

February 2009

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RTU-SER Newsletter

• SCHOOL COUNCIL

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Preparations for the next school year will begin in the coming weeks. Accordingly, the school administration is required to consult the School Council on a number of issues, including the following:

- ✓ Its needs in terms of teaching staff for the following school year (**before March 7 each year**); *school administrations forward those figures to the School Board, which will determine the number of surplus teachers (if any);*
- ✓ The provisional list of positions (full-time or part-time) anticipated in each category and subcategory, as well as the number of vacant positions (full-time or part-time) in each category or subcategory (**no later than April 1**);
- ✓ The pedagogical objectives and **school organization**: *for example, if the organizational model promoted by the School Board (Professional Learning Communities) is unsuitable, this is the ideal opportunity to discuss the issue with the school administration.*
- ✓ **Scheduling**;
- ✓ **The allocation of budget amounts** available to the school: *Note that it is the allocation of the amounts received by the school, rather than the amounts themselves, that is subject to the consultation.*
- ✓ **The implementation of policies on report cards, approaches and evaluation** within the school: *Even if a school administration insists that it wants its teachers to use the portfolio, for example, this decision extends beyond the scope of its mandate. Neither the school administration nor the School Board has such authority. This decision is reached during a teachers' meeting and is subsequently shared with the administration during a School Council meeting. If the QEP and the Régime pédagogique (Basic school Regulations) are respected, the administration approves the teachers' decision. The Education Act [19] ensures teachers have professional autonomy regarding evaluation methods and approaches used in pedagogical interventions.*
- ✓ **The choice of textbooks** and educational materials required for the teaching of study programs.
- ✓ **The time allocation for each subject** (mandatory or optional). *This is to be approved by the Governing Board, on a proposal from the school principal – this proposal is done based on compulsory consultation with the teachers of the school. Failure, on the Governing Board's part, to approve the proposal would mean that no decision is taken. The school principal would then have to submit another proposal, also in consultation with the teachers.*
- ✓ **Local programs of study** to meet the specific needs of the students: *such as the IB program, Sports-étude, etc*

Moreover, consultations regarding new policies or changes in policy must take place at least **seven (7) work days** prior to the implementation of the policy/changes.

•SCHOOL CLOSURES

• REMINDER: REQUESTS FOR LEAVES

•RTU FUND: STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

• INSURANCE ISSUES

•REGROUPMENT PLAN 2009-2010

•REFORM: DISCOURAGING RESULTS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

When the School Board decides to close a school to students because of a storm or other reasons that prevent its normal use (power outage, lack of water, etc.), teachers do not have to be present at the school (**5-11.11**). In other words, if the building is closed because it isn't suitable for students, it means it is not suitable for teachers either. However, if a closure occurs while students are at school, teachers must remain on duty until the students have left the school.

REMINDER: REQUESTS FOR LEAVES

March 1 is the deadline for requesting a leave without pay for the following school year. It is also the deadline for requesting a leave with deferred pay.

RTU FUND: STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

At the delegates' meeting in January, it was decided that the RTU fund would be used, and the teachers who sit on school committees were asked to submit proposals to the union. Note that, further to the settlement of a grievance, the union received a sum of money to provide direct services to teachers assigned to particularly difficult groups of students. Additional services should be in place within a few weeks.

INSURANCE ISSUES

Many teachers are wondering why it is compulsory to adhere to our group health insurance plan, and why it is so expensive while the coverage is minimal. One thing to be clear about is the fact that it is legally compulsory; in Québec, **everyone has to be covered** either by a private plan or by the public plan. The law also establishes the minimum level of coverage. Our plan exceeds the public plan both in the level of reimbursements and in the drugs covered. For teachers, it is therefore compulsory to have the private plan because it is available through our employment. Our group insurance is managed by **the Québec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT)**, which represents around 7 000 members. Our insurance provider is the **Industrielle Alliance**. Our premiums are higher because the employer does not put any money in it; therefore we (the members) have to pay for it ourselves. If the employer did put money in it, then our premiums would be lower. **QPAT** makes sure that the premiums remain as low as possible, and that we get as much coverage as possible; to that end, **QPAT** hires a group of experts in the health insurance field, **Mercer**. Every year, costs and coverage are reviewed and adjustments are made: premium increase or decrease, coverage changes, premiums holidays. Premiums are calculated based, among other things, on what is covered, and of course the cost of medication, which keeps going up. The "experience" of the group (yearly average cost of claims) is also a factor. QPAT tries to maintain a balance between cost and coverage.

REGROUPMENT PLAN 2009-2010

At its meeting in December, the **Council of Commissioners** adopted the new **2009-2010 Regroupment plan**; starting next year, there will be a single (1) category in General Subjects at the elementary-level (instead of two), i.e. **General Subjects K to 6**. In 2007, teachers were consulted, and the majority of them expressed the desire for a single category. The school administrations were also consulted.

REFORM: DISCOURAGING RESULTS

The decline in the quality of French among elementary students was the subject of an article in the December 26 edition of **Le Soleil**. The success rate of grade 6 students on the writing test fell from 83% in 2005 to 81% in 2006. In 2000, before the reform, the rate was 90%. This news confirmed the findings published earlier on December 11, which described how, according to the 2007 **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)**, the performance of students subject to the reform has plummeted in these areas of study. After 8 years of improvised implementation, are the results really that surprising?

• **EMPLOYEE
ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM**

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The School Board has a new employee assistance program provider: **SHEPELL-FGI** offers a confidential support service to help resolve various problems and issues: **1 800 363-3872**.

• **HEALTH AND
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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES

Just a reminder; there has to be a **Health and Safety Committee** in every school, to monitor the situation and inform the administration of any health and safety hazard. This committee is composed at a minimum of one union delegate and one member of the school administration; representatives from other employee groups can also attend.

**Michel Gagnon – President
Riverside Teachers' Union**