

COVID-19 FAQ #29 Responding to COVID-19

We anticipate that this will be the last COVID-19 FAQ of the 2020-2021 school year. In FAQ #29, you will find information on: vaccinations; health and safety; mental health; reporting; individual education plans; and pandemic impacts on the South Asian community.

Here's a link to [COVID-19 FAQ #28](#), if you need a refresher on our last update.

Stay informed about your health and safety at work at etfohealthandsafety.ca.

Frequently Asked Questions

Should I be encouraging students to be vaccinated?

Members should not engage in discussions or advise students and/or their families on their personal/family choices related to vaccinations. This falls outside the realm of your required duties.

What can I do to prepare for a safe start to the next school year?

As the school year winds up, there are opportunities to take action to ensure staff and students are safe in schools in September. In your school or school board, this may already have been discussed by the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC). Your administrator or Health and Safety representative should be able to tell you:

- the plans for summer workplace inspections;
- any ventilation assessments done or work planned to improve ventilation over the summer;
- the time that has been set aside before students are back in schools to train staff on up-to-date safety protocols; and
- if worker input (through the JHSC) is being given into reopening in September.

Since many repairs and upgrades occur over the summer, it is important that you remind school administration of any concerns in your space so they are not missed. If the JHSC has not yet had their June meeting, asking these questions will help prompt important conversations.

In addition, the Provincial Working Group on Health and Safety is scheduled to meet over the summer months to discuss safety issues related to September reopening.

My mental health was negatively impacted this year. How can I have a fresh start next year and protect my mental health?

A [study](#) of ETFO educators released last month showed that the rates of burnout, anxiety and depression among ETFO members has been high this year. Those symptoms were strongly aligned with concerns about infection control in the workplace. Many educators also relayed concerns about the sudden shifts and new modes of teaching, and isolation when not teaching in person.

More than ever before, it's important to put your well-being at the top of your summer to-do list. Relaxing may be a part of that, but you can also be proactive about regaining your health:

- Re-establish healthy habits like eating well, engaging in physical activity and getting enough sleep.
- Avoid trying to keep up with the latest news cycle and wait to prepare for the fall when announcements have been made about school expectations for 2021-2022.
- Access some of the [tools](#) available to help you recover from the constant state of stress you've experienced this year.
- Be aware that you may need some support in this process. If you are struggling, speak to your healthcare provider or a mental health professional.

How do I complete the Term 2 Provincial Report Card/Kindergarten Communication of Learning when I have limited data collected due to the recent Stay-at-Home order?

Since part of the Term 2 reporting period occurred during another lengthy Stay-at-Home order, ongoing challenges regarding the completion of report cards continue. It is reasonable to expect that teachers will be working with less evidence for evaluation for some subjects/strands/frames, and that they will use their professional judgement to determine grades/ratings and to write comments that best describe student achievement for Term 2 reporting.

As always, teachers should keep up-to-date assessment records to provide rationale for the decisions they make.

Has the Ministry issued any new information on Term 2 reporting?

ETFO and all affiliates have asked that the Ministry to release information to school boards on the 2021 Term 2, K-8 reporting process. On May 31, 2021, the Ministry shared information with school boards indicating that its January 25, 2021, memo entitled "Further Guidance on Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting for the 2020-21 School Year" included reporting guidelines for the entire 2020-2021 school year.

School boards should be following the reporting guidelines outlined in the January 25 Ministry memo, and should continue to approach the reporting process with flexibility and understanding. The following reporting considerations were provided by the Ministry:

- the need for boards to demonstrate flexibility and understanding given the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning;
- inclusion of an *optional* statement for boards to use on all report cards and Communication of Learning to highlight that COVID-19 has had an impact on learning to date;
- that teachers will use their professional judgement to determine how best to communicate progress and achievement that is appropriate and in the best interests of students; and
- that teachers will use their professional judgement to determine when the use of “I” is appropriate and in the best interests of students.

Going back and forth between online and in-person learning has made it difficult to accurately assess the social emotional learning (SEL) strand in Mathematics. Do I have to evaluate strand A1 (SEL) in Mathematics for Term 2 reporting?

Members should check the guidelines provided by their school board.

ETFO strongly supports the position shared by the Ministry in December 2020. In a communication to school boards entitled “New Elementary Report Cards and Update on the Evaluation of Social-Emotional Learning,” the Ministry advised that school boards may choose to “pause” the evaluation and reporting of this strand for the 2020-2021 school year as further professional learning is required on anti-racist, anti-discriminatory, and culturally responsive and relevant approaches to instruction, assessment and evaluation. The Ministry indicated that school boards may use the following comment on the report card: *“Students’ social-emotional learning skills have not been evaluated.”*

How do I record FSL hours of instruction for Term 2 reporting?

In communication sent to school boards on May 31, 2021, the Ministry indicated that “schools should follow their usual process and record the number of hours that had been originally planned for the 2020-2021 school year on Appendix F of the Ontario Student Record.”

An asterisk should be placed beside the 2020-2021 school year, and this comment should be noted on the report card: *“The offering of 2020-2021 French as Second-Language Programs occurred in a modified learning environment as required by provincial public health guidelines. The student is recognized as having met the expectations set for instructional hours.”*

Do I need to update Individual Education Plans (IEP)?

IEPs are working documents. For students being presented at Identification, Placement and Review Committees (IPRCs), and for students who are transitioning from Grade 8 to Grade 9, the IEP will likely need to be updated as per the past practice.

When reviewing an IEP for reporting purposes, current content from the most recent IEP should be retained along with the addition of specifics for virtual learning. For example, the communication log can be updated to reflect contact with the family during virtual learning, as well as specifics of how accommodations/modifications and strategies are being implemented.

For the academic period from the start of the most recent Stay-at-Home Order on April 8, 2021, to present, consider including the following statement: *“During the period of school closure, programming focused on [insert overall expectation or goal or strategy provided],”* if your school board has not provided you with a preferred statement.

If an IEP does not require updating, teachers can reiterate the expectation(s) from the most recent IEP with the suggested statement: *“During the period of school closure, programming focused on [insert previous expectations that apply].”*

How have South Asian communities been impacted by the pandemic?

The ongoing humanitarian crisis in India, and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on South Asian communities here in Ontario, continues. There are growing concerns from members of the South Asian community who report hate and stigmatization, which is largely due to media and news outlets reporting the variant as the “Indian variant.” The World Health Organization strongly advises against naming a virus after a geographic location because it leads to xenophobia and harassment. Recently, scientists have begun to refer to the variant found in India as “Delta.”

Many communities have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ontario Human Rights Commission, the labour movement and community activists have been speaking out on these issues since January 2020, when East Asian communities around the world faced racism, hate and discrimination. Indigenous and Black communities have also experienced denial of services, online racist comments and other forms of discriminatory treatment related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Along with Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities, the South Asian community has experienced unequal access to health services in hot spot areas; over-representation in precarious and front-line jobs; and negative impacts from working in the health service, manufacturing and transportation sectors, which all have a higher risk of infection. Agencies and organizations serving South Asian people also expect that many South Asian people who have lost their jobs because of the pandemic will likely remain unemployed after the pandemic.

June 8, 2021

Members of the South Asian community have been supporting the community in various ways. One example of this, is in London, Ontario, where Bhavin Patel, restaurant owner, prepares 350 meals a day to be delivered to those in need.

The South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario has many resources and information to support the community on its website at salc.on.ca.

For other information, please check [ETFO's dedicated COVID-19 webpage](#).