

Important ETFO Update #3: Responding to COVID-19

March 31, 2020

In this update #3 on COVID-19 related issues, you will find information related to social media posts, posting student photos on social media, strategies for students who do not have access to the internet or a laptop, missed instructional time and report cards, along with advice on continuous learning, using personal devices, and student evaluation.

Stay informed at etfo.ca/link/covid19

The information in this newsletter is up to date to the best of our ability and current as of 4:00 p.m. on March 31, 2020. With the situation rapidly changing, ETFO will continue to provide weekly updates on our response to COVID-19.

Keep reading, stay safe, and please wash your hands!

Frequently Asked Questions

What should I be posting on social media during the school closure?

Members are asked to be sensitive about sharing too much personal information and stories of daily routines on social media during the school closure. There are many reasons for this.

With many people losing jobs or having their work hours drastically reduced, this is a difficult time for everyone. ETFO recommends that members limit social media posts to activities that take place outside of work hours. Once the Ministry of Education and school boards give direction, social media may become a useful tool to assist students and parents with activities for on-going learning.

Can I drop off learning packages to students this week who do not have access to the internet or a laptop?

No, the Ministry and school boards are developing plans for student learning. At this time, public health authorities continue to stress the importance of staying home unless dealing with essential needs. Each contact represents a possible link in the spread of COVID-19 through our communities.

I want to have an e-class with my students and post pictures to Twitter afterwards. Am I able to do this?

As virtual platforms for teaching and learning are contemplated for our workplace during the current pandemic, members must be mindful of student privacy at all times. The *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)* applies with respect to the personal information of students, teachers and others. The definition of “personal information” in *MFIPPA* is very broad.

Members should not capture images of students and post them to e-platforms. It is critical that members respect student privacy at all times. Under *MFIPPA*, anyone who “willfully” discloses personal information in contravention of the statute is guilty of an offence and may have to pay a fine of up to \$5,000. These provisions apply not just to school boards but also to educational staff. This means that educational staff must be diligent in working to understand what *MFIPPA* requires of them as they carry out their professional duties. Personal information regarding students, teachers and others is largely private. Educational staff are subject to an array of obligations concerning the collection, use, storage, disclosure and disposal of private and personal information.

In addition to raising a number of privacy concerns, recording a virtual classroom and capturing images or other information, even inadvertently, could be considered professional misconduct by both the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) and the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE). Both Regulation 437/97 of the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* and Regulation 233/08 of the *Early Childhood Educators Act* define professional misconduct in a manner that could include conduct related to videotaping in the classroom. The definition under both regulations includes unauthorized disclosure of personal information, disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional acts or omissions, or conduct unbecoming a member, any of which could be triggered as a result of videotaping.

Take the time to read ETFO’s PRS Matters Bulletin on this topic. Please visit the following link for the PRS Matters Bulletin

<http://www.etfo.ca/SupportingMembers/Employees/PRSMattersBulletin/Pages/Videotaping%20in%20the%20Classroom.aspx>

We have missed a lot of instructional time this year for various reasons. Will I be required to cover all of my curriculum expectations and/or make up lost time and work? What are we going to do about report cards and reporting for the third term?

In this unique circumstance, the entire province and education system are in the same situation with respect to both issues. It is anticipated that direction will come shortly from the Ministry and from school boards. It would be highly unlikely that all curriculum expectations would need to be covered. The Ministry will provide guidance to teachers with respect to assessment and evaluation during the closure period.

Did we not just fight against the government to prevent e-learning? Why would we allow that now?

E-learning was not an issue at the ETFO central table during the most recent round of central bargaining. The issue of e-learning was focused on during secondary negotiations. The Ministry's plan for continuous student learning is being referred to as 'distance learning' as opposed to e-learning. The plan is a temporary measure being implemented during a very serious global health crisis.

School boards and the Ministry of Education recognize the importance of the elementary classroom experience that includes elementary educators. ETFO has been assured that there is no intent to make this a permanent learning model.

With continuous learning going forward, what happens if I get sick, and I am unable to prepare the required work for my students?

If a member becomes ill, they should alert the employer and an occasional teacher will be assigned. Additionally, when preparing lessons, there are other teachers on staff who are not classroom-based teachers but who know and work with your students (e.g., physical education teacher, teacher librarian, prep teacher and core French teachers.) They can be asked to assist you in preparing for your students.

Must I use my personal device for my work in continuous learning?

It is inadvisable for members to use their own personal devices for this work. The work should be done with school equipment. If members do not have the tools that they require, they should get in touch with their principal.

Will I be required to evaluate the work that my students are completing during the closure?

Members are required to provide feedback to their students to support their continuous and ongoing learning. They are not required to evaluate or grade the work; however, members will be writing final report cards and will need to access their assessment and evaluation information and records (e.g., marks book) prepared before March Break.

I am a resource teacher. How will I support continuous learning for students?

Resource teachers will continue to provide support to their colleagues and their students. They will assist teachers in preparing work for students for the recommended hours and collaborate with teachers and with individual students (asynchronously) who may require one-on-one support in technology assistance, special education, individual tasks, etc.

Online Resources

COVID-19 Self-assessment Tools

Use this Ministry of Health's self-assessment tool to determine what steps you should take should you exhibit symptoms. Visit covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/#q0

Find out how to protect yourself, what to do if you're sick and how to recognize possible symptoms. Updated twice daily, in 30 languages. Visit Ontario.ca/coronavirus

Employment Insurance Benefits

For information on the Employment Insurance benefit, eligibility and relationship to EI please read [the federal government's news release](#).

For regular ETFO updates, please check etfo.ca/link/covid19