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RTU-SER Newsletter

•SMALLER CLASS SIZES

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Minister Michelle Courchesne announced a reduction in the number of students in elementary classes—**20% in schools in underprivileged areas** and **10% in other schools**. These reductions will be phased in over 4 years. Currently, the average size of Grade 3 classes is 25, and the maximum is 27. A 10% reduction *would* lower the average Grade 3 class size to 22.5 and the maximum to 24.3, and a 20% reduction *would* produce classes of 20 (22) students. But, as usual, it's not that simple. According to information provided by the school board and confirmed by the **MELS's 2009-2010 Budgetary Rules**, the numbers would be as follows:

Level	Underprivileged-area schools	Other schools
Grade 3	22/24	24/26
Grade 4	22/24	27/29

The school board will use the allocated funds to **create 1.43 additional teaching positions** in 2009–2010. Note that the list of underprivileged schools is currently under review. So, clearly there is a big difference between the political posturing we have seen, and reality.

• SUBJECT TIME ALLOCATION AND LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

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As a follow-up to the concerns raised by our delegates, we recently had a meeting with **Ms. Maria Nasso-Maselli, Director of Elementary Schools**, and **Ms. Lisa Rae, Assistant Director of Educational Services**, regarding the subject-time allocation and language of classroom instruction issues. Our main concern was that teachers reported being pressured by their principals to modify the subject-time allocation/language of instruction in their schools, because the Board apparently said so. We were told that the Board recommended some changes in relation to the application of the Basic School Regulation (i.e. consistency of hours within a cycle and suggested number of hours per subject). With regard to the subject-time allocation, any changes need to undergo the proper consultation process with the teachers and receive approval by the governing board. With regard to the language of classroom instruction (amount of English and French), the same consultation process applies.

•CONSULTATION : PHASE 2

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You will once again be consulted regarding the **next round of negotiations**; if they haven't already done so, delegates will be issuing consultation documents in the coming days. This time, your opinions are being solicited on sector-related issues, such as salary, pension plan, etc. We are required to submit our **results to the QPAT by May 20**. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

• **SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS FOR 2009 - 2010**

• **STUDENT WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES : SOME FIGURES**

• **EXCESS TEACHERS**

• **LUNCHTIME TRAINING**

• **ABSENCE CODES: SYSTEM ERROR?**

• **PLANNED SCHOOL CLOSURES**

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS FOR 2009 - 2010

Annual meetings to determine the needs for 2009-2010 were held in April and early May. Each school committee president, along with the school principal, draw up the list of children with special needs and with learning difficulties, to identify needs in terms of student services and teaching support. Once these resources have been allocated to schools, it's up to the **School Committee for Special Education** to decide how to distribute these resources, while ensuring that coded students receive the level of support to which they are entitled.

STUDENT WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES : SOME FIGURES

At the Riverside School Board in 2008 - 2009:

- **More than 2,000 students** have an **individual education plan (IEP)**;
- **More than 1,000 students are officially recognized (coded)** as having a physical disability or severe behavioural disorder;
- **Over 750 students are officially considered to be "at risk,"** meaning they are at least two years behind.

EXCESS TEACHERS

The school board has reported **12 excess teachers at the elementary level** and **two at the high-school level**. The affected teachers were advised in mid-April and were eligible to apply for a transfer to fill a vacant position (**see list posted in schools**), either in their own school or another school. The school board will assign surplus teachers to vacant positions by **May 18**. Teachers who have been transferred to another school will be advised by **June 1**.

LUNCHTIME TRAINING

Under the collective agreement, no training sessions of any kind are to be "offered" at lunchtime. The workday is full enough already! If you are asked to attend a lunchtime session, contact our office.

ABSENCE CODES: SYSTEM ERROR?

There may be some confusion surrounding the absence codes; many teachers have been told that their remaining **special leave days** were insufficient to cover their absences, whereas further verification revealed that this was not the case. If this situation sounds familiar to you, give us a call.

PLANNED SCHOOL CLOSURES

On April 21, the school board announced its intention to close two of its schools in 2010, and relocate another—**Royal Oak, Terry Fox and REACH**—citing as its reasons the dwindling student population in recent years and the underuse of certain buildings. Public consultations will be announced soon. If the school board goes ahead with these closures, the union will monitor the process closely so as to ensure that teachers' rights are respected at all times.

Michel Gagnon - President