

**Date of Issue:** January 7, 2019

**Effective:** Until revoked or modified

**Subject:** **Professional Activity Days Devoted to Provincial Education Priorities**

**Application:** Directors of Education  
Secretaries and Supervisory Officers of School Authorities  
Director, Provincial Schools Branch

**Reference:** Regulation 304, “School Year Calendar, Professional Activity Days”. This memorandum replaces Policy/Program Memorandum No. 151, December 5, 2017.

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## Introduction

The Education Act states that the Minister of Education may “establish policies and guidelines respecting criteria and topics for the professional activity days that are required by regulation and require boards to comply with the policies and guidelines”.<sup>1</sup>

Regulation 304, “School Year Calendar, Professional Activity Days”, made under the Education Act, sets out the conditions governing the establishment of school year calendars. The regulation states that school boards<sup>2</sup> must designate three professional activity (PA) days and may designate up to four additional PA days per school year.<sup>3</sup> Half a school day may be designated as an instructional day and the remainder of the day for professional activities, but such a day constitutes a half-day in determining the number of instructional days in the school year.<sup>4</sup>

The requirements for the professional activities for the three mandatory PA days are set out in this memorandum. The ministry reviews these requirements regularly to ensure that they reflect the provincial education priorities established by the Minister. If the requirements should change as a result of such review, this memorandum will be updated.

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1. Education Act, subsection 8(1), paragraph 28.

2. In this memorandum, *school board(s)* and *board(s)* refer to district school boards and school authorities.

3. Regulation 304, subsection 2(3.1), paragraphs 1 and 2.

4. Regulation 304, subsection 1(2).

## Context

All school and school board staff have an important role to play in ensuring the success, equity of outcomes, and well-being of all students in Ontario's publicly funded education system. Building capacity at all levels of the education system and supporting a culture of professional learning for all is critical for student success.

The Ministry of Education recognizes that ongoing teacher professional learning plays a significant role in supporting well-being and in helping students succeed in the classroom and after graduation. Teaching is a dynamic learning profession that is constantly changing as teachers strive to engage and motivate students, and meet their diverse learning needs. Setting high expectations, believing that all students can learn, having empathy for all learners, continually reflecting on student learning outcomes, and exercising responsible, informed professional judgement to improve or change practice are fundamental to effective teaching. To ensure that Ontario's teaching profession continues to evolve, thrive, and be recognized for its excellence, the ministry is committed to supporting the ongoing professional learning of all teachers.

## Requirements for School Boards

School boards must prepare their school year calendars in accordance with the requirements set out in Regulation 304. Boards are also required to submit their proposed school year calendars to the Minister of Education according to the dates specified in the regulation.

Professional activities on the three mandatory PA days must meet the requirements set out in the section that follows. If boards designate additional PA days (up to four may be designated per school year), the professional activities on all such PA days must be consistent with the definition of "professional activity" in the regulation.<sup>5</sup>

When submitting school year calendars, boards are required to include a general outline of the content for each of the PA days identified in the calendar.

For each mandatory PA day, the regulation also requires that boards prepare an agenda that specifies the date, location and timing of the activities, school(s) participating, and the program and scheduled professional activities. At least ten school days in advance

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5. As stated in section 1(1) of Regulation 304, "'professional activity' includes evaluation of the progress of pupils, consultation with parents, the counselling of pupils, curriculum and program evaluation and development, professional development of teachers and attendance at educational conferences, but does not include preparation by teachers for classes or instruction."

of a scheduled PA day, the board must make the agenda available by posting it on the board website and the website of each participating school; by posting it in the main office of the board and of each participating school; by distributing it to the school council chair of each participating school; and by using any other means the board considers appropriate to make the agenda accessible to all participants.

Each school year, boards are required to complete an evaluation of the activities conducted on all PA days held during that year. They are also required to retain these evaluations.

### **Requirements for the Three Mandatory Professional Activity Days**

Professional activities for the three mandatory PA days must be focused on teachers' professional learning aligned with provincial education priorities.

These priorities are the criteria that determine the focus and scope of the professional activities for the three mandatory PA days.

#### **PA Day 1**

One PA day must be devoted to developing and implementing strategies to improve student achievement in mathematics, with a focus on fundamental math concepts and skills.

