



## Update from NLTA President Dean Ingram Planning for 2020-21 School Year

June 25, 2020

Dear Members,

As this school year comes to an end, I wanted to provide you with an update on your Association's involvement in discussions on planning for the 2020-2021 school year. As I indicated in my May 29 update, the NLTA has been involved in consultations with the school districts and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) on planning for the 2020-2021 school year.

Discussions on how schools may operate next year have been ongoing for weeks and your Association remains adamant that school operations are very much dependent upon the advice of the Chief Medical Officer for Health (CMOH). To this end, the NLTA, in keeping with our legislated duties, has requested a meeting with Dr. Janice Fitzgerald ([please find letter here](#)) to get firsthand information and to provide her with the benefit of teachers' expertise and perspective on the reality of school operations.

There is no disagreement among those involved in the discussions to date that staff and student safety is the paramount consideration. This is why public health information and guidelines will be so crucial in finalizing any plans. What we can be certain 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. 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 teaching and 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. Your Association has repeatedly emphasized that planning for each potential scenario must be done in advance of the coming school year and that nothing be left to circumstances as they arise. I would like to compliment the work of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District on the work done in identifying many potential issues needing to be addressed and the availability of EECD officials throughout this process.

In our discussions with the EECD and the school districts, your Association has raised many issues and concerns that need to be considered in plans that may arise from changes to public health directions, including but not limited to the following:

- The impact of physical distancing requirements on class size, bussing, supervision and cohorting;
- The availability and appropriate use of PPE, including face masks and hand sanitizer;
- The availability of computer equipment, devices, connectivity, resources and supports for home instruction if required;
- Assurance of personal security and privacy during distance learning;
- The availability of paid leave when teachers are unable to work from home or attend the workplace as a result of public health directives;
- Adequate preparation time if learning is to occur via a combination of in school and online instruction;
- The availability of childcare for teachers and administrators if schools are required to operate on a shift system;
- Clarification on possible modifications and adjustments to curriculum outcomes;
- The potential impact on specialist programs and itinerant teachers;
- The need to avoid implementing extra-curricular activities;
- The provision of adequate professional learning opportunities on the delivery of distance education;
- The need for additional supports for students with special and challenging needs;
- The need for directions for administrators and teachers faced with symptomatic students;
- Clarification on hygiene routines and provision of adequate supplies of soap and hot water and safe facilities;
- Clarification on school cleaning protocols, including frequency of cleaning washrooms, surfaces including desks, equipment and manipulatives;
- Provision of health and safety training and orientation for teachers and administrators;
- The need for an orientation period at the beginning of the school year with small groups of students;
- Clarification on screening protocols for students and staff;
- The needs for additional supports for the social-emotional well-being of students;
- The need for restrictions on access to schools by visitors;
- The need for availability of substitute teachers to avoid disruptions; and
- The need for flexible expectations regarding the implementation of the draft Responsive Teaching and Learning Policy.

In order to meaningfully plan and address the above issues, government needs to make necessary financial commitments and clarify curriculum expectations. In addition, clarity is required on the expectations of the CMOH with respect to school operations.

You have all done remarkable work in a situation in which there was no opportunity to prepare. It is important that the planning for September in all of the possible scenarios be done right. I commit to keeping you informed as new information becomes available. The Association appreciates the work being done by other informed stakeholders, such as the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils, who are advocating for a safe back to school plan.

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

Sincerely,

Dean Ingram  
NLTA President

Further information can be found here:

[COVID-19 Information and Updates](#)