

March 5, 2021

Memorandum to: Directors of Education
Senior Business Officials
Secretary-Treasurers of School Authorities

From: Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Subject: **2021-22 School Year**

Over the last year, we have witnessed the extraordinary steps that school boards and their staff have taken to safely support the learning journey for Ontario students in what continues to be unprecedented and uncertain times.

These steps were possible by the government making available over \$1.6 billion in temporary resources to support the safe reopening of schools, with a plan that was designed in consultation with medical authorities in the province. These resources have allowed school boards to hire over 7,000 one-time additional staff for this school year including principals and vice-principals, teachers, educational assistants, mental health workers, early childhood educators, professional/paraprofessional staff, custodians and other staff that the boards required to meet their needs and the robust health and safety guidance issued by the Ministry.

In addition, when school boards informed the ministry in the fall about significant unexpected enrolment decline as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic of about 40,000 fewer students, the government mitigated the related financial impacts by providing approximately \$400 million in one-time stabilization funding. This funding allowed school boards to maintain teaching and education worker positions and a high standard of programming during the pandemic.

As we look towards the 2021-22 school year, school boards should take a cautious approach in their planning given the uncertainty in enrolment and adjust accordingly for one-time funding that was provided in 2020-21.

- The ministry expects that provincial enrolment will continue to be lower than previously planned and school boards should revise their enrolment projections to reflect actual 2020-21 levels. The enrolment decline this year was unexpected which is why the enrolment funding stabilization for 2020-21 was introduced. GSN funding will be based on the two count dates next school year as per standard practice.
- Given the staffing deadlines that school boards will be facing shortly, staffing assumptions should be based on the COVID-19 funding supports being one-time in nature while we continue to monitor and work with health experts to assess what supports are needed and review the valuable feedback in our GSN consultation.

- For staffing purposes, fully remote classes and classes offered through hybrid models should apply in-person class size requirements. Virtual schools continue to be assessed provincially, and additional direction is expected in the future.

As a result of collective agreement requirements to make staffing decisions now, it is understandable that school boards may issue more than the typical number of redundancy notices to its staff this winter/spring. Notwithstanding one-time hires for this school year, as is typically the case, staff can and are recalled once enrolment and funding are confirmed. While not all school boards issue notices every year, staff recall rates have been high in recent years, including 82% for the 2018-19 school year, and some school boards fully recalled staff in 2018-19 and 2019-20. As such, this regularized year-over-year process should not cause concern for staff, students and families alike.

We also acknowledge the importance of releasing the annual Grants for Student Needs funding and Priorities and Partnership Funding in a timely manner so that school boards have all the necessary financial information to prepare and plan their budgets. The ministry is planning to return to a traditional spring release.

As the ministry continues to monitor the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, we may be reaching out to school boards to ask for additional data to help our continued planning for the 2021-22 school year.

Thank you for your collaboration and commitment as we work together to continue to support Ontario's students.

Sincerely,

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

- c: Executive Director, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'ontario (ACÉPO)
- Executive Director, Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
- Executive Director, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
- Executive Director, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)
- Executive Director, Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)
- Executive Director and Secretary-Treasurer, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
- General Secretary, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)
- General Secretary, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
- General Secretary, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)
- Chair, Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW)
- Chair, Education Workers' Alliance of Ontario (EWAO)
- Co-ordinator, Canadian Union of Public Employees – Ontario (CUPE-ON)
- Executive Director, Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)
- Executive Director, Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)
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