



## Supervision Standards for Ontario Schools

### Background

Over the past two years, principals have become increasingly concerned about in-school supervision and its impact on student safety.

We are now operating under Collective Agreement restrictions that have reduced the amount of time that teachers and other education workers are required to supervise. However, this reduction in supervision has not been adequately filled, impacting student safety and the learning environment in schools.

As well, we are living in a world that necessitates additional safety measures. Parents expect schools to be more vigilant against intruders and to deal more effectively with incidences of bullying. Schools are often located in areas that call for more observant supervision. Life-threatening allergies are on the rise, requiring closer supervision of students while they are eating. The number of students with medical fragilities and special needs are on the rise, and often require one-on-one adult supervision.

Today, in our schools, principals are responsible to parents (who entrust their children to us), the ministry (through the *Education Act*), school boards (as our employers) and the Ontario College of Teachers (our professional licensing body) for the safety of the students in our schools.

Principals are responsible for keeping schools safe and maintaining a positive learning environment, but are struggling to do so and are being required to make compromises that come at a heavy cost to our students. We have heard from hundreds of principals who have identified situations in schools that are worrisome and unacceptable to us, and of great concern to parents.

- There are fewer teachers supervising more students.
- Untrained volunteers are supervising students.
- Instructional time is being lost.
- There has been a reported increase in vandalism, bullying, assaults, behavioural issues, theft, graffiti, drug activity, truancy and verbal abuse due to decreased supervision.
- Parents are becoming concerned about the visible reduction in supervision in and around the school.
- Elementary school students are supervising younger students in the absence of teachers.

- Teachers are supervising more than one classroom, lunchroom or portable at a time by roaming the halls or space between rooms.
- Playgrounds, climbing equipment, breakfast clubs and co-curricular activities are being limited, closed or cancelled.
- Educational Assistants, hired to help special education students, are being re-assigned to assist with supervision. As a result, special needs students are receiving less instructional time.
- Principals assigned to formal supervision are spending less time meeting with parents and mentoring students and teachers, and more time supervising.
- Schools that are “busing hubs,” where students gather to be transferred to other schools, are experiencing additional supervision challenges.
- Construction or renovation projects underway at schools have created additional supervision challenges.
- Teachers have reported concern for their personal safety.
- Homework clubs have been cancelled.
- Detentions and behaviour programs have been cancelled, impacting on the flexibility of the school to maintain student discipline and positive learning environments.
- The physical layout of some schools, with multiple levels, wings and entry points, makes supervision more of a challenge.
- Other employee groups have expressed concern about the change in their duties as a result of their re-deployment to pick up supervision duties.
- The installation of video surveillance cameras does not replace the need for adult supervision.

### **The Need for Standards**

While trying to help principals deal with this issue, we conducted research about how supervision is managed in other jurisdictions. We found that some school boards in other provinces and in the United States have developed mandatory standards.

In Ontario, school boards currently have standards in place for off-site field trips, physical education classes and sports. However, there are no standards in place to deal with supervision during recess, lunchtime, transition between classes, before and after school, in hallways and in cafeterias.

The main purpose of standards would be to provide school leaders with direction around safe, sensible and consistent practices.



To date, no standards have been put in place in Ontario. In their absence, the Ontario Principals' Council has developed reasonable, comprehensive and sensible standards to which schools can refer and use. Not only is it our legislative and professional duty to ensure the safety and security of students while they are in our schools, but we have a moral duty to help find a solution to this challenge. We cannot continue to put supervision schedules in place that do not adequately or appropriately meet the safety needs of Ontario's students.

The Ontario Principals' Council urgently calls on the government to endorse these standards and provide immediate and appropriate resources for their implementation. The standards are based on good practices that are in place in other jurisdictions. It is responsible, timely and appropriate for Ontario's schools to adopt such standards.

## **Supervision Standards for Ontario's Schools**

1. Only trained staff shall be given supervisory responsibilities in a school.
2. A supervision ratio of staff: student must fall within the following ranges:
  - Junior Kindergarten/Senior Kindergarten: 1 supervisor for 8 – 20 students
  - Elementary: 1 supervisor for 50 – 100 students
  - Secondary: 1 supervisor for 100 – 150 students
3. In elementary schools, at no time shall there be fewer than 2 supervisors (within direct line of sight of each other) during recess, lunch and before and after school.
4. Elementary supervisors must have continuous and direct sightlines of the students they are supervising.
5. Supervision duties cannot erode instructional time. For example, Educational Assistants must not be assigned to supervision duties if it will conflict with the instructional time of special needs students.
6. Students shall not be used to supervise other students in the absence of a teacher.
7. Junior and Senior Kindergarten students in separate designated play areas require separate/additional supervision.

8. Younger students should be separated from older students while playing in the playground, due to the increased possibility of injury.
9. Play structures require separate supervision.
10. While students are eating, each enclosed room must be supervised separately.
11. In order to be available to handle emergencies and ensure the overall safety of the school, principals and vice-principals are not to be on the school's formal supervision schedule.
12. All supervisors on the schoolyard and in/around the school must have access to a communication device.

## **Extenuating Circumstances**

In addition to the above-noted standards, there will be times when supervision schedules must be altered due to extenuating circumstances, aggravating factors or circumstances beyond the control of the school. In such cases, the principal maintains the authority to ensure appropriate supervision, alter the supervision plan and designate additional supervision as needed. Such circumstances include:

- Cancelled classes in secondary schools
- Physical plant challenges
- Changes to the busing schedule
- Absence of a principal and vice-principal
- The needs of students with life-threatening allergies, special needs or medical challenges
- Problematic sight lines
- The physical location of the school (issues in the surrounding neighbourhood, placement of the school in the neighbourhood, proximity to a high traffic area)
- Inclement weather
- Special events
- Emergency/crisis situations
- Absences by staff who have assigned supervision duties.



Ontario's school leaders share this government's commitment to improving education. Like the public, we want nothing less than quality, stability and safety for our students.

We believe that these standards will help re-establish the positive learning environments that are so critical to our student's success.

The students of this province deserve nothing less. The parents of this province should accept nothing less.