

# CONVERGENCE

March 2020 Edition



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# WHAT'S CHANGED? AN OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED TIMETABLE CHANGES

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We've all heard the talk and rumours regarding changes to UCC's timetable coming into effect at the beginning of the next school year. On January 21, Dr. Kinnear, Ms. Timusk, and Ben Swan held an information session for Upper School students revealing details of the timetable changes currently being proposed.

While these proposals are far from finalized, the emerged details from the information session can alleviate certain anxieties among some of us. It turns out that the start and end times of school days will not be modified drastically. This is good news not only for those who were worried about possible logistical difficulties that might be incurred by an altered start time for school, but also for those who were concerned about a late dismissal compromising outside-of-school extracurricular activities.

This is not to say that our school days will remain the same next year — in fact, they will be dramatically different. That being said, we at Convergence feel that the proposed adjustments will help streamline our school days while addressing some prominent issues such as lunch line congestion.

## The Proposed Adjustments

The school day would still start at 8:30 am under the proposed timetable model. However, dismissal would be pushed back to 3:40 pm to accommodate some of the changes below. Wednesday sleep-

ins will be kept.

All classes would be fixed at 75 minutes long (except for Period 4, which would be 85 minutes long). The result would be a similar amount of total class time each day.

The timetable would include two newly-created 45-min blocks of time each day. The first will be a 45-min recess-like break in the morning between first and second periods (from 9:45 am to 10:30 am). Our current 20-min recesses are considered too short to be that useful. Extending it to 45 minutes would allow for club meetings to run during recess and give students enough time to eat, get extra help, and take an effective break.

The second 45-min block would be a "community time" block in the afternoon, from 1:30 pm to 2:15 pm. This would be used for assemblies, house meeting, advising, and wellbeing/community activities similar to our recent Rivalry Week. It should be noted that the placements of the morning break and afternoon community time have not yet been 100% set.

Finally, a "sliding" lunch would be implemented. Details of this aren't firmly worked out yet. An example of this would be Y8-Y10s having lunch from 11:45 am to 12:15 pm and Period 3 from 12:15 pm to 1:30 pm, while Y11-12s having Period 3 first from 11:45 am to 1:00 pm and then lunch from 1:00 pm to 1:30 pm.

Even though we will still have four class periods each day, a 9-day schedule will replace the current 8-day cycle to

spread the schedule out and create additional blocks of time during a 9-day cycle. For Y8s-Y10s, these additional blocks of time would likely be used for supervised study hall, skills development, independent study, and the Personal Project. Y11s-12s should expect more spares too, but should also expect the addition of a physical wellbeing period once or twice a cycle (think of it as a formative gym class) and one dedicated seminar for university counselling, EE and CAS every cycle.

## How The Proposal Was Created

During the information session, Dr. Kinnear and Ms. Timusk explained the prudent and thorough process through which the above proposals were created.

The process of designing a new timetable for our school has been a lengthy process, which has been ongoing since January 2019. It has involved the tremendous effort of two teams: the Timetable Project Team, which acts as the guiding team, and a Timetable Committee, acting as an advisory body to the Timetable Project Team.

In January 2019, the groups began identifying the four main priorities of the implementation of a new timetable: it must function for the school as a whole (meaning that time blocks of the Prep and Upper schools should match up), benefit learning through student-focused and evidence-based means, promote student wellbeing, and facilitate collaboration between teachers to plan learning experiences.

Between January and October 2019, the teams received and processed significant amounts of input from students, teachers, and parents. Surveys were sent out to both faculty and parents, as well as to students in the form of a Student Experience Profile Survey. Moreover, many interviews and focus groups were held.

In November, the teams sought the counsel of an international expert consulting group known as Independent School Management (ISM). ISM helped the teams analyze best practices for timetable design, examined the strengths and challenges of the current timetable, and provided recommendations for a revised timetable.

These meetings helped the school outline several criteria to work with for the new timetable. It was decided that the timetable would use a tumbling model (in which classes aren't always at the same time), incorporate sufficient breaks and access to food, minimize stress, provide consistency, and help students spend more time in the community.

