

Dr. Jennifer Adams - Director of Education

September 12, 2012 Message

Dear Parents and Guardians:

As you may know, the Ontario Legislature has passed Bill 115, Putting Students First Act. There has been considerable media attention on this matter and there is some confusion about the impact of the legislation. Here are a few things that you should know:

- The Act requires school boards and their unions to negotiate collective agreements by December 31, 2012. The agreements must be consistent with the financial terms prescribed by the Act. I want to reassure you that the district remains committed to negotiating agreements in good faith with all of our employee groups, within the parameters of the legislation.

- Under the Bill, strikes and lock-outs are prohibited until December 31st, 2012. After that date, the Cabinet may issue orders regarding strikes and lock-outs at its discretion. Based on this, we do not anticipate any disruptions to the instructional day.

Across the province, the unions have encouraged their members to protest the passage of the legislation. For example, one union has asked teachers to refrain from participating in extra-curricular activities for one-day. It is important to know that extra-curricular activities are voluntary – they take place outside of the instructional duties of teaching staff. I believe that extra-curricular activities have always been an excellent example of the passion and professionalism our staff brings to student learning, both inside and outside the classroom.

It's too early to know the full impact this might have at your child's school and the impact may vary from school to school. As of today, some extra-curricular activities are operating while others are currently without staff volunteers. Schools have until next week to register sports teams for fall sports. I want to reassure you that our Principals are working hard to keep the focus at school on student learning and to address these issues. As always, Principals will be communicating regularly with their school community through school newsletters, school council meetings, meet the teacher nights and will keep you informed about the impact in your child's school.

I know that this is a stressful situation for our students and families. It is also an opportunity for us to teach our students about respect, cooperation and our ability to work together in the face of uncertainty. There are many unanswered questions, but with time, we will bring more clarity to the situation and we will share more information with you as soon as possible.

If you have any comments, concerns or questions do not hesitate to email me at director@ocdsb.ca.

Sincerely,

Jennifer