

February 15, 2017

VIA EMAIL

Dear Superintendent:

Student Retention (“No-Fail”) Policies

I am writing in follow-up to earlier dialogue with respect to the perception of a student retention or “no fail” policy in our public schools. As discussed, there is no such Ministerial or Department policy in this regard and I understand through our discussions that individual school boards also do not have such a policy in place.

Despite this, it has become clear through negotiations and letters we have received from teachers that teachers and principals believe they cannot retain students, even if they determine it is in the student’s best interest. It is important that we respect the professional judgment of our teachers and principals, and that they know they will be supported when they make these difficult decisions in consultation with parents.

It has also come to my attention that Board policies that do exist with respect to retention are administered and supported unevenly across the Province. It is my intention to discuss this matter at Principals in Focus this Spring to gain insight into the issues that cause teachers and administrators to believe they are unable to hold children back if it is in the academic and social interest of the child.

In recognition of this fact, this letter will serve as a directive that school boards will not institute a retention or “no fail” policy regarding students who are unable to achieve education outcomes required for advancement.

I require that you communicate this letter to all principals and teachers within your school systems.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this regard.

Yours truly,



Sandra McKenzie
Deputy Minister
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Copy: *Joan Ling, Executive Director, Nova Scotia Teachers Union*
Karen M. Gatién, Associate Deputy, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Executive Directors, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Nancy Pynch-Worthylake, Executive Director, NSSBA
Angela Kidney, Director, School Board Labour Relations
REOs, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development