

Ministry of Education

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MEMORANDUM TO: Directors of Education
Secretary-Treasurers and
Supervisory Officers of School Authorities

FROM: Kevin Costante
Deputy Minister

DATE: September 29, 2010

RE: Changes to Supervised Alternative Learning, Part-time
Attendance, and Attendance Policy for 14-17 year olds

I am writing to inform you that the government has approved a new regulation, #374/10, "Supervised Alternative Learning and Other Excusals from Attendance at School". It will replace Regulation 308, "Supervised Alternative Learning for Excused Pupils" when it comes into effect on February 1, 2011. This is one of a cluster of actions aimed at addressing the needs of students most at risk of disengaging from school, described below.

Regulation

The SALEP regulation had not been reviewed in over 20 years. With the increase in the school leaving age to 18 as a result of Learning to Age 18 legislation (Bill 52), Supervised Alternative Learning can now be used for students age 14 to 17. During consultations, which included educators, attendance counsellors, social workers, school administrators, students, parent groups and community agency representatives, participants agreed that Supervised Alternative Learning could be a useful tool in maintaining a link to learning for highly disengaged students when other measures have not been successful. However, stakeholders also identified the need for better planning and monitoring of students to ensure that student needs are met.

As part of the Student Success goal of Reaching Every Student, the intent of the regulation is to ensure that students in Supervised Alternative Learning (SAL) have access to a program that helps them continue to learn.

The regulation increases the emphasis on planning by requiring a Supervised Alternative Learning Plan (SALP) for each participating student. The SALP will include a range of activities to help the student achieve his or her goals, an identified contact person for the youth who will be in touch with him/her at least monthly, and a transition plan to help the student return to school. Pupils participating in SAL will continue to be recognized as full time for grants purposes. The *Instructions for the Use of Computerized Enrolment Registers for Elementary and Secondary Schools* (the Register) will include a new attendance code "C" to record contact with pupils participating in SAL. The new regulation will help those most at risk of totally disengaging from school to stay connected to learning and re-engage more fully at a later date.

In addition, the regulation:

- provides more detail about the board process to consider requests to participate in SAL
- provides greater accountability through clearer requirements for school boards to plan for and regularly monitor students in SAL
- adds a provision allowing up to one year of part-time attendance for compassionate reasons for 16-17 year olds, with the approval of their principal and without needing to go through the SAL process. Under this provision, enrolment for the student for funding purposes would be determined in accordance with the Register.

Attendance Policy/Register

As well as the above regulatory changes, there will be a change to the Register which was suggested during our consultations. Currently, pupils of compulsory school age may remain on the Register in the current school year as long as an attendance counsellor reports the student's file is still active at least every 15 school days. As of February 1, 2011, this will be limited to a maximum of 60 consecutive school days for a pupil aged 14-17. The "C" attendance code will also be used to record the attendance counsellor's confirmation that a file is still active. Each board will be required to maintain a list of non-attending 14-17 year old students who have been removed from its schools' registers but are thought to still be in the community. The school or board is expected to contact these youth at least once a semester to encourage them to return. In addition, there will be new associated reporting requirements in order to measure the impact of these changes.

Implementation

The new regulation and Register rules will come into effect on February 1, 2011. The text of the regulation will be available next week in e-laws at www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/index.html. A Policy and Program Memorandum and a Resource Guide will be released this Fall. The PPM will include reporting requirements. One day training sessions for school board teams will be held in Toronto: November 9 (all French language, Thunder Bay and London region DSBs) and November 10 (GTA, Ottawa, North Bay/Sudbury and Barrie region DSBs). Board teams should include 4-5 people selected from supervisory officers, principals, attendance counsellors/social workers, and teachers (e.g. Student Success Teachers, co-op or guidance). Further details about training will be forthcoming.

Please forward this memo to your secondary school principals and any other staff who need to be aware of this new regulation. Thank you for your continued efforts to reach every student.

Original signed by:

Kevin Costante

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