

Rationale for Supervision Standards

Only trained staff shall be given supervisory responsibilities in a school.

While we often use parent or community volunteers to help with events in the school, it's important that anyone who has a supervisory role be properly trained. School boards train para-professional staff in areas such as First Aid, CPR and dispute resolution. As well, we want them to be familiar with school policies and procedures and know how and when to contact the office staff.

Such training is important so that we can ensure any emergencies will be dealt with quickly and efficiently. It's also an expectation of parents.

***A supervision ratio of staff:student must fall within the following ranges:
JK/SK – 1 supervisor:8 – 20 students (as defined by the Day Nurseries Act)
Elementary – 1 supervisor for 50 – 100 students
Secondary – 1 supervisor for 100 – 150 students***

When researching other school districts, we found that many of them included specific ratios or ranges. We thought this was important because it is often difficult for a principal to know how many supervisors to use. These ranges provide a guide for principals and are based on other jurisdictions in Canada and the US, and on our own experience as principals, having implemented and provided supervision in schools for many years.

We're recommending a range of between 8 and 20 JK students per supervisor. Some children start JK as 3 year-olds. Under the government's Day Nurseries Act, those children would be covered by a ratio of 1:8 if they were in a licensed day care setting.

The government currently funds primary education, that of JK – grade 3 students, at a ratio of 20 students to 1 teacher. So we think it is appropriate for 3 year-olds to be supervised in a range between those two government figures.

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.

There have been incidents in which only one supervisor was in the schoolyard when an injury occurred. In order to deal with that injury and take the student to the office, the supervisor had to leave the rest of the students alone and unsupervised on the playground.

To ensure that there is always one supervisor in any large school setting to deal with injuries or discipline issues, two must be present so that one can deal with incident as needed.

Elementary supervisors must have continuous and direct sightlines of the students they are supervising.

If students are not in a supervisor's sight line, then they are not being properly supervised. The only way to safely supervise students is to have them within your sight line at all times.

Supervision duties cannot erode instructional time. For example, Educational Assistants must not be assigned to supervision duties if it will conflict with their instructional time with special needs students.

This government has placed a high priority on student achievement and literacy, and we support those initiatives. But increasingly, the 300 minutes per day that students are supposed to receive instruction, as outlined in the *Education Act*, are being eroded. In some boards, the time students spend entering school, removing coats and entering their classrooms is being counted as instructional time, when it was meant, according to Reg. 298 of the *Education Act*, to be considered as entry time. So up to 20 minutes of instructional time each day can be lost this way.

In addition, EAs are increasingly being used to cover supervision duties due to the gaps that currently exist. EAs are hired to help our special education students with individual learning and attention. It is unacceptable that our most vulnerable students are losing their instructional time in order to fill these supervision gaps. That practice has to stop.

Students shall not be used to supervise other students in the absence of a teacher.

In some elementary schools, older students, those in grade 6 or 8, are used to supplement teacher supervision. A student may be "supervising" in a lunchroom while a teacher floats between many lunchrooms.

Even if students receive some training, it is not appropriate for an 11 or 13 year old to be charged with the responsibility of supervising so many younger children. We don't think parents would regard this as safe – or acceptable – either.

In November 2005, then Education Minister Gerard Kennedy was told about this practice by a principal. The Minister said that the practice was not acceptable and that kids shouldn't be supervising other kids. Yet, to date, no mandate has gone out from the government to school boards to end this unsafe practice.

Junior and Senior Kindergarten students in separate designated play areas require separate/additional supervision.

Many schools have set up separate play areas for JK and SK students because of their very young age. If children are separated from the rest of the student population, in an area that can't always be seen from the playground, then that area requires separate supervision.

Younger students should be separated from older students while playing in the playground, due to the increased possibility of injury.

The age range in elementary schools can be as much as nine years. Older students are stronger, bigger and often play more physically, which can result in injuries if younger, smaller children are part of that play. We think it makes sense to separate groups of kids who can be injured because of a large size and strength gap.

In a school in B.C., a younger student was injured while playing with older students. The school had a policy against mixing older and younger students. In a subsequent legal case, the Court ruled that by violating this standard, which it had set for itself, the school board was negligent. The Court considered the separation of age groups relevant in its assessment of student safety and yard supervision.

Play structures require separate supervision.

Play structures exist in many elementary schools. They are separate structures with slides, ropes, monkey bars and climbing equipment. Injuries occur more often on play structures than in the general schoolyard.

As such, play structures require separate supervision.

While students are eating, each enclosed room must be supervised separately.

In many schools, it has become common practice for one teacher to roam through a hallway, "supervising" several classrooms or portables at a time.

Accidents and injuries can occur in a less than a minute. Add to that the life threatening allergies that must be closely monitored around food. If a teacher is down a hall, he/she cannot respond to an emergency on a moment's notice. Even arriving several minutes later may be too late.

While children are eating, supervisors must be present in each room, not on a rotating basis.

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.

A. There are two kinds of supervision in schools. One is formal supervision, whereby a staff member is assigned to a certain part of the school at a designated time. For example, a teacher might be assigned to cover the schoolyard for recess on Monday and Wednesday mornings.

The other is informal supervision, whereby the overall supervision of the school is monitored throughout the day primarily via walk throughs. Principals and vice-principals are always involved in informal supervision as part of our role.

The difficulty with a principal being on the formal supervision schedule is that we can't respond to emergencies if we are confined to one area. Legislatively, we are responsible for the safety of the whole school. As such, we need the flexibility to be available at any time and not to be part of a formal, locked-in supervision schedule.

All supervisors on the playground and in/around the school must have access to an internal communication device.

This is simply a safety issue. A supervisor should always be able to contact the office immediately if an emergency arises.

Extenuating circumstances when schedules can be further altered.

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, it's important for the principal to be able to ensure appropriate supervision by altering the plan and assigning additional supervision as needed.