

Dear UCDSB Parents and Guardians,

Operating any business or organization has become more complicated during the current pandemic and this is true for school boards, the Upper Canada District School Board included. You may have seen in the media that school boards are having challenges getting casual staff to address employee absences at schools. Although there has only been one case of COVID-19 in the UCDSB, the number of staff members that are away from school with COVID-19-like symptoms, awaiting test results and/or self-isolating is increasing.

On any given day over the past week, we have had approximately 500 jobs to find substitute staff for. Finding staff to fill those positions is becoming increasingly difficult and we often have over 150 positions that go unfilled for the day, leaving schools short staffed. A major contributing factor is the length of absences. When a teacher is required to self-isolate for 14 days, an occasional teacher is needed for all of those days.

Although our substitute teacher list has close to 650 people on it, that is not the number of people available for work each day. Many people on that list are already covering other positions, may only be available on certain days, and/or they may be on lists/working with other school boards.

To address this staffing challenge, we are actively recruiting and adding to our occasional teacher list, interviewing and hiring teachers for long-term occasional work, bringing back retired staff members, and redeploying central staff when possible.

However, it is important for our UCDSB families to know if we are unable to have adequate staff in our schools to supervise our students, classes within a school may need to be cancelled until coverage can be found. In extreme cases, we may need to close a school until we have enough staff to be fully operational. If this happens, parents/guardians would not be able to send their children to school.

In both cases, this would be a last resort and we would make every effort to have online resources available during the length of the closure.

If we must close a school, parents/guardians will be notified as soon as possible via email, social media and through local media so that alternative childcare arrangements can be made for that day. **Please know that there may be times when a cancellation or closure is not known until 6:30 a.m. on a school day. We ask that parents/guardians begin to consider their plans for alternative child care so that they are prepared should this happen.**

Our ability to keep our schools in operation relies on the collective efforts of the UCDSB community to follow public health guidelines and stop the spread of COVID-19. [Please continue to make screening part of your daily routine.](#)

Sincerely,
Stephen Sliwa
Director of Education

John McAllister
Chair

Stephen Sliwa
Director