
Administrative Memorandum

Regular Board Meeting

Date: September 19, 2018
Topic: CUPE – Continuity and Safety in the Workplace
Submitted by: Jordan Tinney, Superintendent of Schools/CEO

Background:

In supporting students with Autism, our paraprofessionals (e.g., Education Assistants [EAs] and Applied Behaviour Analysis Support Workers [ABA SWs]) play a key role. Adequately trained and well-supported staff are paramount to ensuring student success and effective home/school collaboration.

Students with Autism fall into Level 2 of the Ministry of Education's "Unique Student Funding" category. Over the past several years, we have seen a dramatic rise in the number of students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. During the 2004/05 school year, Surrey had 1038 students in Level 2, whereas during the 2018/19 school year, we are projected to have 2850 students. To put this growth into perspective, the district's entire enrolment has grown by about 14% in the same period that our numbers of students in Level 2 has grown by 175%. Keeping pace with the increasing number of students reported in the Level 2 category, our number of support staff (EA/ABASW) has increased from 485 to 1345 employees during that same time-period.

To provide every chance for student success, it is a district priority to attract, train, and retain fully qualified paraprofessionals and to ensure that their knowledge, skills, and abilities are aligned with student needs. Ensuring an effective "fit" includes a discussion of: (a) how best to provide effective paraprofessional training and support; and (b) situations in which Education Assistant/Applied Behaviour Analysis Support Worker continuity may be in a student's best interests. Safety in the workplace is also a key topic and priority for the Board of Education and again, adequate training and support is key.

In this dramatically changing landscape, the Board needs to engage with CUPE and district staff to continue the dialogue about how we can provide the most effective support for students and the paraprofessionals who play a key role in the education of children with Autism.

As one example, School District No. 44 (North Vancouver) and CUPE Local 389 have developed a supportive Letter of Understanding, and Surrey has already begun to discuss the possibility of a similar Letter of Understanding with CUPE Local 728 as part of our Collective Bargaining processes. It is our hope to continue to engage with CUPE Local 728 and to come to an understanding and agreement on how to best meet the needs of the students in Surrey.

CUPE – Continuity and Safety in the Workplace

It is recommended:

THAT District staff engage with CUPE local 728 on issues related to continuity and safety in the workplace with the intent of pursuing a Letter of Understanding; and

THAT staff report back to the Board by January 31st, 2019 on progress prior to staffing processes for the 2019/20 school year.
