

York Memorial School Council - Parent FAQ

May 13, 2019

Introduction

On Monday, May 6, 2019, at approximately 2:15 pm, our students were evacuated from the school due to fire. Toronto Fire Services reported that the fire was extinguished that evening. Early the following morning, at approximately 3:30 am, a second fire was discovered. This second fire burned throughout the day on May 7th, requiring a 6 alarm response. The building sustained significant damage due to fire, water and smoke. The media covered this event quite extensively.

As parents of students at York Memorial, it is expected that we have questions regarding this event, and the future of the school. **This document has been developed to answer immediate questions regarding the current school year (2018/2019).**

Q: How did the fire start?

The Toronto Fire Services and the Toronto Police are currently investigating the school site. (They could not begin the investigation until the fire was confirmed out). Until they complete the investigation and release the results, it is important not to speculate on the cause. Rest assured, the investigation team is committed to finding the answer.

Q: My son/daughter left belongings in the classroom. Will we get them back or are they lost in the fire?

On Friday, May 10, an email was sent out to parents and students regarding the personal belongings. The email explained that due to safety any items that can be recovered will need to be recovered in an organized manner and TDSB staff is working on retrieval of any items that can be retrieved. **Please have your student click on the link in the email and identify (report) missing personal belongings.** This step will be helpful to ensuring that any items that can be reclaimed are reunited with their owners. Please also note that this process may still take some time due to the continued Fire and Police activities in the building.

Q: What will happen to the students for the remainder of the school year? Will they finish and graduate?

Since Wednesday, May 8, the TDSB administrators, staffs and support persons of York Memorial and George Harvey CI have been working to create a plan to complete the school year coursework for ALL students. As noted on the website, students of both schools are expected to report at George Harvey CI, Monday, May 13, where they will begin their course schedule as it will look for the remainder of the year. Please note that TDSB staff, administration and support will have worked throughout the weekend to have rooms ready for the students.

A message was sent **to students** that there will be no final exams - the final grade for each course will be based upon a summative that will be worth 30%. Students need to check with teachers regarding the deadlines for this work. EQAO exams will still take place.

Many Extra-Curricular activities and field trips will continue as planned.

The Student Nutrition program will continue as normal. Sandra, the cook who ran the York Memorial Cafeteria has been assigned to George Harvey CI for the duration of the school year. This means that students will continue to be provided with breakfast in the morning (cash donations are always welcome) and those on the breakfast and lunch program will continue to receive this service for free.

Q: 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 soon. AP students should check with the teachers on Monday/Tuesday 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. Details will be provided asap.

Q: Is there any assistance for replacing personal items lost in the fire?

We understand that this is an important question. Any items still in the building that can be recovered, will be recovered (see previous question regarding this topic). Unfortunately, for many of our students the items were destroyed in the fire. The teachers, staff and community are all working in many ways to try to replace some of the items; however, some of the higher-valued, specific personal items may need to be replaced by claims on personal home insurance. We understand, and respect the fact that many of our families may not have been able to afford insurance and are now directly impacted.

Q: 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. The 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.

Q: How can we help?

- Make sure that your student responds to the email reporting the items he/she left behind in the building.
- 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.
- **If possible, please attend the TDSB-led Parent Meeting at George Harvey Collegiate on Tuesday, May 14, 7 pm for the latest information. The School Council members will be in attendance and will be taking notes from the meeting to be posted on the website for those unable to attend.**
- Continue to check email and the TDSB website for accurate and important information updates.
- **DONATIONS:** In order to limit the confusion regarding cash donations, please wait for an official announcement for where to direct funds. We recognize that people are looking for a way to support the students but, as parents, we need to be concerned that the money goes to the areas of most need. (The GoFundMe page that was started by the Tonks family and other alumni has a specific purpose - please read the information on that page when considering your donation.)
- **VOLUNTEER:** We will need a group of volunteers to help prepare backpack and supply donations received on behalf of the students so that they can be delivered to the students asap. Donations will be collected up until Friday, May 17th. A local church within the immediate vicinity of George Harvey has volunteered to help with space for the collection sorting and organizing of physical donation. We expect there to be a large volume to sort through. The school is tentatively looking at Saturday, May 18th for volunteers to assist. The principal will confirm the date and time at Tuesday night's School Meeting. We will update you on the date once confirmed.
- **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 CI. The meeting will be held in the library from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm. In addition to the regular school council agenda items, we need your voice, the parent/guardian voice, on the future of York Memorial!