

Friday, October 30, 2020

Memorandum to: Chairs of District School Boards
Directors of Education
Secretary-Treasurers of School Authorities

From: Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister of Education

Subject: Supporting School Board Operations for the 2020/21
School Year

Thank you for your continued support as we have reopened schools for the 2020-21 school year for students and staff across Ontario. We are encouraged by the hard work, enthusiasm, and dedication that you have demonstrated while supporting a safe, healthy learning environment in our schools.

We know that this year has been like no other. We also know that the adaptations that have been made to comply with public health requirements and support the safety of our province during the COVID-19 pandemic have led to challenges in school board operations. We have heard your concerns and are taking action to ensure that you have the flexibility needed to continue to operate effectively during this time.

Proposed Regulatory Amendments

As you know, Ontario made a number of amendments to the *Education Act* and its regulations to implement temporary changes that supported school boards during the school closure period.

The ministry will recommend the following regulatory amendments that, if approved, would support school boards this school year, including:

- Extending the waiving of requirements for school board trustees to attend meetings in person for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year;
- Extending the date by which elections of School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees must be held and ensure meetings can be held virtually; and
- Temporarily adjusting the Special Incidence Portion (SIP) allocation process for the 2020-21 school year, relieving boards of administrative work related to the claims submission process while still ensuring they are properly resourced to support students with special education needs through a board-by-board allocation.
- Providing boards time to focus on the New Teacher Induction Program and performance appraisals in support of new teachers, by providing a temporary pause on the current cycle of appraisals for vice-principals, principals and experienced teachers. Principals

and supervisory officers would maintain the ability to initiate a performance appraisal, where required. The requirement for Annual Learning Plans and Annual Growth Plans would remain in place for all teachers and principals respectively.

Please note that the proposed regulatory amendments set out above are subject to approval by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and are subject to change. We will continue to keep you informed.

These potential amendments are part of a broader suite of changes intended to support Ontario's education system as we continue to navigate through this school year.

Update on Standardized Testing for the 2020-21 School Year

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)

The literacy graduation requirement will be waived for all students graduating during the 2020-21 school year.

The ministry is continuing to explore a field test of the online OSSLT in Spring 2021, which could allow the opportunity for non-graduating students to write the test and have successful attempts counted on their transcript.

Reducing Administrative Workload for the 2020-21 School Year

Special Incidence Portion (SIP) Funding for 2020-21

To help boards get the funding they need faster to support students with special education needs, the ministry is proposing to temporarily adjust the SIP allocation process for the 2020-21 school year. Boards would be relieved of the administrative work related to the claims submission process while still being properly resourced to support students with special education needs through a board-by-board allocation. Details of any proposed changes, if approved, will follow in an update to the Special Education Funding Guidelines: Special Incidence Portion (SIP), 2020-21.

Pausing or Suspending Partnership & Priorities Funding (PPF) Transfer Payments

The pandemic has had a profound effect on board and school-level planned programming for the 2020-21 school year. We've heard that in some cases, the programs to be funded through PPF transfer payment agreements may need to be paused or canceled. The ministry will be in touch with boards to determine which, if any, of their programs will be, or have been, suspended, in order to amend agreements and ensure that reporting requirements are still valid.

Reducing Reporting/Workload Requirements

To support school boards in focusing on implementation of priority programs, requirements for reporting to the ministry have been streamlined as follows:

Early Years Experience at Kindergarten (EYE@K)

Effective October 2021, boards will no longer be required to administer the EYE@K survey. This change is expected to help streamline kindergarten registrations while reducing associated administrative work during the 2020-21 school year. The ministry will continue to rely upon data collected through the Licensed Child Care Operations Survey as the primary source for data on the Ontario early years and child care system.

Early Development Instrument (EDI)

The EDI is an important indicator on the developmental health of all senior kindergarten students. However, in light of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic the ministry is proposing that the collection of EDI data be postponed until the 2021-22 school year. Deferring this work will allow our dedicated kindergarten teachers to focus more on their students' activities during this atypical year and will help to further alleviate some of the administrative workload of boards.

Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA)

In a typical school year, boards are asked to submit a supplementary MISA plan for the school year (due November 2020) and a final report (expenditures and results achieved - due June 2021), in addition to EFIS reporting through the GSN. We've heard that MISA planning and reporting requires significant administrative resources from boards and that's why, for the 2020-21 school year, the ministry will not require boards to submit supplementary MISA reports. School boards will be expected to maintain their EFIS reporting.

Student Success Action Plan (SSAP)

School boards' participation in the annual SSAP Report is integral to the ministry's ability to monitor the effectiveness of activities that support vulnerable and underserved students as part of the Student Success Strategy. Typically, two reports are required of boards: the Initial Report due October of the current school year and the Final Report. For this school year, the ministry will only require the Final Report. The ministry will be connecting directly with school board teams throughout the year to learn more about activities that are supporting vulnerable and underserved students.

School Math Reports

Information typically collected through the school-based report-backs will be integrated into the board level report-backs used to monitor the Math Strategy Transfer Payment Agreement.

Board Improvement Plans

The ministry is currently reviewing opportunities to strengthen board improvement planning in ways that will promote the success of all students, particularly as we continue to move forward on our equity work across the province. Boards are asked to refrain from submitting their plan to the ministry until more information is provided in the future.

Fall 2020 Enrolment Audit Cycle

The ministry typically conducts enrolment audits twice per year, Fall and Spring as an important accountability mechanism. However, with the ongoing challenges presented by COVID-19, the ministry will be postponing the Fall 2020 audit cycle in order to be responsive to operational challenges currently facing school boards. The ministry will monitor the ongoing situation regarding COVID-19 in schools and assess the possibility of resuming enrolment audits in Spring 2021.

Thank you again for the ongoing partnership as we continue to ensure the safety of schools for students and staff during this unprecedented time. We hope you will find these changes helpful and that they reflect the useful feedback you have provided to date.

We look forward to further conversations on how we can support a successful 2020-21 school year.

Sincerely,

Stephen Lecce
Minister

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister