

Important ETFO Update #8: Responding to COVID-19

May 28, 2020

In Update #8 on COVID-19 related issues, you will find information related to: Term 2 Reporting and ETFO's position; retrieval of materials from schools; questions regarding reporting; and updating Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

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

Stay informed at etfo.ca/link/covid19

ETFO Position on Term 2 Reporting

The Ministry of Education has finally released key considerations for Term 2 Report Card/Kindergarten Communication of Learning. It is meant to provide some flexibility, adapt to the current school closures and provide greater consistency for all school boards.

ETFO expects that all school boards will provide consistent guidance that aligns with the Ministry's advice. The key considerations are set out below:

- Boards with a report card writing PA day should provide sufficient time for report card writing to fulfill their collective agreement obligations;
- A statement is to be added in all report cards to highlight that the term included the provincially-mandated school closure from March 13 to June 30, 2020;
- Grades/learning skills and work habit ratings/comments will be based on observations and evidence collected from the beginning of Term 2 to March 13;
- Marks/ratings/observations cannot go down after March 13. Teachers can use their professional judgement to decide whether to include evidence of learning during the school closure if it benefits individual students;

- When there is insufficient evidence of learning in a particular subject or strand (including math strands), teachers will use their professional judgement to determine if the code “1” is appropriate and a generic comment is provided that can be used (Grades 1-8);
- Teachers will use their professional judgement to make decisions regarding whether to include comments on growth in learning demonstrated during the school closure when it benefits the child; and
- Generic comments are provided by the Ministry that teachers may use to indicate that grades/comments/ratings include or do not include evidence or observations during the school closure.

ETFO members will not be required to enter marks or comments from Term 1 on the Term 2 Provincial Report Card/Kindergarten Communication of Learning.

ETFO members fulfilled the requirements for Term 1 as outlined in the work-to-rule strike action by submitting the marks/ratings/comments to their principals. ETFO members **cannot** be asked to enter these for Term 1 on the Term 2 Report Card/Kindergarten Communication of Learning because it was struck work.

ETFO local leaders will work with senior administration in school boards as plans are finalized for the completion of Term 2 Provincial Report Cards given that there are many pieces to reporting that are unique to locals.

ETFO’s Position on Assessment

Since the closure of schools, ETFO has been working with the Ministry in formal working groups with other affiliates to support educators.

ETFO was clear in discussions with the Ministry, and continues to state, that the distance teaching and learning that is taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic and closure of schools is not ‘business as usual’. There is no precedent for what educators and students are experiencing during this time.

- Established practices for evaluation of student work and the determination of student grades, ratings and comments cannot be relied upon completely in this situation. Flexibility and the use of professional judgement are needed given: the significantly shortened length of Term 2; some strands not being taught (e.g., in Math); the number of students who may not have submitted work during the school closure time; less time for observing students; and the possibility that



students may not have independently completed assigned work during school closures.

- It is acceptable, in this unique circumstance, for marks, ratings and comments to be based on a much smaller body of evidence than at other, non-pandemic, reporting times. Teachers should, however, be sure to have assessment data that substantiates the grades, ratings and comments, recognizing that it will be less data than in other reporting periods.
- The shortened formal assessment period will dictate that some strands and possibly subjects may not have been covered and the use of “I” would be appropriate in these circumstances. It would not be appropriate for an entire report card to be full of “I”s as there is an understanding that grades, ratings and comments reflect a limited amount of data.

The use of professional judgement is embedded throughout the Ministry assessment document.

Members are encouraged to use their professional judgement for:

- determining grades/ratings;
- the inclusion of assessment information gathered during school closure when it is in the best interest of individual student;
- the limited use of “I” when insufficient evidence is available or a subject/strand was not addressed and the generic statement provided;
- the depth and breadth of comments included in Kindergarten on learning and growth;
- the depth and breadth of comments in Grades 1 to 8 (e.g., what students have learned and where possible, describe significant strengths and identify next steps); and
- the use of the generic comments provided by the Ministry for various situations including to indicate that a student engaged/did not engage during the school closure.

Please contact your local if you have questions or if issues arise.

