

CCTA UPDATE #7

JANUARY 7, 2022

VOLUME 28

EDITION #7

Students Return To Our Worksites on Monday, January 10th

I'd like to officially acknowledge the arrival of 2022 and our return to school, and hope all of you have been able to make use of the additional time we had in preparing for our new term over the past four days. The cold temperatures and inclement weather over the past week has added to the hurdles we seem to be facing on a regular basis, but a lot of planning has been taking place that I have been involved in at the district level to address any unforeseen challenges that may lay ahead.

District Preparations For Potential 'Functional Closures'

The 'soft start' to this term was in part an opportunity for districts to plan for potentially higher absentee rates among staff in the coming months. The goal of districts in the province is to keep schools open, but there is an absenteeism threshold that at some point makes that impossible. Schools may become susceptible to "functional closures" if there is an excessive shortage of teaching staff beyond the normal rates we usually experience, or if there is a shortage of custodial service. The district responses will be different for these two situations.

The online reporting of teacher absences will allow school-based administrators to know if a teacher shortage is potentially imminent on any given day but most determinations may not be possible until staff and students arrive at school. In the event high absenteeism is the reality, administration is planning for one of two possibilities, either the continuation of instruction, or the supervision of students without regular instruction occurring.

While all aspects of the district plan are subject to change, the continuation of instruction may be possible, at least on the initial day of the shortage. This could be achieved by combining multi-age students groups where possible, or platooning district itinerant staff, including some Student Services personnel, the district Helping Teachers, District Principals, and Senior Staff, to provide instruction. If it becomes evident that instruction cannot be provided on the initial day, the administrator, in consultation with district staff, may decide to create additional space for the supervision of students, using the library or other common areas.

If all indicators point toward the need for a functional closure of a school, that determination is made by the Superintendent, not the school-based administrator. In our district, a functional closure is likely to be for 7 calendar days and would likely feature a day for staff preparation, which would include communications with parents, the sharing of materials, and taking the steps necessary to transition to on-line learning. On-line instruction would occur during days 2-7 during regular instructional hours, with age appropriate instructional design. On Day 7 there would be a reassessment of staff illness levels in anticipation of a return to face to face learning.

Keep in mind, this plan is a work-in-progress. The district staff has had conversations with itinerant staff of their potential role in any functional closure, and has consulted with the unions and school-based administration. As more details become available or are altered, I will provide updates.

Teams Phones for Teachers

The district has purchased upgraded Microsoft licenses and phone lines for all teachers, administration, office staff, and exempt staff. The phone license is applied to teacher accounts now and a phone icon should appear on Teams with a keypad allowing us to make phone calls. We are able to make phone calls from our laptop or we can install the teams App on a mobile phone or tablet and make calls from this device. This provides teachers with the ability to make calls to parents from a district number from their classroom or home. Teams does not have any concurrent call limitations so there is no limit to the number of teachers who can call at the same time. Additional documentation on Teams calling is available on the district portal under the IT page.