

## NEWS RELEASE

*June 12, 2020*

### **Board Trustees Discuss Plans for September**

The Board of Trustees of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) discussed preliminary plans for the resumption of teaching and learning in September during a virtual meeting today (Friday, June 12), live-streamed through the District website. A number of potential scenarios and related considerations were brought forward.

“Obviously our goal is to have all K-12 students back in classrooms, engaged in face-to-face learning with their teachers,” said Goronwy Price, Chair of the Board of Trustees. “That is what we all want. But we cannot predict with certainty how the Covid-19 health emergency will evolve over the next couple of months, and what direction we will be provided from public health and other government authorities with respect to protocols in classrooms, on school buses, and within the school environment in general.”

Chair Price noted that if the current situation prevails, with very low rates of Covid-19 identified in the province, many schools - particularly those with lower enrollments - could return to normal instruction with minimal change. Other measures are being considered to address schools with larger enrollments, including finding alternate locations to provide instruction. In any case, the District must be prepared for any scenario, and be able to pivot at any time to revert to a blended model of in-class and online learning, or even a complete switch to regularly scheduled online teaching and learning, complete with assignments and assessments. This would look very different from the continuation of online learning experienced between mid-March and June of this year.

A bona fide plan for reopening schools in September is dependent on three key pieces of information to be provided by the Provincial Government, said Chair Price. They are:

- Finalized detailed guidance from the Chief Medical Officer of Health on how each Alert Level impacts student transportation and the delivery of education;
- Sufficient funding to provide equitable access to technology and internet connectivity for students, along with the provision of appropriate devices to teachers should they be required to perform online instruction from their school or home; and,
- Direction with respect to any modified curricular requirements and provincial assessments.

Tony Stack, CEO/Director of Education of the NLESD, said in these last weeks of June, all teachers have been participating in mandatory professional learning around teaching in a digital environment.

“We saw some incredible innovation occur over the past months, with thousands of teachers stepping up to the plate and finding new ways to engage their students and collaborate with each other,” said Mr. Stack. “But we also know that effective teaching and learning in a virtual environment requires different teaching approaches. This is new to many of our educators, but through these professional learning sessions we expect to be better prepared to adjust to whatever scenario we will face in September - and to switch course in short order, if necessary.”

Mr. Stack said some of the considerations for September include, but are not limited to: alternate school locations, physical distancing measures within schools and on school buses; enhanced cleaning protocols; enhanced personal hygiene protocols (e.g., frequent hand-washing); leveraging technology to ensure equity of access to education, meeting the needs of students with exceptionalities; modified curriculum (e.g., a focus on core outcomes); food services, and the delivery of such courses as home economics, skilled trades, music, drama, physical education and others which traditionally require close contact and shared equipment.

“While we await further information from government, we will continue our internal planning for the resumption of classes in September,” said Mr. Stack. “I take this opportunity to thank our regional District staff, schools administrators, teachers, students and parents for their hard work and dedication and for their willingness to adjust and adapt under these extraordinary circumstances.”

The Newfoundland and Labrador School District includes more than 250 schools, about 5,200 teachers and serves approximately 63,400 students throughout the province.

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