

Maple Ridge Teachers' Association Memorandum

To: Teachers
From: MRTA Office
Date: March 28, 2020
Topic: Information Update

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Dear Colleagues,

We would like to begin by saying that we understand how hard it has been waiting for information to come about the return to work next week. Although this plan is only for week one, we do not anticipate things to change drastically in the coming weeks. We have been able to provide meaningful input to the district plan, and will continue to advocate for issues that we feel are important for our members, including more timely communication. Safety of our members continues to be the top priority of the MRTA leadership during this time. There are still many unknowns and we still do not have clarity on such issues as work for TTOCS, unfilled positions, and the provision of remedy. We will update you as we get information. For now, we would like to clarify and expand on some of the information that you have just received from the District.

It is our recommendation that members avoid going to their buildings unless absolutely necessary, in order to reduce the risks associated with COVID-19. As part of the administrator's contact with you early next week, you will be asked a few questions as a risk assessment for whether or not it is safe for you to enter the building. It has been made clear to us by the BCTF that during a pandemic, the employer is entitled to ask these questions in order to determine the level of risk that exists.

The District has asked that teachers check-in with their students next week by phone or virtually. Do this in whichever way feels most comfortable. The idea is to re-establish connections with students. The District will be providing a script/guide for teachers to support you in this. Students and parents will likely have questions. If you don't know, nor feel comfortable, answering any question, direct them to your administration.

You will be asked to review two safety documents on Monday: "COVID-19: Health and Safety Measures for the Wellbeing of all Employees", and the "Exposure Control Plan for COVID-19". It is important that you read these documents carefully as they contain information that will ensure your safety should you decide to enter the building next week. The District has indicated that it is the responsibility of the employee to be informed of potential risks. Page 4 of the "Exposure Control Plan for COVID-19" document outlines the responsibilities of the employee. Please note that these documents describe what worksites may look like should students return to the building. At this time, there is no plan for students to be returning to buildings for in-class instruction, other than those determined as children of Essential Services Workers.

School-aged children of Essential Services Health Care Workers (Tier 1) living in the Coastal Health and Fraser Health Regions could be attending a small number of designated school sites starting as early as next week, on direction of the Government. Care for children in the broader group of essential workers [Tiers 2, 3, 4] will come later, if necessary. The district will need people to do the work of supervising and supporting these students, in a manner that adheres to the safety measures in place through the "Exposure Control Plan for COVID-19" document. It is unclear, at the moment, how many students will need this care as the district is

gathering this information now. We are hopeful that enough people across the employee groups will come forward to ensure that this care can happen voluntarily. If more people are required, we will work with the district to ensure a process for determining how to proceed. There are many issues that we will need to address as a plan is developed.

Next week's work for members is to plan for learning opportunities that will be initiated April 6th. The MRTA wants to assure members that we understand that this will be a slow process and that this is just a start date. Do not feel that you have to have a full program by April 6th. Minister Fleming has made it clear that the provision of learning opportunities comes second to safety and that this may not be fully up and running until the middle of April. We encourage you to try to connect with your colleagues to support and collaborate with one another. Remember that there are multiple ways to be in contact through email, video conference, or a phone call.

You have the autonomy to plan and deliver learning opportunities in the ways that work best for you. Where as an online delivery model could be advantageous and desirable for some, others may wish to use paper based, or other learning materials. This is your decision. Please realize that these extraordinary circumstances mean that we will not be able to provide all the opportunities we would in a regular setting, and that is okay.

Please do not hesitate to contact Penny Morgan, Acting President (penny@mrtaoffice.ca), Kaitlin Thorarinson, Acting 1st Vice President (kaitlin@mrtaoffice.ca) or Trevor Takasaki, Acting 2nd Vice President (trevor_takasaki@sd42.ca) if you have any questions or concerns while we navigate these unprecedented times together. Your input informs our advocacy!