



Q & A
GORDON THOMAS
Executive Secretary

Q: What is the role of a school principal in administering the collective agreement?

A: None.

Principals must be aware that in most cases they are not in a position to determine the terms and conditions of a collective agreement. Principals are members of the bargaining unit—they are not an employer who is a signatory to the collective agreement. It has been confirmed through arbitration that superintendents cannot delegate discretionary power to administer the collective agreement to members of the bargaining unit.

There are certain areas of the collective agreement where this is clear. For example, a teacher with a question about pay should be referred to central office and the Association for advice and correction, if applicable.

There are areas of collective agreements that are not so easily delineated. Often there is uncertainty in school systems about the role that principals play with respect to leaves of absence. The Association advises that, while administrators must ensure that proper supports are in place for classrooms when teachers are absent, in most collective agreements administrators have no role in authorizing the leave or questioning the legitimacy of the reasons for the leave. In those few collective agreements where the principal has that authority, the principal should make decisions based on the school's ability to continue to function and not on his or her opinion of the validity of the request. The reason the Association prefers that such decisions be made by the superintendent's office is to ensure an even-handed treatment of leave requests across the system.