

MEMO TO: All Staff Members
FROM: Doug Smuland, ATU President
DATE: September 7, 2021
RE: Return to School – Staff Meetings

Dear Member,

The ATU is aware that there is trepidation from some members about staff meetings scheduled to occur on the first day of school and throughout the coming weeks. For those teachers who feel that the physical proximity to others in such meetings is a concern, it is the understanding of the ATU that a discussion with the school principal to find alternative structures to these in-person meetings should be made available.

The District's document **Communicable Disease Safe Work Procedures** outlines that a trauma-informed lens for respecting personal space and for the protection of members is of importance in planning school activities (including staff meetings). With this in mind, teachers are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their principal in order to facilitate alternatives to meeting in groups with large numbers of members and/or students. Feel free in your discussions to access either of the documents for a more fulsome understanding of the District's and the provincial government's position on safety in schools.

From:
SD#34 Communicable Disease Safe Work Procedures:

Staff should also utilize a trauma-informed lens when planning school activities (e.g., gatherings and events) and interactions with other staff and students, including considerations around respecting others personal space (the distance from which a person feels comfortable being next to another person).

Students and staff may choose to wear masks, face shields or other personal protective equipment in schools beyond the requirements outlined in this document. Those choices must be respected. School administrators are encouraged to review the information in this section with their school community to increase awareness and support from staff, students, and families.

Physical Distancing & Space Arrangement

Although public health no longer recommends learning groups and physical distancing of 2M as communicable disease measures for the K-12 setting, there are a number of strategies that schools can consider to help create space between people and to support students and staff in returning to school using a trauma-informed approach:

- *Remind students and staff about respecting others personal space. Use visual supports, signage, prompts, video modelling, etc. as necessary*
- *Use available space to spread people out, both in learning environments and for gatherings and events, where possible*

From:

Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Diseases Guidelines for K-12 Settings

School Gatherings and Events

Organizers should apply a trauma-informed lens to their planning, including consideration of:

- *respecting student and staff comfort levels regarding personal space;*
- *using space available to spread people out as much as possible, respecting room occupancy limits, and ensuring enough space is available to prevent involuntarily physical contact between attendees (i.e. overcrowding); and*
- *gradual transitions to larger gatherings (e.g. school-wide assemblies), including starting with virtual or smaller in-person options, shorter in-person sessions, etc.*

Should teachers find their concerns are not adequately addressed, they should first contact their school-based health and safety committee for further information and action, and following this, their staff representative and the ATU.

Respectfully,
Doug Smuland
ATU President

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