The new timetable also aims to solve some drawbacks to the current timetable. For example, our current Regular Schedule is only in use 25% of the time, and the new timetable should be flexible enough to remain consistent at least 90% of the time. The new timetable should also attempt to fix congestion in the dining halls during lunch.

## Questions from Students

During the information session, several students raised some great questions and they were addressed by Dr. Kinnear and Ms. Timusk as follows.

### Will the school year be extended?

Shortening classes to 75 minutes and building in time for other priorities results in an overall loss of instructional time. In order to meet the hour requirements of the Ontario and IB diploma,

a couple more school days may be added, but these changes won't be too dramatic. For example, the PD day before March Break may be eliminated; and school may end in June two or three days later. All four-day long-weekends will not be affected.

### What are staggered lunches? Would the 30 minutes be enough?

The new lunch period is designed only for eating. Activities such as socializing, club meetings, and extra help sessions are meant for the new extended recess in the morning.

Staggering the lunch period would result in crowds at both dining halls being halved; therefore, lines are expected to be cut dramatically. In addition to these changes, Aramark is also in the process of making menu and flow improvements to reduce congestion. An improvement in the overall lunch experience is definitely expected.

### If community time is 45 minutes long, does that mean longer assemblies for students? Will activities still involve houses? What about house breakfast?

The goal would still be to have shorter assemblies. This year it was targeted to have most assemblies fit into a 25-minute slot. This shouldn't change with the new timetable. In fact, the longest assemblies that will be incorporated into the new timetable should be around 33 minutes. The remaining time could be given as extra break time.

Wellbeing and community activities are still expected to be primarily house-based. However, inter-house activities will still be planned, such as those during Rivalry Week.

A possibility to swap the two 45-min time blocks (the long recess and the community time) is also being considered. In general, these changes are still in the design phase.

## Next Steps

After receiving ISM recommendations, the teams responsible for updating UCC's timetable have been carefully reviewing ISM's suggestions and sharing the details of the changes with parents and students for feedback. In addition to the student information session on January 21, there was also a presentation and discussion with the Board of Stewards about this project. The teams are currently aiming for a final decision by early to mid February to leave sufficient time to plan implementation.

If you have any feedback or questions regarding the changes to our school's schedule, please feel free to contact our Academic Steward Ben Swan.



# \$10,000 RAISED FOR SICKKIDS HOSPITAL



**VIKRAM RAWAL**  
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As the arts and artistic extracurricular pursuits gain further attention in the UCC community over the course of the last few years, the student body and the school as a whole should be congratulated for the tangible increase in turnout to events such as Nuit Bleue, seasonal concerts by the Jazz Band, Concert Band, and Wind Ensemble, as well as theatrical productions.

A recent, and arguably one of the more impressive and successful events created to showcase the arts at UCC was the brainchild of Year 10 student Jay Liu. Jay, having worked with Sick Kids Hospital for five years, wondered if he could use his love for music to help those children who are ill and in need.

In an interview with Jay, he explained that he thought up the idea of a concert supporting Sick Kids a few months ago and brought it up with Mr. Gomes, who backed Jay's plan. Together, the two began to work out the details. While originally Jaden had imagined a relatively small concert with about a hundred people attending, the sheer amount of support from the faculty and UCC students allowed him to broaden his horizons and gave him the courage to think bigger.

The concert, while held at UCC, was organized in collaboration with The Sky-Ky Multicultural Learning Foundation, a non-profit organization that focuses on providing and engaging learning experiences for youth nationally and internationally. It aims to provide children with

education in reading, writing, language learning, and music. Jay, as a piano and violin teacher for Skyky, brought the organization and UCC together to work jointly on the groundwork for the concert.

With support from Mr. Gomes and Mrs. Timusk, Jay was able to find mentors who could help him gain sponsors for the event. He worked to advertise the concert to UCC students and faculty, as well as to those from other schools. He organized a youth committee made up of one student from each school performing in and attending the concert to help with organization and setup. With the incredible support framework backing the concert, it wasn't long before sponsors were found. Lanna Cuisine became the title sponsor of the event, and additional sponsors included SkyKy Publishing and LoveFunArt.