A Report Card webcast will be available on the ETFO Virtual Learning page the week of June 1, 2020 at etfo.ca/link/virtualllearning.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I complete the Term 2 Provincial Report Card/Kindergarten Communication of Learning when I do not have a lot of data collected?

Because of the pandemic, established practices for evaluation of student work and the determination of grades, ratings and comments cannot be completely relied upon. It is not business as usual. As a result, it is acceptable for marks/ratings/comments to be based on a much smaller body of evidence than in non-pandemic reporting times. Members should use their professional judgement, based on the limited evidence they have and overall knowledge of their students, to evaluate and communicate progress to parents.

The Ministry communicated to boards that “evidence collected during the school closure period that shows improvement in learning **may** be taken into consideration by the teacher when assigning a final grade/mark”. This additional data may be used when in the best interest of the individual student. This applies to Kindergarten educators as well.

Members should use their professional judgement to make decisions about where “I” for Insufficient Evidence “is appropriate in the best interest of the student”. It would not be appropriate for an entire report card to be full of “I”s as it is understood that grades, ratings and comments reflect a limited amount of data on this unique set of report cards. As always, members should have the data and evidence of learning to substantiate the grades/ratings/comments that are assigned and communicated to parents.

What happens if I did not teach a strand/subject prior to school closing on March 13?

The emergency response of closing schools on March 13 abruptly interrupted teachers’ long range plans. Therefore, some strands and possibly subjects may not have been started prior to the school closure period. The use of “I” for Insufficient Evidence, along with the generic comment provided by the Ministry, would be appropriate in these circumstances.

How many comments do I have to include on the report card?

Teachers should use their professional judgement to determine the length of comments. Given the shortened length of Term 2 (beginning of Term 2 to March 13) and the limited assessment data that would have been collected prior to the pandemic closures, members should not be required nor feel the need to fill the comment box. As suggested by the Ministry, “when writing comments, teachers will use their professional judgement and focus on what students have learned, and where possible, describe

significant strengths and identify next steps for improvement.” For Kindergarten, the Ministry recommends that the Kindergarten Communication of Learning “will be based on observations of key learning and growth ... in each of the Four Frames”.

ETFO locals will provide additional guidance about comments once they have met with their Boards to discuss reporting processes.

I am being asked by my principal/school board to re-enter my school to retrieve my own belongings and to gather and bag the belongings of my students. Is it mandatory for me to do this?

Students and parents are responsible for retrieving their own personal possessions. ETFO strongly advises against members taking on this task. There are too many potential issues and risks with trying to do this at the current time. If a student or their parent is unable to attend school for this purpose and want their belongings, they should be directed to the school office for advice on how to proceed.

Retrieving your own personal belongings is your choice. When it comes to retrieving personal belongings, members must follow the advice of health authorities. Before choosing to go into the school, members need to see a written copy of the school board’s access protocol that has been approved by the local public health unit as well as the details of how the school is implementing the protocol. If members have concerns that adequate protective procedures have not been put in place, they should address their concerns to the principal. If the concerns are still unresolved, members should contact their health and safety representative, ETFO local office or ETFO provincial health and safety services staff for advice.

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

IEPs are a working document and likely need some revision given that the conditions and scope of emergency distance learning are different than what is experienced in the classroom.

For students being presented at IPRCs and those students transitioning from grades 8 to 9, the IEP will likely need to be updated as per the past practice at your school board.

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

For the academic period from March 13 to present, consider using a phrase (unless a school board has a preferred statement) such as: *“During the period of school closure, programming has focused on (insert overall expectation or goal or strategy provided).”*

In the event that 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)”.

Resources and Financial Support

[Apply for the Provincial Child Benefit.](#) Eligible parents will receive \$200 for children up to 12 and \$250 for children with special needs up to age 21.

[Apply for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit Program](#)

[Learn more about the CERB at \[etfo.ca/link/FAQ-CERB\]\(https://etfo.ca/link/FAQ-CERB\)](#)

[COVID-19 self-assessment tools](#) to determine what steps you should take should you exhibit symptoms.

For updates, please check ETFO’s dedicate webpage at etfo.ca/link/covid19