

**The following message is sent on behalf of Paul Wozney, NSTU
President**

Dear colleagues,

Yesterday the province announced that BEd students (preservice teachers) who are in their final practicum placement will be offered early certification to try and help reduce the number of unfilled teacher absences exacerbated during the omicron wave of Covid-19. It will be the preservice teacher's choice whether they substitute or not. Should a preservice teacher decide to engage in substitute teaching during their practicum placement, discussions with their associate teacher, practicum supervisor and school administration are encouraged to ensure the substitute teaching does not cause significant disruption for the associate teacher and the students in the classroom.

The NSTU and EECD mutually agreed to this temporary initiative as it required a change to the requirements for certification. While we understand the important role preservice teachers play in many classrooms, and the strong sense of mentorship that associate teachers have towards preservice teachers, this will help ease some of the burden and negative impacts that the higher volume of unfilled teacher absences has created. This could also potentially provide BEd students with a more diverse and intense experience which could prove beneficial as they prepare for a career in teaching.

While this action will help reduce the shortage in some areas, it won't eliminate the problem. The NSTU continues to advocate for more systemic measures to help recruit and retain more qualified teachers across Nova Scotia. It's also imperative that teachers receive the appropriate level of prep time as required under the collective agreement, to ensure that students receive the best learning experiences possible. As such, the current situation remains unsustainable.

If you have any concerns or question on this matter, please contact your executive staff officer.

In solidarity,

Paul