

Questions and Answers, May 15

How did the fire start?

Fire Officials are currently conducting an investigation to determine the cause of the fire. TDSB staff will assist in any and every way we can with that investigation.

Why were some local schools, including George Harvey CI, evacuated on Tuesday, May 7?

We were working in close co-operation with police and fire officials on Tuesday. Initially, police evacuated the south side of Eglinton due to the heavy smoke. They made their way south from there and as they did so, we also worked with identified schools to quickly and safely evacuate. Those schools contacted parents to pick up children if possible; otherwise they relocated to an alternative site. Schools practice various kinds of emergency procedures hoping never to have to use them, but are always prepared to do so when necessary.

What will happen to the York Memo building? Can it be rebuilt or repaired? What has been preserved or saved from the history of the school?

The York Memorial CI building has been under the active control of Toronto Fire Services and Toronto Police, so we haven't had access to the building until very recently. Now that we are able to get inside, we'll assess the damage and have a better idea of the impact of the fire. Please keep in mind that it could take some time for a thorough assessment to be completed.

When will students receive the items they left in the school on Monday afternoon?

The York Memorial CI building had been under the active control of Toronto Fire Services and Toronto Police. Now that the site has been released back to the TDSB, crews will assess the safety of the building and begin a process of reviewing building contents. In the aftermath of this terrible event, we know that material items are just that and we are so thankful that no one was injured in the initial fire or the subsequent one that broke out early Tuesday morning. But we recognize that many of our students and staff had a number of important personal items that were left behind in the building. TDSB staff are devising a retrieval strategy, including contracting a crew to go into the building and systematically collect and inventory salvageable items. We will make every effort to locate and return personal belongings of students that have not been significantly damaged and are deemed safe to return. We sent an email to students and parents about retrieval of personal items that included a link for students to complete to assist us in this process.

My child is struggling emotionally with this loss. Is there help for him/her?

This is a difficult time for everyone, and our students are the most vulnerable. As parents, we can encourage them to talk about their experience and to express their feelings about this tragic loss. TDSB social workers and counselors have been and will be available to listen to students who need help. Please encourage them to talk to them if needed.

What happens with exams this year?

Under these exceptional circumstances we find ourselves in, and given that many students lost their notes, we are not expecting York Memorial students in regular programs to write exams. We have numerous assessments from throughout the year that provide a very good basis for marks. There are also several weeks remaining where we can pick up where we left off, cover remaining program, and assess students in different ways. We are considering alternative assessments such as a final assignment.

Will students applying to university or college be impacted?

No, most students applying to university or college have already done so. And a good many have already received acceptances based on marks to date. We've been in touch with OUAC and OCAS to ensure they are aware of exceptional circumstances and that there won't be any impact on offers or acceptances.

My student was scheduled to take AP Exams. What will happen with that?

The AP Exams have been rescheduled for May 22-31. The revised exam schedule will be posted. AP students should check with teachers to decide if they wish to write the exams. Students who do not or *cannot* (due to loss of notes/materials) write the AP exams will be able to get a refund for the exam fee, but will still get the multiplier for the course.

What happens to extracurriculars like track and baseball?

These will continue wherever possible. Staff and students have been meeting, and our goal is to resume regular routines as much as possible. It's important for our students. York Memo students have also been participating in extra murals with George Harvey students

Will EQAO assessments be taking place?

Yes. As noted, our goal is to continue with regular routines as much as possible.

Will students have resources to get through the rest of the year?

Yes. Basic supplies have already arrived. Other resources are en route.

Where will Memo be operating next year?

York Memo is a school today, and it will be a school next year as well. Our collective focus last week and this week has been squarely on helping our students and staff process what happened and on preparing to welcome students back to classes, along with the myriad details that accompany that. At this point, we don't know what happens for next year or beyond that, but will be turning attention to that in the coming days and weeks and to consider all the options. We'll establish a process for that which will include consultation with students, parents, and

community so that we hear a broad range of voices. We'll share more information about that in the very near future.

How will we hear about what happens next?

We'll continue to share information regularly through school communication tools such as email, and on our school web site. We'll also use social media and media to keep the broader community up to date. Parents and students with questions can also contact the office. York Memo's main phone number is up and running at the George Harvey building. That number remains the same as always, so you can still reach us by calling 416-394-3000.

Why was George Harvey CI chosen as the school to host York Memo?

George Harvey CI has the capacity to host most of the students and staff at York Memo. It's located in close proximity to York Memo, so from that perspective it was a good fit. It's also an operating school and that helped insofar as it's quicker to get up and running there. George Harvey is also the designated emergency evacuation site for York Memo.

Why was an empty school building, like Scarlett Heights EA, Vaughan Road Academy, or Nelson Boylen SS, not selected as a temporary location?

We considered a number of options but the best one that was available on extremely short timelines was George Harvey CI. As you can imagine, there's a significant number of details involved in moving an entire school to another location in a very short period of time. Some other sites that have been vacant would have required much more time to prepare for occupancy. Others, such as Vaughan Road Academy, are already being used.

Is the area around the school safe?

When the York Memo building was still under the control of TFS and police, TDSB crews installed fencing around the perimeter of the building. TDSB security services also has had a 24-hour presence at the school. Heavy construction equipment excavated parts of the building to assist TFS in its efforts to suppress the fire and ensure no hotspots remained. This has resulted in a significant amount of debris on the property and it is not safe for anyone else to be inside or near the building unless authorized to do so.

Can both schools coexist in the same building?

The short answer is yes. George Harvey CI students and staff have been incredibly welcoming. And I know everyone with York Memo appreciates that. This is what community looks like. When our neighbours need us, we lend a helping hand. We should be very proud of how these young people are handling this challenging situation.

How can parents help?

- Check in with your student; be aware that behaviors may be unusual as they work to process this loss. Encourage them to talk to friends, teachers, and the school social workers if they need help.
- Continue to check email and the school website for accurate and important information updates.
- TDSB has launched a [central fundraising campaign to raise funds](#) to support all those impacted by the incident. Thank you to all who have donated.
- Volunteer.
- **BE A VOICE FOR THE FUTURE OF THE SCHOOL:** The final School Council meeting of this school year will be held on Tuesday, May 28, 2019 at George Harvey Cl.