The ministry released the following key resources to support this professional learning focus:

- [Focusing on the Fundamentals of Math, A Teacher's Guide](#)  
This resource highlights fundamental concepts and skills in Number Sense and Numeration in the Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Mathematics, 2005.
- [A Parent's Guide to the Fundamentals of Math, Grades 1 to 8](#)  
This resource provides an overview for parents and guardians on some of these key math concepts and skills that elementary students are expected to know in grades one through eight.

**PA Day 2**

The topic (or topics) for the second mandatory PA day will vary, as indicated below. The topics for each teacher federation were determined during the 2014 and 2017 labour negotiations between the provincial government and representatives from the federations and school board associations, and continue to be in effect.

- **Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)**

**All teachers:**

- The full day must be devoted to a topic (or topics) aligned with ministry priorities, such as improving student achievement in mathematics and/or developing and implementing strategies to ensure equity for all students, or to a topic that is also a current school board priority.

- **Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)**

**All teachers:**

- A half a day must be devoted to occupational health and safety training, including training in violent incident reporting;
- The other half of the day must be devoted to a topic aligned with ministry priorities, specifically developing and implementing strategies to improve student achievement in mathematics.

**Education workers:**

- A half a day must be devoted to role-specific training or professional development (applies to permanent employees only);
- The other half of the day must be devoted to occupational health and safety training, including training in violent incident reporting.

- **Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)**

**Grade 1 to 8 teachers:**

- The full day must be devoted to a topic aligned with ministry priorities/school board initiatives, explicitly developing and implementing strategies to improve student achievement in mathematics.

**Grade 9 to 12 teachers:**

- The full day must be devoted to a topic determined by board/federation professional development committees (where possible) and aligned with ministry priorities, such as improving student achievement in mathematics or science and technology, or developing and implementing strategies to ensure equity for all students.

- **Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)**

**All teachers:**

- A half day must be devoted to occupational health and safety training.

**Full-day Kindergarten (FDK) teacher and early childhood educator (ECE) teams:**

- The other half of the day must be devoted to developing and implementing inquiry-based learning and pedagogical documentation assessment strategies.

**Grade 1 to 12 teachers:**

- The other half of the day must be devoted to a topic determined by board/federation professional development committees and aligned with ministry priorities, such as improving student achievement in mathematics, providing students with more inquiry-based or experiential learning opportunities, developing pedagogical documentation assessment strategies, or developing and implementing strategies to ensure equity for all students.

**PA Day 3**

The third PA day must be devoted to teachers' professional learning related to any one or more of the following provincial education priorities:

- Indigenous education;
- foundational math;
- science, technology, engineering and mathematics fundamentals (STEM);
- financial literacy;
- special education;
- equity, inclusion and human rights;
- job preparedness;
- mental health and well-being; and
- health and safety.

In addition, all professional activities for the mandatory PA days must meet one or more of the following requirements:

- Align with board and school goals and plans created within the context of the current provincial education priorities;
- Address systemic barriers and discriminatory practices that negatively impact student engagement, learning and outcomes by placing an emphasis on equity, inclusion, and human rights;
  - [PPM 119: Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools](#)

- Be informed by school and school board data, and targeted to reflect the contexts of the board and its schools, including the priority learning needs of the students and teachers;
- Be based on identified teacher learning needs with respect to culturally responsive and relevant instruction and the use of strategies that address the diverse learning needs of students;
- Contribute to pedagogical development by providing teachers with opportunities to become familiar with a wide variety of evidence-based instructional strategies and their appropriate use;
- Support learning in which teachers can engage in inquiry and knowledge construction with colleagues;
- Increase knowledge of the impact of the Indian Act, the residential school system, treaties and systemic racism, as well as increasing understanding of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives, cultures, histories, contributions and contemporary realities; and
- Support an intentional focus on addressing learning opportunities for students, including students receiving special education programs and services, through an equitable and asset-based teaching and learning approach.

### **Additional Considerations**

While the three mandatory PA days are focused on professional learning for teachers, boards may decide to include other educators in professional activities on these three PA days. This may include Education Assistants and Early Childhood Educators in kindergarten classrooms, who may also benefit from participating in these or other professional learning opportunities, depending on local context.

Because of the importance of ongoing professional learning, school boards may also wish to consider incorporating professional activities scheduled for the three mandatory PA days into established board or school professional learning structures.

Knowledge of various ministry policy documents, including Policy/Program Memoranda, and ministry-developed resources is essential to meeting provincial education priorities and legislative requirements. Boards are encouraged to consider where a review of ministry policy documents and resources can be integrated into professional learning activities.