

COVID 19 – 2020-2021 UPDATE #1 (August 27th)

BTA Members,

I am hopeful you have all had a restful summer break and are looking forward to the start of another great school year. I am very well aware that this year will be like no other. I realize the anxiety level of many teachers is higher than it has ever been. I have received questions and concerns and would like to provide you with the following information:

Rallies and Protests

There is a rally planned in Brandon, for later today (August 27th) organized by Safe September. If you choose to participate, please be advised that Safe September is a grassroots community organization. While we are pleased to see that Manitobans share our commitment to a safe return to school for all, the Brandon Teachers' Association and the Manitoba Teachers' Society have chosen not to endorse petitions at this time due to a variety of factors. Our role and goals as the official organization that represents Manitoba teachers is central to all our advocacy. Further, because of our strong position on physical distancing, we have not officially endorsed any rally in the past several months and will not have an official presence at this one. Of course, teachers able to participate in these rallies and events, however as a participant you are not representing BTA or MTS. Please keep in mind the optics of protesting outside of your employer's office.

Online Activity

Members are encouraged to stay informed about the current COVID situation. Please look to reliable sources such as our health officials. Follow the updates from MTS, ask questions of your admin or reach out to the BTA Office. Do not take to social media to ask questions of BSD. Remarks which could be considered disparaging towards your employer can warrant disciplinary action. As always, be careful with social media.

Orange/Yellow Confusion

Your possible confusion regarding the colour coded response level in Brandon between schools and other public gatherings is understandable. After a review of the #RestartMB Pandemic Response document and consulting with MTS here is what I have been advised:

Prairie Mountain Health region is under level orange for all public gatherings. Schools are not considered public gatherings because there are additional measures in place to protect the staff and students. Students will, be in cohorts, physical distancing when possible, wearing masks and encouraged to maintain proper hand hygiene. It is because of these measure schools are considered level yellow at this point.

The start of school is still two weeks away and the chief medical officer, Dr. Roussin, anticipates the outbreak will have subsided by then. However, he has stated if things do not improve or there is further evidence of community spread, there could be changes to back to school plans. Unfortunately, we are heading into a year where our operating procedures can, and will, change day to day.

We have a very challenging year ahead of us. I am here for you so please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or concerns you have.

We remain in this together!

Cale Dunbar
President, Brandon Teachers' Association.