

To: ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local Members
From: Mike Thomas, President, ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local (ETFO TVTL)
Date: September 25, 2025
Regarding: **September Newsletter**

First, thank you. Really - thank you. Every day, you show up for your students and for each other, and the impact of that work is enormous, even if it doesn't always get the applause it deserves. The lessons you teach, the guidance you give, and the care you provide leave a lasting mark that stays with your students far beyond the classroom. You're not just teaching curriculum - you're helping students grow socially, emotionally, and personally. The difference you make today echoes tomorrow - and beyond. Keep it up; it truly matters (even if some students are sneakily rolling their eyes, they're paying attention). I've written this newsletter to give you a window into some of the work we are doing on your behalf, to highlight key information that supports your professional understanding, and to share some of the exciting opportunities we are preparing at your Local to support you.

Recently, we have been actively engaging with Board leadership and elected officials, including one of our area Conservative MPPs (with two more meetings on the horizon). In conversations with the Board, we are focused on driving change in areas that we can control - like fostering positive school and Board cultures, creating supportive environments for staff and students, and strengthening collaboration. At the same time, while we are meeting with the area Conservative MPPs, we are shining a light on immense and real challenges that teachers are facing on a daily basis: insufficient or non-existent special education supports, limited classroom resources, stretched mental health services, rising behavioral incidents, unmitigated violence, and growing class sizes.

Our conversations are not only focused on the supports we need to do our jobs effectively, and to support our students, we are also describing the remarkable work you do every day - designing creative lessons, supporting struggling learners, strengthening community ties, and creating classrooms that are safe, engaging, inclusive, and transformative.

Your Local Executive is committed to advocating for change: we require a school board and a government that recognizes this essential work, invests in meaningful resources, and champions positive, thriving school cultures. Thames Valley teachers aren't just educators; they're the heartbeat of our schools, shaping futures and leaving a lasting impact.

We have been busy here at the Local and are excited to share some updates:

- **School Visits:** Our team is aiming to visit 24 schools by the end of October! These visits are a great chance for us to meet new and returning members, hear your ideas and concerns, and share updates from the Local. During the visits, members can enjoy **ETFO swag, snacks, and a prize draw**, and most importantly, we want to listen to your concerns. These conversations strengthen the Local and allow us to advocate for the supports you need. **Big shout out to the following schools (some might not know it yet, but we are coming...):** McGregor, Davenport, Ekcoe Central, Mosa Central, Westmount, White Pines, Kensal Park F.I., Woodland Heights, Louise Arbour F.I., Northbrae, Chippewa, Hillcrest, South Dorchester, River Heights, St. George's, Riverside, Northdale Central, South Ridge, Annandale, Westfield, Trafalgar, Ealing, Arthur Ford, Arthur Stringer.
- **Workshops:** We have some amazing professional learning opportunities coming up, including workshops for Pregnancy and Parental Leave, Retirement, NTIP, New Teacher Workshops, and TPA sessions. Dinner will be provided! These workshops are designed to help you navigate your teaching journey, provide practical tips, and connect with colleagues across the board.
- **Professional Learning & Wellness:** Stay tuned for even more opportunities to support your professional growth and personal wellness, through workshops and in-service sessions. As our First Vice President Jen Hillner jokes, these opportunities go "faster than tickets for a Taylor Swift concert," so make sure you don't miss out. Upcoming sessions will include wellness workshops, mental health resources, and skill-building sessions that are limited in availability. More information will come out later in the fall – so keep an eye out!
- **Professional Development Fund** (Self-Directed Fund, Wellness Fund, Professional Opportunities Fund): Yes, these will be coming out also! So, pay attention to future updates. We are aiming to have this out later in the fall (November!).
- **Social Events:** We are planning some incredible social events for our members, including trivia nights, skating, sports events, and much more! These are great opportunities to connect with colleagues, relax, and have some fun outside the classroom. Come out, share some laughs, and build connections that strengthen our Union community.
- **New Teacher Visits:** Our Non-Released Executive Members will be visiting schools in the coming weeks to meet our newest members, to welcome them into the Union, and to invite them out to New Teacher training occurring in November.

In the coming weeks, you might find these Local memos beneficial. Each Local memo has important information to help you understand your rights and obligations, so please take some time to read through them. They have been structured to give you important information related to your entitlements, rights, and professional obligations. Please reach out anytime if you have any questions or concerns. Each memo has been re-written, so enjoy at your leisure (they are also posted on our website for future reading).

