us recently when self-test gargle kits were delivered to schools. These kits are optional for families of children who become symptomatic when at school. They take the kit home and test there. So when you see a bag like this in your school, it's not filled. It's an empty kit for parents to take home should they want to do a gargle test in the privacy of their home. Another tool, another good option for us as we want kids tested.

As the year draws to a close, there are numerous celebrations that we normally do face to face and we are now doing them virtually. I wanted to give a shout out to our amazing people who have given 25 and yes, even 50 years service. We have 107 people to honour and our Board will do that this Wednesday publicly at the Board meeting but I just wanted to say congratulations and thank you for all that you do.

In the spirit of celebration I wanted to just reflect for a second on what we've accomplished this year. We've kept students in schools. We've given them an education in the midst of a pandemic and for those who are working on the front lines in schools every day, you've weathered nearly 1500 letters of exposure. Despite the risks and all the protocols, you've delivered education undaunted and with enormous dedication and professionalism. From our caretakers and ea's to our clerical staff, classroom teachers, itinerant teachers, prep teachers, principals and vice-principals and on and on. To spareboard

and TTOC staff who go from building to building. The list of thanks is indeed too long. It could not have happened without you. We're almost there.

With that, I know you're tired. I said way back in September that you can't do it all. Education in a pandemic does not look like education in any normal year. Teachers as you feel June looming and you look at all the things you feel you need to cover, this is a reminder that we trust you. Use your normal strong professional judgement about what is the most important learning for your students as we head toward the end. The things that will serve students well are the normal daily compassion and care and your expert judgement about what's really essential as we bring this COVID year to a close.

Thank you. Take care, stay well.

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