

Director's Message Continued

January 2021

Throughout the uncertainties of the pandemic and school closings, re-openings, and schedule adjustments, a "new normal" has emerged in that many flexible scheduling options have become more mainstream. Working diligently over the summer and into the new 2020-2021 school year, division leadership shifted toward exploring various strategies of online, virtual, and remote classes--including virtual check-ins, virtual "office hours" for extra time or extra help, and self-guided learning not only for the targeted few, but for the larger majority of students at ALL grade levels. The pandemic has placed an unprecedented level of financial, educational, and personal burden upon our families and students. In recognizing the circumstances of our families and local communities, school divisions have been challenged to consider giving students more power over their time to accomplish the demands of home and school. The Office of School Quality (OSQ) invites all educators within the Commonwealth to continue to embrace this change, step out of comfort zones, and to accept the "new normal" in support of students' needs.

State Superintendent James Lane consistently refers to flexible scheduling as one of the tenets of continuous school improvement. Providing students with as much flexibility as possible, while maintaining accountability, will be just as important in the future as it has been since the start of the pandemic. The pandemic has effectively magnified the need for greater innovation and flexibility in schools. Our hope is that the desire and capacity to explore new ways of learning will carry over into more permanent reforms once schools emerge from these extraordinary circumstances.