

# COVID-19 FAQ #17 Responding to COVID-19

October 27, 2020

In Update #17 on COVID-19 related issues, you will find information related to: COVID-19 exposure; hand sanitizers; new math curriculum; Kindergarten; assessment and reporting; and parent/caregiver interviews.

**Need a refresher on ETFO's most recent COVID-19 update?**

[View a version of FAQ update #16](#)

Stay informed about your health and safety at work at [etfohealthandsafety.ca](https://etfohealthandsafety.ca).

## Frequently Asked Questions

**The COVID-19 screener that my school board has directed me to use indicates I should not report to work. What type of leave should I be taking?**

If you have been directed to remain at home due to COVID-19, a number of provisions in the local collective agreement may apply, depending on the member's individual situation and whether the member is in a permanent, long-term occasional or daily occasional assignment. The absence could be covered under WSIB, quarantine/orders language, sick leave entitlements or one that could be covered by the school board without deduction from sick leave. There may be other types of absences that could apply depending on the specific entitlements in the local collective agreement.

If a member is not receiving paid leave from the employer for the absence, the member may be entitled to income support through sickness benefits administered by the federal government, subject to meeting eligibility requirements.

A member who is directed to be absent from work after they have used a board-recommended COVID-19 screener should contact their ETFO local office as soon as possible to confirm the absence is being properly coded and administered by the school board.

**We've had a COVID-19 positive case in one of our primary classes. All students in the class were told to self-isolate at home but the classroom teacher was not, and continues to work at school. I am concerned that this teacher has also been exposed to the virus and may be putting me at risk. What can I do?**

As with any health and safety concern, members need to report the issue to the principal. The principal and school board take direction from the local public health unit that determines, based on contact information provided to them by the school, who is at high risk of exposure and should self-isolate at home. While each instance should be considered on a case-by-case basis, some local public health units are deeming educators to be at low risk of exposure because they are wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) i.e. a medical mask and face shield. Public health may also be making the presumption that educators are maintaining two-meter physical distancing at all times from students in the classroom.

Educators may not always be able to maintain physical distancing of two meters and may at times be in close contact with students for 15 minutes or more. Given these factors, educators in a classroom with a confirmed case of COVID-19 should stay at home and self-isolate in order to prevent spread of the virus. The school board must take every reasonable precaution to protect workers even if public health is not requiring them to do so.

If the principal says there is nothing they can do, members should contact their ETFO local office and/or Joint Health and Safety Committee worker health and safety representative for support.

### **How can I find out if the hand sanitizer being used in my school has been recalled?**

Health Canada has recalled certain hand sanitizers because they either contain ingredients that are not permitted by Health Canada or they are not properly labelled and are missing important information such as risk statements. For a list, see [Health Canada: Recall of Certain Hand Sanitizers](#). Authorized hand sanitizers can be viewed at [Health Canada: Authorized Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\)](#).

Health Canada is making it possible for certain hand sanitizer products to be sold that may not fully meet regulatory requirements, but they do not compromise the safety of Canadians. They can be viewed at [Health Canada: Accepted Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\)](#).

### **Is it safe to use hand sanitizer with technical-grade ethanol as opposed to pharmaceutical-grade ethanol?**

Due to high demand and difficulty in sourcing pharmaceutical-grade ethanol (the key ingredient in hand sanitizer), Health Canada has authorized temporary use of technical-grade ethanol in alcohol-based hand sanitizers following a health [risk assessment](#).

Technical-grade ethanol does not meet the same purity standards of pharmaceutical and food-grade ethanol with one of the primary impurities being acetaldehyde, which is potentially carcinogenic. For that reason, manufacturers of hand sanitizer with technical-grade ethanol must include the following risk statements on their product labels:

- Under Medicinal Ingredients: "Ethanol XX% (technical-grade)";
- Under Directions: "Adults only";
- Under Warnings: "Do not use on broken or damaged skin", "Not recommended if you are pregnant or breastfeeding" and "Do not inhale";
- Include a statement for consumers: "Report any incident to [Health Canada](#)"; and
- Under Questions: "Call 1-866-234-2345 to report any adverse reaction".

The task force that prepared the risk assessment “determined that the public health benefits of using this hand sanitizer to limit the spread of COVID-19 outweighs the risk when it is used as directed and for a limited period.”

**In my remote learning assignment, parents/caregivers are joining in with their child during synchronous learning time. Some are attempting to participate in class discussions and prompting the child to respond by whispering answers to them. How do I manage this?**

Many school boards have set out expectations for students enrolled in remote learning that, in some cases, would have been agreed to by parents/caregivers when they completed the board's request to opt into this learning environment. A member should contact their local if they are unable to obtain a copy of any user agreement/expectations for students created by the board. Concerns should be brought to the attention of the principal.

