

Wednesday, August 12, 2020

Memorandum To: Directors of Education
School Authorities

From: Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Date: August 12, 2020

Subject: Professional Activity Days for the 2020-21 School Year

I am writing to provide direction on the topics for the three mandatory Professional Activity (PA) days to be implemented prior to the start of the 2020-21 school year.

The ministry recognizes the importance of professional learning that enhances educators' knowledge and skills for the effective support of all students and children. This year, in response to the current context and reopening of schools, mandatory PA days will focus on topics for restarting the school year, to ensure the safety of staff, students and the broader community, and delivery of high-quality education for all learners.

The three mandatory PA days will focus on school re-entry and will address the following topics:

1. Health and safety protocols in response to COVID-19 (full day)
2. Student mental health, well-being and anti-bullying
3. Remote and online learning strategies and tools
4. An introduction to anti-racism and anti-discrimination training that will continue throughout the 2020-21 school year
5. An introduction to the new elementary math curriculum and fundamental math concepts/skills

The PA day topics can be addressed in an integrated manner as part of restart planning. All professional learning will consider and incorporate the implications for teaching students with special education needs. Boards should also consider how to address these topics in such a way that allow time for educators to plan and prepare for the arrival of their students.

School boards are reminded that a half day was centrally negotiated with teacher federations to focus on violence prevention and violent incident reporting. The half day should take place after the school year begins and before December 31, 2020.

Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No. 151: Professional Activity Days Devoted to Provincial Education Priorities will be revised and issued in early fall 2020 reflecting this direction.

The purpose of the mandatory PA days prior to the start of the school year is to provide support for re-entry and to set the stage for professional learning that will occur throughout the year and in response to local context and needs. In addition, the ministry is preparing a comprehensive professional learning plan focussed on anti-discrimination and anti-racism. More information regarding additional learning opportunities will be available at a later date.

As boards prepare for staff professional learning, they are expected to put in place appropriate health and safety measures, such as physical distancing aligned with the advice of their local health units.

To support school boards in delivering professional learning, the ministry is developing customizable materials. These materials are being developed with experts in the topics identified. They will be module-based, and school boards are encouraged to adapt these materials for specific audiences and local contexts. These customizable materials, as well as links to additional resources, will be available in the ministry's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). School board staff have access to this space by logging into the VLE and accessing the link on their school board's home page. If you are unsure of how to access your board's VLE, please visit <https://www.d2l.com/ontario>.

As communicated in June, the ministry will also be hosting an introductory webinar to explore the new elementary math curriculum with board math teams, including Board-Based Math Learning Leads and Superintendents responsible for math. These webinars will provide a detailed overview of the new curriculum as well as the research and guiding principles that informed it.

The webinar will be available on the following dates:

- Wednesday, August 19th (English)
- Wednesday, August 26th (English)
- Wednesday, September 2nd (French)
- Wednesday, September 2nd (English)
- Wednesday, September 16th (French)
- Wednesday, September 16th (English)

Please share this information, including the [registration link](#) with appropriate board staff so they have the opportunity to register. Registration for each session will close the day before the webinar date. Up to six staff members from each board are able to register on each date.

Further professional learning to support the math curriculum will be covered through the Math Strategy and Grants for Student Needs funding.

The ministry will continue to work with school boards and education partners to provide ongoing learning opportunities and resources throughout the school year and in a manner that responds to needs that arise as the school year progresses.

I appreciate your collaboration in supporting professional learning for educators and staff across the province.

Sincerely,

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

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