

# Special President's Message

June 24, 2020

## Back to School Planning

After the Minister's announcements last week concerning plans for September, we wanted to update you on what we have been doing to provide input into the process. For the past six weeks, we have been at a table with the ministry and the other two P/VP associations (ADFO and CPCO) discussing the re-opening of schools in September. With input provided by our Provincial Councillors, we worked with ADFO and CPCO to develop a comprehensive document outlining points and issues to be considered, which we shared at the ministry table. The document was also shared with Provincial Councillors to assist them with providing input to their local board working groups that are now focused on implementation.

We have consistently stressed the importance of having the P/VP voice directly involved in planning. We also strongly believe that re-opening schools is a team effort requiring input from every employee group, as well as designated implementation tasks for each group, to be successful. Implementation cannot be on the shoulders of P/VPs alone at the school level.

We have communicated a number of implementation concerns with the ministry's School Safety Plan.

- There will be some school employees (including P/VPs) who may not be able to return in September as a result of compromised immune systems or because they are living with someone with a compromised immune system. What will the plan be for these individuals?
- Anyone with flu/cold symptoms will need to remain at home until they are certain they are not COVID positive, which will increase absenteeism across all employee groups. How will we ensure adequate staffing when many school boards have struggled to fill vacancies in the past? This is especially true of P/VPs, since there is a small number of retired administrators across the province who are limited by their pension to 50 working days. We have asked the ministry and the OTF to reconsider this limit during these extraordinary times.
- The Minister is encouraging "regular, everyday" scheduling for high needs students with Special Education needs. How is this going to work with all the requirements that have to put in place according to health experts? Will there be extra supports for these classes? Will there be adequate PPE?
- The plan suggests a one educator touch point. How will this work with specialists (the Arts), collective agreement provisions and teacher planning time?
- How will teachers be able to successfully manage in-class and online teaching as envisioned by this plan, in the absence of significant, increased technology support, training and careful scheduling?

While our voice needs to be part of the re-opening planning, we also worry that your pace over the past year, first with labour action and then the pandemic, has led to fatigue, burnout and a real need to take a break this summer to re-charge. We will continue to advocate to the ministry and boards to find ways to include our voice, while providing the necessary time off for you to enjoy a well-deserved and needed summer break.

## **New Math Curriculum**

Yesterday the ministry released the [new math curriculum](#) for grades 1-8, to start in September. After 15 years, we agree that a modernization of the curriculum is needed. However, from the time we were advised that it was to be released, we have urged the ministry to delay its implementation until 2021. We want it to be effectively delivered and result in higher levels of student math success. In the midst of an uncertain school re-opening, without appropriate time to pilot it, no focused time for training and principal/vice-principal/teacher learning and the probability that some students may have some learning gaps to overcome, the conditions are not right for a successful launch in September. We have suggested that, if the expectation continues to be a fall implementation, then professional development time should be provided in early September to support implementation and opportunities should be available with the ministry to provide just-in-time and efficient training to you to support the new curriculum.