Prince George Citizen: First off, I just wanted a quick comment from you on the teachers’ contract settlement offer.

Anita Richardson: We were very happy to hear that a tentative agreement was reached with our teachers. This is good news when we could really use some and we look forward to hearing the details.

PGC: After reading through the ministry’s plan for setting up online education there are many questions as to how that will be accomplished. Could you explain what advice the district and school board is giving to local teachers as to what online tools/programs they will have to familiarize themselves with to be able to conduct online classrooms? Will the tools/programs and teaching methods actually used to instruct students be left up to the discretion of each individual teacher?

AR: What platforms and strategies individual teachers will use will be largely dependent on the teacher and the context of their teaching load. The resources, tools and programs that a high school math or science teacher uses may look very different than those utilized by a Grade 1 teacher. This may also look different in different areas across our district. We are waiting to see the Ministry of Education’s Integrated Planning Framework before providing thorough guidance to our staff. Our Curriculum and Innovation, Inclusive Education and Indigenous Education Departments have been working hard over spring break to have excellent resources and supports ready for teachers returning to work next week. I am confident in the capacity of our teachers to employ a continuation of learning for our students that will help them successfully transition to next year.

PGC: Do you know when this is going to be unveiled to students and parents? The ministry expects mid-April; is that realistic? Obviously it won’t happen on Monday, which was to be the first day of classes after spring break. Do you have a date in mind to tell parents when on-line school begins?

AR: Teachers will be making initial contact with their students by the end of next week and will continue with regular contact after that. Much of the instruction early on will be focused on reconnection and relationship and trust building. Teachers and students will need time to navigate what their new connection will look and feel like. Teacher time that is not spent connecting with students will be used to develop their plans and strategies for teaching in our new, current reality. There is a lot of instruction around core competencies that will begin next week. Instruction around curricular competencies will likely take a little longer to come on
board. We certainly think our teachers are capable of meeting the Ministry’s target
expectations and of course we all know that our rapidly changing landscape has interfered with
many great plans so far. Our hope is that we are able to successfully flatten the curve without
further restrictions that may increasingly limit our ability to provide an education program and
supportive relationships for our students.

**PGC:** What can you tell parents about day care and/or meal programs that were happening at
the schools? The ministry has said that is the responsibility of each district. Will schools be used
to set up daycares for the families of health care workers/first responders and how will that be
accomplished? What will be new hours of operation for schools?

**AR:** We need to be careful about language and understanding in regards to services provided
for children of essential workers. Daycare providers in PG are still operating and operating well.
If essential workers require daycare, current operators will be working to accommodate those
needs. If, however, essential workers require in-person support for their children in Grades K – 5,
School District 57 and our counterparts across the province are ready and able to provide
that service. Essential workers requiring in-person service for their children in Grades K – 5
should complete the application form on our website. At this time, schools are not open to the
public and the daytime hours of operation for in-person services at schools will depend in large
part on the need in our community.

**PGC:** Any increased cleaning protocols in the schools?

**AR:** School District 57 has increased the frequency of cleaning in our schools and will be
ensuring that any schools offering in-person services for front-line workers will have daytime
custodians on site. With guidance from the Ministry, we are implementing school site safe work
procedures adjusted to address concerns associated with COVID-19.

**PGC:** Does the district expect parents who are home with their kids to take active roles in
replacing what has been lost by the kids not being in school?

**AR:** Parents and guardians have always played a key role as partners in their child’s education.
Education remains the primary responsibility of the teacher, however, additional support for
students at home at this time is welcomed. Like many adults, students may be struggling with
anxiety and questions they don’t understand or have the answers to. Parents will be key in
supporting the social-emotional needs of students in partnership with their teachers and
support staff. We continue to encourage our families to be curious about the world around
them and engage in learning as families through play, conversation, creativity and the great outdoors while keeping themselves and others in our community safe by following the recommendations of our Provincial Health Officer.

**PGC:** What can you tell parents of special needs students or students with disabilities?

**AR:** Teachers will be in touch very soon to start establishing what the educational programs will look like for all of our students with exceptional needs. We recognize that many children have unique circumstances and we want to create a learning plan that will best work for them during this challenging time. Teachers and support staff will work closely with the students and/or parents to meet the exceptional needs students may have.

**PGC:** How will technological challenges (no home computer, lack of WiFi) be addressed?

**AR:** We are currently surveying our parents and guardians to determine what the technological challenges may be. Once we have more information about where and what the challenges are, we will be better able to determine our response. It may be that technology reduced or tech-free options for learning are required in some instances or that support will be required to facilitate the learning via technology in others.

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