Members who have concerns about parents/caregivers recording their synchronous learning sessions or taking photos or screenshots of them while they are working should also seek their administrator's support in order to respond to the situation. Members should contact their local office to advise them of these situations so that local leaders can continue to discuss concerns with the appropriate school board staff.

**I am new to teaching mathematics. Where do I get a copy of the revised 2020 mathematics curriculum?**

The 2020 revised mathematics curriculum is only available online in digital format and can be found [here](#). It is suggested that members watch the videos associated with the curriculum and familiarize themselves with any ideas or concepts that are new to them. Review the glossary and the tasks (soon to be released) for additional support. The overview can be found [here](#).

The Ministry released Long-Range Plans. PDF versions and modifiable word document versions are available in the “Supports for Virtual Learning” eCommunity in the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). To access the Long-Range Plans, follow these steps:

1. Log into to your board-specific access to the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
2. Visit this [link](#) in the same browser.

Members can also access the Long-Range Plans by logging into their board-specific login for the VLE and navigating as follows: My Courses in Other Boards > Supports for Virtual Learning > Resources > Navigate to Elementary Math 2020 > Long-Range Plan.

Here are additional resources on the Curriculum and Resources website:

- [New Elementary Math Curriculum](#)
- [High-Impact Instructional Practices in Math](#)
- [Learning Areas Video](#)
- [Teaching Supports Video](#)

If unsure of how to access the board's VLE, please visit this [link](#) and also ask your administrator for further information.

### **I teach Kindergarten. What are the expectations for me to write the Kindergarten Communication of Learning: Initial Observations for the students in my class?**

Kindergarten teachers should rely on their professional judgement when determining the comments to be written for the [Initial Observations](#).

Comments should follow the format of Key Learning/Growth in Learning/Next Steps in Learning *based on initial observations*. This would mean a minimum of three sentences would be required. Kindergarten teachers may choose the most significant area of learning to focus on based on their initial observations. They are not required to completely fill the comment box. The Ministry released a fall memo that states, "teachers *may* also describe the child's transition to the new school year, including new health and safety measures." ETFO has prepared [Professional Judgement Guidelines](#) for completing the report.

Kindergarten teachers should not be reporting on the components of the program that were delivered during prep time, nor be asked to input comments provided to them.

### **My time since September has been spent helping Kindergarten students feel welcome and establishing health and safety routines. I don't have much information to share with parents/caregivers on the Initial Observations. What do I do?**

The Initial Observations report is meant to provide parents/caregivers with an *overview* of initial observations of the child's learning and *early evidence* of growth in learning related to overall expectations of the Kindergarten Program, with appropriate next steps to further the child's learning. (Kindergarten Addendum, pg. 12)

Members will have observed their students during the last several weeks, considered how to meet their learning needs and planned for them. Think about what is known about the student, strengths they have demonstrated and any interests or preferences they have exhibited. Share how they have demonstrated their learning and consider

what next steps they could take. Members can also reflect on how the student interacts with their peers, materials in the classroom, the learning environment and with the Kindergarten team, and may include how the child is responding to enhanced health and safety measures and routines in the class.

**Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the continual reorganization of classes, I have not been able to teach and assess as I used to. How can I complete report cards when I don't have a lot of evidence to report on?**

The start of this school year has not been business as usual. Teachers will use their [professional judgement](#) and the limited data they have to share progress with parents/caregivers at this time. Ongoing communication with families (i.e. sharing of student work, conversations, feedback, etc.) is an appropriate way to share progress or concerns throughout the term.

**Our principal has told us that we have to meet with parents and caregivers for an interview in the school. What should I do?**

When conducting interviews, school boards should fulfill both collective agreement obligations as well as public health guidelines. ETFO advises members to conduct interviews remotely by video or telephone at this time. If members are asked to conduct face-to-face interviews, they should contact their local or ETFO Professional Relations Services staff.

ETFO, school boards, the Ontario College of Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators have all provided advice about maintaining professionalism and boundaries when interacting with parents, caregivers and students in a virtual platform. Please refer to ETFO's [PRS Matters Bulletin 108](#). Interviews should also follow collective agreement obligations.

Be cognizant that some parents and caregivers may require language support and translation in communication and interview processes, a provision that should be considered with the school board.

**Between planning, teaching and knowing report cards are coming, I am lacking sleep and feeling anxious about going to school. Where can I get help?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a great deal of uncertainty and anxiety for many. If members are feeling anxious, not sleeping, not eating, feeling overwhelmed or experiencing other symptoms that may be affecting their teaching or home life, they should contact their healthcare professionals and share how they are feeling. Reach out to the ETFO local office or provincial office to ask what mental health resources are available. It is extremely important to take care of individual physical and mental health.

Additional resources include:



[List of Mental Health Supports for Educators](#)

[PRS Matters Bulletin 108, including Wellness During Covid-19](#)

**For other information, please check ETFO's dedicated webpage at [etfo.ca/link/covid19](https://etfo.ca/link/covid19).**