

August 7th, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you have had a relaxing break and have recharged since the end of the school year. During that time we have been connecting with the Department regularly in an advisory capacity to the “Learning Continuity Plan” team and to the oversight committee of the “Back to School Plan”. We appreciate the opportunity to have the voice of administrators heard at both of these tables.

In June I indicated that we were requesting a meeting with the Deputy Minister and the Executive Director of Labour Relations to address key areas of concern affecting administrators.

- An expectation to report to work in August in excess of the 5 advanced reporting days.
- Receiving communication at the same time as the general public despite implications for school and entity operations.
- Issues regarding workload and employer directed professional obligations that are impinging on personal time extending well beyond the workday or workweek.

Over the course of July, we have had discussions on these and other matters that directly affect each of you as administrators. We are pleased to provide you with an update on those today with the understanding that steps will need to be taken at the provincial and regional levels to realize them in practice.

PRIORITIZATION OF VACATION TIME

There is a commitment from the EECD to work with the Regional Centres for Education and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial to prioritize vacation time up to the 24th of August for school year administrators. It is recognized by the EECD that this rest period is essential for leaders who will be at the forefront of the school year ahead.

WORKLOAD

There is a commitment from the EECD to PSAANS to have a voice regarding workload and the priorities for the 2020-2021 school year. Administrators must be able to focus on the critical work of leading the implementation of the back-to-school plan. This will require decisions to be made about what work is a priority and what can be suspended during this time. Further direction about planned abandonment of some routine and usual tasks and duties will be communicated by the Department in consultation with PSAANS.

TIMING AND WORK

In light of the evolving nature of the pandemic, we are advising those who are administrators in schools to exercise professional and personal judgment over how and when they engage with planning for September. Policy and directives from public health continue to evolve as we have seen in recent days. You may be able to plan with greater accuracy later in August than you can today. In addition, this gives time for the development and circulation of provincial or regional support documents. For many administrators this spring proved frustrating when work was completed early, only to have the parameters or requirements change as time went on and deadlines approached. This is an ongoing complication of working in a pandemic. The desire to prepare early has to be weighed against the benefit of working with the greatest amount of information for the current context.

VOLUNTARY SUMMER WORK

There is a deep appreciation from the Deputy Minister for the volunteer work being offered by PSAANS administrators who are in a position to do so. Collectively all administrators will benefit from the collaboration and sharing that continues to occur as our system faces the challenges that COVID-19 has inflicted upon our students and schools.

In turn, the Association extends our appreciation for the solutions being endorsed by the Deputy Minister. These are unprecedented times and it is challenging to find the balance between the needs of the system as it prepares to meet the needs of students while also supporting the leaders who carry heavy burdens in challenging times.

The first day of school is a month away. During the coming weeks, we expect to have increased communication with you about developments that are relevant to you as administrators. We will continue to accept and participate in any opportunities for feedback or input that are offered by the EECD or the education entities, and encourage you as administrators to do the same if you are able. No education system has been down this road before and we must keep adapting and evolving with the conditions that are present in our province. Our students need us, our schools need us and we need each other.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Simony', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Tim Simony,
Chair