

February 15, 2017

VIA EMAIL

Dear Superintendent:

EECD Discussion Paper - *Be There: Student Attendance and Achievement*

I am writing in follow-up to our discussions with respect to the above referenced Discussion Paper.

As you know, this Discussion Paper surrounds the important issue of student attendance in our schools. The paper is intended to serve as the groundwork for a provincial student attendance policy that will set consistent expectations and accountability around attendance, balanced with the flexibility to respect the needs of individual students and the professional judgment of teachers. We also need to ensure the policy does not add to teacher workload, and, in fact, supports them in their efforts to help all students learn by being in class regularly and on time.

To date, we have received feedback on the paper from a variety of partners, including teachers, administrators, parents, groups representing vulnerable students, as well as the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. This feedback has come from a survey, focus groups as well as by written submissions and meetings. We appreciate all partners taking the time to contribute constructive, well-informed thoughts and advice on what is clearly an issue of concern in our schools.

While work in this area has recently slowed because of the Work to Rule job action, I am writing to advise that the Department will immediately continue with the required consultation processes (including further consultation with classroom teachers, School Advisory Councils and others) leading to the completion of the development and rollout of this policy in the Spring of 2017 such that it is in place in all Boards in September 2017.

I know you agree that student attendance is critical to student success and I look forward to continuing this important work.

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. Gatien, Associate Deputy, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
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