

Date of Issue:	December 5, 2017	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 Executive Director, Provincial and Demonstration Schools Branch	
References:	Regulation 304, “School Year Calendar, Professional Activity Days”. This memorandum replaces Policy/Program Memorandum No. 151, December 9, 2011.	

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”.¹

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 boards² must designate three professional activity (PA) days and may designate up to four additional PA days per school year.³ Half a school day may be designated for an instructional program and the other half for professional activities.⁴

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 are aligned with the provincial education priorities. If the requirements should change as a result of such review, this memorandum will be updated.

CONTEXT

All school and school board staff have an important role to play in ensuring the success 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. At the core of *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario, 2014* is a commitment

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).

to high-quality, collaborative, and continuous learning for all learners – students, teachers, support staff, and school and board leaders.

The Ministry of Education recognizes that teachers play a significant role in improving student achievement. Teaching is a dynamic and collaborative learning profession that is constantly changing as teachers strive to engage and motivate students, and meet their diverse learning needs. 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 fundamentals of 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 continue to prepare their school year calendars in accordance with the requirements set out in Regulation 304. Boards are also required to submit their 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.⁵

When submitting school year calendars, boards are required to include a general outline of the activities to be conducted on 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 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.

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.”

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE THREE MANDATORY PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY DAYS

Professional activities for the three mandatory PA days must be focused on teachers' professional learning with respect to the following current provincial education priorities, which are outlined in *Achieving Excellence*:

- achieving excellence
- ensuring equity
- promoting well-being
- ensuring public confidence

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 numeracy.

PA Day 2

The topic (or topics) for the second mandatory PA day will vary, depending on the teachers' federation, as indicated below. The topics for each 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 for the 2018–19 school year.

- **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:
 - 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:**
 - 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: half a 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** of the four provincial education priorities: achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being, or ensuring public confidence.

In addition to focusing on the topics indicated above, professional activities for the three mandatory PA days must meet **one or more** of the following requirements. They must:

- align with board and school goals and plans created within the context of the current provincial education priorities;
- focus on ways to address systemic barriers and discriminatory practices, and place an emphasis on equity, inclusion, and human rights;
- be informed by school and school board data, and be 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 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; or
- support collaborative learning in which teachers can engage in inquiry and knowledge construction with education colleagues.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The professional activities on the three mandatory PA days are focused on professional learning for teachers. However, other educators who play a direct role in student learning – such as early childhood educators in full-day Kindergarten classrooms and educational assistants – could also benefit from participating in these professional learning opportunities. Depending on the local context, boards may decide to include other educators in professional activities on these three PA days.

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 and resources is essential to meeting the current provincial education priorities. Boards may include a review of ministry policy documents and resources in professional learning activities on the three mandatory PA days.