
AM ETFO INFO

Return to In-person Learning Special Edition: January 11, 2022

As you are aware the Ford government announced last night that all staff and students will be returning to in-person learning on Monday, January 17, 2022. Last week, AMETFO posed the following questions to the Board, regarding the return to in-person learning for students with special needs. Please find the questions along with the Board's answers below:

1. Will RAT's be provided to staff and students who are returning to in-person learning on Monday, January 10?;

Yes, we are offering RATs to staff working in-person, face-to face with students today and students attending in-person on Monday, January 10. Testing is optional.

2. If students/parents refuse to complete RAT's, what next step will the Board pursue?;

We hope that students that are able will utilize the rapid tests but we cannot mandate that they do. For some students, the testing is invasive and not possible. Messaging will be prepared to encourage families to use them.

3. a) If students refuse to wear masks, what next step will the Board pursue?;

Students who are able to, are required to wear masks. If they refuse, administrators will follow-up with their parent/guardian.

There may be some students who have an approved mask exemption. It is recommended that staff maintain 2m distance as much as possible and always wear their PPE (masks AND eye protection) at all times when working with these students. This recommendation has not changed.

b) If students who do not have a mask exemption refuse to wear a mask, what steps will the board pursue?

School administration will work directly with parents/guardians of students who refuse to wear a mask. Appropriate disciplinary steps, taking mitigating circumstances into account, will be taken if required.

4. If transportation is canceled during the period of Special Education in-person learning, we trust that the Board will not expect the members who have been directed to work onsite to pivot to online learning, since the students impacted "would require significant support to engage in remote learning due to complex learning/physical needs"?;

That is correct, these students cannot be accommodated online so moving to online learning when transportation is cancelled will not occur.

5. What will the process be to ensure that there are no unfilled jobs due to staff absence? How will member safety be guaranteed if there are unfilled jobs?;

We will follow our normal process of filling jobs in the schools. Given the majority of teaching staff are working online/remotely, we should have enough supply teachers available to cover absences. In addition, teaching staff will not be in the school alone. Principals, EAs and CYWs are also reporting to the school building to help support students attending school in person.*

*** Note: This was the Board's answer prior to the announcement that all staff and students will be returning on January 17. AMETFO will be asking this question again in light of yesterday's announcement.**

6. When will N95 masks be available and how will the process for requesting one be shared with members?;

Shipments started arriving on Thursday, (*January 6, 2022*) and we expect all to be available by Monday, January 10, 2022. Principals will advise staff when they are available.

At this time there is one universal size.

Staff who are interested in this option should speak to their principal/supervisor.

7. If a student tests positive for Covid or displays symptoms of Covid while at school, what specific steps are in place to address this situation?;

The process will remain the same - if a student exhibits symptoms, they will go to the "Health Waiting Room" (with administrators and/or staff assistance where needed), the parent/guardian will be called to pick them up and they will be asked to complete the screening to help determine next steps.

8. If a student has had to self isolate due to a positive case of Covid, what specific steps will the Board follow to ensure the student's safe return to the school?

Staff (or administrators) are not expected to 'police' students or keep track of isolation requirements for individuals. Front office staff are aware of the resources available to Ontarians and will provide those to families (e.g. ontario.ca/exposed and the [Ontario School Screening Tool](#))

9. If students display aggressive behaviours which could endanger the health of members and the integrity of their PPE, what specific steps will the Board follow to ensure member safety?

Our usual processes are in place for violent incidents, as per AP404. Principals are to ensure student support plans and/or safety plans are current and provided to staff. Staff are expected to review and follow the support/safety plan, and report hazards/incidents to the Principal as per AP175.

Given the full return scheduled for Monday, January 17 we are in the process of generating a new set of questions which we will pose to the Board. We will share these questions and answers as soon as we can.

As always, please reach out with any questions and/or concerns that you have.

In solidarity, Darrell Uhler, Laura Inglis-Eickmeier, and Kent Cleland