Finally, after many hours of preparation and planning, the concert took place on Sunday, January 12, 2020, in UCC's own Laidlaw Hall. In total, over three hundred students, parents, and faculty members attended the concert, successfully raising a grand total of \$10 000 for SickKids Hospital. Jay spoke highly of the tremendous courage that the students supporting this event showed while the concert was being planned and set up.

Overall, Jay is thrilled with the outcome of the concert and hopes that he can help organize more concerts and other artistic performances to support good causes. Due to the tremendous success of this event, Jay says that he plans to turn what was once a one time concert into an annual occurrence, and he hopes that it will con-

tinue to attract the attention it deserves. Additionally, Jay has made the goal of bringing more schools to the concert and raising more money for next year.

While the primary goal of the concert was to raise funds for Sick Kids Hospital, he was aspiring to increase the school's focus on music and on arts as a whole.

As Jay stressed, "The vision I originally had for the concert was to give UCC students more opportunities to perform, as I believe that playing an instrument can be considered, in most respects, similar to playing a sport. So, I think that musicians deserve opportunities similar to those which athletes receive in terms of showcasing the results of their hard work, whether it be in the gym or in the music room, in front of an audience who can appreciate and enjoy the performance."

Athletics have been at the forefront of the college throughout most of its long history. Several events throughout the course of the school year, such as A-Day and Winterfest, are dedicated to sports and the support for UCC's sports teams as they compete against rivals from other schools. However, in recent years, there has been a push from the musical community and the arts community at UCC to create more performance opportunities and to increase attendance and interest at these events. The ultimate hope is that music and the arts as a whole, like sports, can be recognized as entertainment and the product of dedication, hard work, and a true passion for whatever activities UCC students choose to engage themselves in.

A number of new policies were implemented at the beginning of the school year aimed at improving student conduct and building a better school environment. To gain a greater understanding of the planning that went behind the policies, I talked with Ms. Marshall, one of the key organizers of these policies. The following is based on our conversation.

## The Late Policy

*10 Lates = Detention*

*15 Lates = Detention and an email from student sent to parents and copied to Ms. Marshall*

*20 Lates = Conduct Advisory - 5 weeks on status and an email home from house advisor*

*25 Lates = Conduct Concern - 10 weeks on status and conversation with Ms. Marshall and family*

The most talked about policy among students has been the late policy. Many different concerns were brought up about the policy, including that it didn't consider students who have long distance commutes, those who spend a lot of time in co-curricular activities, and that the school was putting too much emphasis on being on time for class. The main concern that was brought up was that being put on conduct advisory for lateness was too harsh of a consequence.

In planning these policies, the key message the organizers aimed to convey is that we, as students, should improve our attitude and approach to the classroom environment. Would you consistently show up late to a sports practice and dismiss it as nothing? Probably not, because you know your coach will be unhappy and could bench you in an upcoming game. However, in the classroom, there previously was not much of a consequence for being late, resulting in a more casual academic culture at our school.

Next, in order to only give consequences to students who were frequently late without reason, UCC administration settled on fair numbers of lates for the policy based on school data. They also only considered lates that were unexcused as counting towards possible consequences, as most lates can be excused. For example, parents can excuse lates: whether it is because of an appointment, co-curricular activity, or other reason. Further, if a major transit delay (bus, subway, or train) or weather event causes you to be late, that late will be excused. Last, faculty members can excuse lates. If you are late because of a co-curricular activity or extra help, they can write you a blue late slip which would excuse that late.

To sum up, the policy seems to be effective in helping us get to class on time, as the number of lates so far this year have decreased from the number at this time last year.

