



Member Update: Planning for September 2020

May 29, 2020

Dear Members,

As you are aware, the NLTA is involved in consultations with the school districts and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) as planning proceeds for the 2020-2021 school year. Assurance of the Association's inclusion in these discussions has been communicated previously through internal NLTA communications, as well as communications from the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) and EECD and has been acknowledged during COVID-19 provincial updates.

All NLTA members appreciate that the unprecedented event of a global pandemic and the declaration of a public health emergency has drastically disrupted the education system since March 16, 2020. Members are to be congratulated on how well they have adapted to this never-before experienced situation, and I understand anxiety is high. Your Association continues to work collaboratively with the school districts and EECD on issues pertaining to the remainder of this year as well as to planning and preparation for the next school year.

Discussions on how schools may operate next year have been ongoing for several weeks and good progress is being made. It is important to realize that final decisions, which will impact what K-12 education "looks like" in September, are very much dependent upon the advice of the Chief Medical Officer for Health. The best case scenario is that the province will be at Alert Level 0, which means schools will be able to operate as normal. The worst case scenario is that the province will be at Alert Level V, which would mean that schools would be unable to operate, requiring a fully developed online learning plan. Alert Levels I, II, III, and IV will all present challenges and require varying degrees of adjustment and change to normal school operations.

There is no disagreement among those involved in the discussion to date that staff and student safety is the paramount consideration. This is why public health information and guidelines will be so crucial in the finalizing of any plans. What we can be assured of is that, unless the province is at Alert Level 0, schools and teaching will look different in September 2020. Likewise, as the Alert Level status of the province may change during the school year, the development of robust alternate plans is required to ensure that the education system is prepared to easily adjust as necessary.

Everyone acknowledges that teachers and administrators have done remarkable work in a situation in which there was no opportunity to prepare. Now that we have more time on our side, it is important that the planning is done right, rather than quickly. This means that school plans for next year will most certainly change. In a public health emergency situation, we should not assume otherwise, but please be assured that your Association is committed to continued and collaborative engagement in the planning process.

Thank you again for your professionalism and hard work during these challenging times. Take care, and stay safe.

Sincerely,

Dean Ingram
NLTA President