

The Ins and Outs of Discretionary Leaves

We continue to receive many questions regarding discretionary leave. *When can you take it? Why are requests denied? What is the process?*

We can identify from school years past when we suffer the most from a lack of supply and casual availability. We know that days surrounding holiday weekends, breaks, and the months of February through April are our peak periods of both high absenteeism/meeting pull and low supply availability. Therefore, during these times we will be *very* limited in the number of leaves we can approve. For the other times during the year, we will continue to adhere to the daily limits we have set in each of the education centres. *Every request is looked at individually.* In order to establish if we have the capacity to approve, we must:

1. Consult the District Calendar of events – Are there meetings of PD being held on the day of request? How many teachers are attending the meeting? Which centre?
2. How many requests have already been received for said day?
3. Does it fall on a day with typical high absenteeism (*i.e.* Monday and Friday, surrounding a holiday, February through April, *etc.*)?

A common statement made when a request has been denied is “I have a supply/casual already lined up to take the job.” This may be the case, however, by taking that particular supply/casual out of the pool, we are taking that individual away from the unexpected absence that they could have covered in the school nearby or within the Centre. We anticipate about 35% of our daily absences are unplanned (sick, bereavement, emergency, compassionate, *etc.*) so we must leave as many supply/casuals in the pool to cover those absences or we will face unfilled positions.

Requests for “leave without pay” have grown astronomically over the last few years. The District can appreciate that unforeseen circumstances may lead to the request for a “leave without pay,” however approval is completely dependent on the number of supply/casuals we have available. With regards to “Family Responsibility Leave” for B contract teachers – we know these days are often saved for special events and we do our best to try to accommodate these requests.

Our goal is to have all of the daily absences covered, for teachers, EAs, administrative assistants, bus drivers and custodians. This is best achieved by balancing the leave requests with our available substitutes/casuals, continuously updating the supply/casual list for all employee groups, and actively recruiting to continue to add to our supply/casual lists.