## The Absence Policy

*1 Skipped Class = Warning*

*2 Skipped Classes = Detention*

*3 Skipped Classes = Detention and an email from student sent to parents and copied to Ms. Marshall*

*4 Skipped Classes = Conduct Advisory - 5 weeks on status and an email home from advisor*

When talking with Ms. Marshall, she mentioned skipping class as a major problem at UCC that she hasn't seen at the 5 other schools she's worked at (most of which were independent). Managing your time as a UCC student is tough, as many of us are engaged in a variety of co-curricular activities while also needing to complete a lot of schoolwork. This may result in some of us not valuing being in class as much, choosing to instead spend class time doing activities such as sleeping or independent study. Thus, this policy aims to curb our attitude to the classroom. Especially in the present pandemic times, many of us miss being connected with one another in a physical classroom, and that sense of community plus the clear learning benefits are just some of the reasons why being present in class is so important.

## The Phone Policy

*No phones are to be used in the classrooms unless authorized by your teacher. If seen, the teacher will collect it and you will be able to pick it up from Ms. Fernandez at the end of the day.*

Phones have been a concern to teachers at UCC for many years now due to their distraction abilities. Through research on the effects of phones on wellbeing and performance, it was concluded that the use of phones not only decrease your emotional wellbeing through interacting with a screen rather than with people, but also that the use of them during class decreases academic performance and information retention. Also, it's important to note that we are not the only school implementing such a policy, as the Ontario government required schools to have a phone policy starting from last Fall.

When fall arrived, and with it the start of school, many of us checked our inboxes for the first time since the end of exams. There were a lot of emails. Many of which contained information pertaining to new school policies that affect our day to day routine. Among them, two stand out: the late policy and the phone policy.

## The Late Policy

When signing in after the TTC gets badly delayed (as one knows will happen but never when), you may find a sign on the front desk laying out the new late policy. It contains a graduated penalty system, meaning that the punishments increase as more lates are accumulated.

The reason for the policy's instatement is clear to see. It's meant to deter students from showing up late to class, a perfectly fair objective. You get more out of class when everyone is on time. And to be fair, it's been mostly effective — there's now an added deterrent to not be late (apart from missing class).

However, I believe that the punishment system doesn't recognize that there are elements of a daily commute which are objectively out of our control: a medical emergency on the train in front of you, a sibling getting ready, or even a morning practice or band rehearsal that runs late. If any of these things happen to you in the morning, you have no option but to pick up a late slip and be recorded as late.

Over the year, this can happen many times — TTC delays alone easily account for 10 lates a year. This means that if you take the TTC, for instance, there's a decent chance that you will get a detention at some point during the year, since a recorded late at the start of the year will carry over all the way until June.

Well-intentioned as it may be, I fear that this policy will unfairly penalize students who have long commutes by punishing them for something that is out of their control.

But there's a compromise, a way to keep the deterrent to being late while avoiding unfair punishment. "Refreshing" the amount of allowed lates at given intervals during the year will give more leeway to boys with unpredictable travel times while still retaining a deterrent for being late.

## The Absence Policy

Being in class is clearly important, and skipping class without a good reason isn't something that the school can ignore. While it makes sense to have some deterrents to skip class, it is important that the solution is not worse than the problem. Making the absence count apply to the whole year means that a student could be punished in June for missing two classes in September. Having the absences "refresh" halfway through the school year could give some leeway to students who need it. It is also important to note that some classes can be missed for valid reasons but can be recorded as skipped or parents do not excuse the absence within 24 hours.

## The Phone Policy

This is definitely the most visible change at the school. At its core, this policy is trying to make the classroom a better learning environment (as it came in the wake of the province's decision to take phones out of the classroom, citing that it would improve classroom environments). How much of a difference has this change really made?

Not much, from what I can observe. Most teachers would already confiscate phones if they saw them out during class. Having a formal ban doesn't change that. In fact, it takes away the benefits of having phones along with the detriments. Phones can perform a variety of useful functions in the classroom: taking pictures of the board for reference when studying, writing down important dates in our calendars, etc. Oftentimes, it's much more convenient to do these things with a phone rather than with a laptop, and it can be disruptive to constantly ask for authorization in the middle of a lesson.

On the whole, the main change that the no phone policy has brought is preventing us from using our phones for these beneficial purposes, since they were already being confiscated when used for non-academic reasons.