



Memorandum

The Alberta Teachers' Association

INFORMATION MEMO

Date 2025 02 21

To Members with School Leadership Designations of the Black Gold Teachers' Bargaining Unit

From Sean D Brown, Coordinator, Teacher Employment Services (TES)

Re Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Labour Dispute in the Black Gold School Division

You should have received the general memo from the Alberta Teachers' Association (Association) to your bargaining unit members today. The memo contained advice and guidance and identified some general risks for members, but as it grew in length, it became clear that separate communication for school leaders would be required.

School leaders play a crucial and unique role in school functioning, shouldering pressures that often differ from those their classroom colleagues face. One significant source of pressure stems from their closer relationship with the central office, which brings heightened expectations and a sense of accountability less directly experienced by their colleagues in the classroom.

The Association has heard from school leaders about concerns regarding their lack of time protection and workload. While central bargaining continues to address those very real and legitimate concerns, improvements have not been easily achieved.

The inability of the Black Gold School Division (Division) and CUPE Local 3484 (CUPE) to avoid labour action creates a challenging and complicated situation for school leaders. While school leaders understand and support their CUPE coworkers' demands for higher pay and overall increased education funding, the Association recognizes you are responsible for ensuring student safety and maintaining a productive learning environment. It is further complicated when the tasks traditionally completed by support staff are asked of teachers, who are already overburdened during a labour action, not to mention the additional pressure some school leaders may feel because they lack a continuing administrator designation.

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The following advice is meant to help guide you during the challenging days ahead and is in addition to what was generally provided to all bargaining unit members today.

- The Association understands that central office personnel have contacted school leaders to discuss contingency plans for the strike.
- While school leaders need to maintain positive learning environments during the CUPE strike, connecting with your teachers most impacted by the lack of support staff will be crucial.
- As mentioned in the other communication, expectations will need to shift for the duration of the CUPE strike. The ability to deliver the same high level of service may not be possible. While school leaders may wish to take on more, doing so is not generally your work or expected work and could increase the length of the job action. However, the Association acknowledges that this is easier said than done.
- School principals should obtain clear direction from the central office regarding the expectations during the strike. While “site-based decision making” places school leaders in a position of knowing their buildings the best, a common approach for all schools, wherever possible, should be followed for consistency's sake.
- Some situations, especially parental concerns, may require difficult conversations with your central office or catchment area superintendents. School leaders are encouraged to **call TES (1-800-232-7208) for assistance.**
- School leaders should follow the Division's directives where reasonably practicable, but there are limits on the educational services one can provide during CUPE's strike action.
- Seek clarification from your central office and be as transparent as possible about the challenges when speaking with parents, community members, and staff. Clearly communicate what services and support your school can provide, including any limitations caused by current circumstances. Transparency builds trust and fosters understanding.
- Some information the Division may put out could realistically direct questions to the school. This may make school leaders feel like they are on their own. You should connect with your central office contacts to ensure you have all the information necessary to address questions or concerns from parents and community members. You may also need to direct questions back to central office personnel. Understandably, these may be uncomfortable conversations, so should you require assistance with messaging, please call TES.
- Due to the CUPE strike, your teachers may have questions about leave entitlements, duty-free lunch provisions, assignable/instructional time, or other collective agreement provisions. While your agreement remains in force, school leaders are encouraged to call TES for advice if questions arise about its implementation and interpretation.
- Should additional time have no other option but to be added to a teacher, it is essential to note that assignable time limits are annual amounts. While there is some flexibility in assigning additional time to teachers if necessary, increasing a teacher's time can only be done to the limits of their FTE (proportional to a typical teacher's total assignable time) in the case of a part-time teacher or, if they are full-time, to a maximum of 916 hours of

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instructional time and a total of 1200 hours assignable time (inclusive of instructional time).

- Increases in assigned time because of the CUPE strike should be carefully tracked and factored into scheduled time to avoid exceeding the assignable time cap per the collective agreement. If adjustments are required, work with your teachers to address them, as no resolutions are available to exceed the maximums.
- Explain to teachers why the additional work is necessary and share any measures considered or attempted before assigning the task to them. This helps maintain trust and collaboration.
- If teachers have concerns or questions about the additional assignment, encourage them to follow this process:
 - Ask for clarification about why they are being assigned the work.
 - If directed, the teacher should follow the lawful order of the Division unless the task is deemed unsafe under Occupational Health and Safety guidelines or if they believe they have not been provided with the proper training and inservicing required to complete the task.
- Encourage teachers to document their concerns or objections in writing and submit them to you. This ensures their voices are heard while protecting them from potential employment ramifications.
- As was mentioned in the memo to classroom teachers, school leaders may choose to show solidarity by wearing purple, subject to division dress code policies.

Due to the complex nature of school leadership, providing general advice is difficult. Most situations require significant contextual considerations to offer helpful guidance. As such, school leaders are encouraged to call the Association.

The CUPE strike will undoubtedly affect your workload and well-being, creating additional pressure during what is already a difficult time in your complex schools. Please know that TES is here to support you as you navigate this uncertain period. Whether you need assistance or guidance, our team is ready to help.

School leaders are encouraged to contact TES for support to mitigate stress and provide stability during this time. We greatly appreciate your resilience and dedication and remain committed to supporting your well-being throughout this process.

School leaders with questions or concerns about their roles and responsibilities should contact TES at 1-800-232-7208.

SDB/dmc/ejl

cc K R St Andre, Local President, Black Gold Teachers' Local No 8
J C Schilling, President, The Alberta Teachers' Association
B J Baum, District Representative, Central
TES Staff Officers