

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Raise the Bar: A Coherent and Responsive Education Administrative System for Nova Scotia

Teachers, principals and vice-principals have asked questions about government's response to Dr. Avis Glaze's report, *Raise the Bar*. The first FAQ was issued on February 8. Teachers, principals and vice-principals continue to submit questions to askeducation@novascotia.ca

This FAQ includes those most commonly asked.

School Advisory Councils (SACs)

Q: What kind of decision will SACs be able to make?

A: The Minister is talking to parents, teachers, principals and students about these very questions. We know that they will be able to decide on how some funding can be used. We will have more to share soon.

Q: If elected boards are gone, what happens to representation of African Nova Scotians and Mi'kmaq? Will it only be one representative for each on the provincial council?

A: Along with representation on the provincial advisory council, diversity must increase within the membership of school advisory councils. This will help respond to the unique needs in rural areas and all parts of the province. Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotians are also represented on the Minister's Council on African Nova Scotian Education and the Council on Mi'kmaq Education. Ways to elevate voices on these councils from across the province are also being pursued.

Seniority

Q: Will there be one seniority list for the province, or seniority lists for the current boundaries?

A: Seniority lists are governed by regional agreements with each board as a separate employer. That will continue. However, we want to create more choice and opportunities for teachers, while respecting seniority and supporting teacher recruitment and retention for all schools. The details of how to achieve this are complex (involving legislation and provincial and regional collective agreements) and are still being worked out. We are committed to work with the NSTU and other partners on these questions.

Q: If administrators choose to return to the classroom, will they lose their seniority with NSTU?

A: If an administrator returns to the classroom, under the existing collective agreement provisions, their seniority is protected. This is an issue that we want to discuss with the NSTU. It may be that seniority could be recognized for all time spent, whether in the bargaining unit or not; however, we cannot confirm this until discussions take place with the NSTU.

Q: Can a principal or vice-principal who has decided to return to teaching bump or displace another teacher because they have more seniority?

A: Principals and vice-principals cannot bump other teachers out of positions now. Bumping or displacement would not occur in the future either.

Removing Principals, Vice-Principals, Supervisory Staff from the NSTU

Q: Will the government protect our rights and benefits?

A: Yes, your rights and benefits will be protected. Government recognizes the critical role of principals and vice-principals in our schools. Government also recognizes that principals and vice-principals will only stay in these roles if their rights and benefits are protected. Solid public policy and best practice demand that all employers treat excluded employees (like principals and vice-principals) fairly. All employers including government want managerial employees to feel valued. Less favourable terms and conditions are not an option.

Details will be provided in March, before people have to make any decisions.

Q: What would be considered significant terms and conditions of employment?

A: Managerial positions are excluded from bargaining units throughout the public sector. In no case are terms and conditions less favourable with those employees. It will be no different with principals and vice-principals. We want principals and vice-principals to remain in these positions, as instructional leaders in our schools. We can only achieve this if we preserve all terms and conditions of employment that make a difference in people's professional and personal lives (salary, sick leave, PD, etc.).

Q: How will compensation be affected?

A: Until such time as principals and vice-principals have had an opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion, there is no plan to change how they are compensated. Any future changes that might occur would only be done to enhance compensation for this group of excluded employees. All large public sector employers have compensation plans that are fair and recognize the responsibilities and authorities of the employees in them. Principals and vice-principals would be no different.

Q: If I have accumulated sick days, will they be protected?

A: Yes.

Q: In the event that I need legal support, will I be required to find and pay for my own legal counsel?

A: The province provides legal support for its staff who are performing their duties in good faith. Principals and vice principals would be entitled to the support that the province provides to its existing non-union staff.

Q: Will there be a PD fund set up for administrators?

A: Yes.

Q: Will department heads, IB coordinators, O2 coordinators, and athletic directors be removed from NSTU?

A: These positions will continue to be members of the NSTU.

Q: Will consultants who are paid an admin allowance but do not have supervisory roles stay in the union?

A: Yes.

Q: What is the plan for people who have their recall status?

A: Teachers with recall status will continue to have that status within their region.

Teaching Principals, Vice-Principals

Q: How can a principal or vice-principal have teaching responsibilities when classroom teaching is a union job?

A: The Education Act defines what it means to be a teacher now. Principals and vice-principals meet that definition. They will continue to be educators, with the qualifications to be in the classroom. Principals and vice-principals who do not belong to the union in other provinces continue to be able to teach, and our plan will enable them to do so in Nova Scotia too.

Professional Association

Q: Why can principals and vice-principals choose to form a professional association but not form a Union?

A: Principals, vice-principals and other supervisory staff are educational leaders and will continue to be. As part of their roles, they have supervisory responsibilities for teaching and non-teaching employees, including performance evaluation as well as other confidential responsibilities. They are being removed from the union based on these responsibilities in the same way that supervisory staff are excluded from bargaining units under other legislative regimes. It is rare to find supervisory staff in a bargaining unit because of the inherent conflicts that arise.

Q: Can principals, vice-principals and supervisory staff form a union?

A: As employees with supervisory responsibilities, they, like those in other fields, would not be able to form a union. However, they would be able to form a professional association where issues of common concern would be discussed. Government will enable any such association to bring forward issues of importance to the members. Over time these discussions could result in terms and conditions such as compensation plans or other terms changing but only if they make sense to the employee group. Government has no intention of making unilateral changes that would result in less favourable pay and benefits.