- [**IEPS**](#) – This memo is designed to help clarify the role of LSTs and teachers in the preparation of IEPs. After all, when it comes to IEPs, teamwork isn't just recommended - it's essential. Think of this as a guide to help ensure that responsibilities are clear, collaboration runs smoothly, and nobody is left wondering, 'Wait... was I supposed to do that part?'
- [**In-School Staffing**](#) - Staffing can sometimes feel like a game of Tetris - lots of moving pieces and not enough space. To make things easier, the memo and checklist lay out roles, timelines, and responsibilities, keeping the process fair, transparent, and Collective Agreement–friendly
- [**Progress Reports, Kindergarten Initial Communication of Learning, and Using Professional Judgement**](#) – These reports can sometimes feel like a balancing act - capturing student growth without turning it into a novel. Our memo breaks down what's expected, offers tips to keep things manageable, and helps ensure your hard work really shines through. If you've ever wondered, "Am I doing this the easiest way possible?" - this memo is for you.
- [**Diagnostic Assessment \(PPM 155\)**](#) - PPM 155 and diagnostic assessments give you data - but your professional judgement is what turns it into action. Curious how to use both to guide your students' learning? This memo is for you!
- [**Inclement Weather**](#) - When the weather decides to throw a curveball, be it a blizzard, ice storm or fog with a mind of its own, your safety comes first. Please review our inclement weather memo so that everyone arrives safely, avoids unforeseen adventures, and maybe even keeps their morning coffee from spilling.
- [**Communication Protocol**](#) (and link to resources) - Weekends = your time. Emails can wait. Walks in nature, hobbies, and family time cannot. See the memo to learn more about your right to disconnect.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

As educators, September 30 is more than a date on the calendar; it is a reminder of our responsibility to learn, reflect, and teach with intention. The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation asks us to honour the children who never returned home, the Survivors of residential schools, and the ongoing impact these injustices have on Indigenous communities. In our classrooms, we have the privilege - and the obligation - to create spaces where truth is spoken, difficult histories are not avoided, and reconciliation is fostered through respect, empathy, and action. This day is not just about wearing orange; it is about listening, learning, and committing to a better path forward for the students we teach and the communities we serve.

ETFO Provincial offers some resources to help facilitate learning on Indigenous Education:
<https://etfofnmi.ca/etfo-indigenous-education-publications/>

The Thames Valley District School Board offers some resources for teachers to access for classroom instruction: <https://sites.google.com/gotvdsb.ca/tvdsb-fnmi/home>

The Local would like to acknowledge the work we are fortunate to do is situated on traditional territories:
<https://www.etfothamesvalley.com/land-acknowledgement>

Here are some important updates and highlights from our Labour Management meeting:

- **Illness Reporting:** Please note that members should continue to use **Illness 1**, rather than any of the other codes in TVARRIS. Using Illness 1 ensures that your absence is recorded correctly, aligns with Board procedures, and avoids confusion for payroll and HR.
- **Digital Platforms:** The Board expects that Teachers will have a digital platform, either through **Brightspace or Google Classroom**, to communicate, share resources, and organize classroom materials. Our position is that Teachers will determine how and when the platform is used, including the type of information shared and the content structure. This also ensures a smooth transition to online learning if ever required.
- **Staffing & Reorganization:** We recognize that recent **school reorganization decisions** impacted many members. Factors such as student attendance, school/system class compositions, and budget complexities in September has resulted in reorganizations this fall. As we are working to support staff impacted by these changes, we have ensured that Collective Agreement rights have been upheld throughout this process.

I'll end this update newsletter where I began, with a **thank you!** Thank you for the incredible work that you do on a daily basis. The work you do as teachers is truly extraordinary. Every lesson, every moment of support, and every act of care sets students up for lifelong success. Our Local is here to support you every step of the way - through advocacy, professional learning, social events, wellness resources, and simply listening to your needs. Thank you for your ongoing dedication and commitment to your profession and your Union - you truly make a lasting difference in the lives of your students. Remember, we are all ETFO, and our strength lies in our solidarity and commitment to 'creating change - together!'.

With appreciation and solidarity,

Mike Thomas, President
ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local



c. Released Executive, ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local