

November 19th, 2020

Regarding school cases of COVID-19

This week was marked by the presence of the first positive cases of COVID-19 in schools. This is the challenge we have all been preparing for when it arises, and have been taking significant steps to prevent. The success of our collective response and preparation hinges on effective leadership at every level of the public education system, and the compliance of all students, families, staff, and communities with the measures that are put in place.

The Association wants to recognize the exemplary leadership shown by the administrators of the two schools affected, Graham Creighton Junior High and Auburn Drive High School. Being the first schools in Nova Scotia to tackle this challenge is a daunting task and as administrators, we all know the challenges of coordinating communication and maintaining cohesion when there are uncertainties and the pressing time demands of operating schools.

On Tuesday we were able to connect with the Principals from both schools to offer support and to better understand their experience on the front-line of having cases in schools. Based on this we strongly believe that steps must be taken to ensure that school-based administrators receive information as quickly as possible and approval to share it with staff. This fosters collegiality and a feeling of being valued among staff builds trust and establishes common understanding as the school prepares to respond to a school case of COVID-19.

Since having those conversations we have been in direct contact with the EECD at the Learning Continuity Planning Table, and in addition with representatives of Public Health at another provincial coordinating table. We are sharing the experiences we have heard from these administrators and continue to advocate that the principles agreed upon in the summer be maintained.

- *We turn to the experts at the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health for guidance and procedures for dealing with all public health matters.*

- *School and system preparedness for prevention and response to school cases of COVID-19 depends on:*
  - *the supplies and the human resources being available and consistent with Public Health standards;*
  - *procedures in place to manage the movement and supervision of students;*
  - *participation of all employees within their roles and responsibilities.*

In the wake of these first cases, the Association believes these principles and their importance is clearly evident. Provincially we must all follow the Public Health guidelines, and we are thankful for the leadership of the public school administrators of this province who are continuing to embed those principles in the day-to-day culture and climate of all schools.

Sincerely,

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

Tim Simony  
Chair