



October 6, 2021

## COVID-19 FAQ #2 – 2021-2022

In this COVID-19 FAQ, you will find information on: vaccination requirements at work; health and safety; reporting; remote learning; and pandemic recovery.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Are vaccine mandates and proof of vaccination certificates permissible under Ontario's *Human Rights Code*?**

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has released a [policy statement](#) on COVID-19 vaccine mandates and proof of vaccine certificates.

The OHRC's policy statement indicates that "while receiving a COVID-19 vaccine remains voluntary, the OHRC takes the position that mandating and requiring proof of vaccination to protect people at work or when receiving services is generally permissible under the *Human Rights Code* (Code) as long as protections are put in place to make sure people who are unable to be vaccinated for Code-related reasons are reasonably accommodated."

ETFO supports members' right to reasonable accommodation under Ontario's *Human Rights Code*. Members who cannot be vaccinated due to medical reasons should assemble the documents that demonstrate their specific accommodation needs, and seek support from their local about the accommodation process. We will continue to closely monitor vaccination policy implementation to ensure our members' rights are respected and boards are applying the government's policy in compliance with their legislative and collective agreement obligations.

#### **The government said they were improving ventilation, and some classes seem to have stand-alone HEPA filters. How can I find out what has been done in my school? Can I get one of those air cleaners in my class?**

The government required all school boards to submit and post a ventilation report on their websites by September 3, 2021. In that report, you can see the board's ventilation strategy and how the funding has been allocated. There is also a page for each school that indicates if there is mechanical ventilation, if an assessment was done, and what precautions are in place (e.g., higher grade filters, running the system longer, standalone units). The worker representative on the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) should have been given access to any tests that were done.

Standalone units are required where there is no mechanical ventilation and in Kindergarten classes. ETFO recommends that there also be an additional measure in classes where any students are unmasked, in the same way they were provided in special education programs last year. This should be brought to the Principal and the JHSC if necessary.

**I am vaccinated and I'm keeping my distance from students and colleagues. I wash my hands regularly and do the screening. Do we still have to wear masks/eye protection?**

Everyone longs to return to a sense of normalcy and the vaccination of workers has been an important step on the road to making that happen. However, the precautions that keep us safe are all still important, particularly in elementary schools where most students can't be vaccinated.

When vaccinated, you are less likely to get COVID-19 and are well-protected from serious illness and hospitalization, but you are not 100 per cent protected. Continuing to wear a mask/eye protection doesn't just keep you safe, it keeps students and colleagues safe, and helps stop spread in the community. Be an example to your students who also find them uncomfortable, but are learning that they are important for their protection.

If you are finding the masks/eye protection to be uncomfortable, try to build opportunities to go for an outdoor break with physical distancing into your day (e.g., during nutrition break or outdoor learning). Talk to your supervisor about alternatives to shields, such as safety goggles or glasses.

**I am completing my Progress Reports/Initial Observations of Learning. How do I determine the level of progress students are making in the first six weeks of school knowing that some students may be experiencing learning gaps from COVID-19 interruptions?**

It is understandable that some students may be experiencing learning gaps because of the interruptions caused by the pandemic. The range of learning gaps will vary from student to student and subject to subject (or frame) based on many factors. Teachers will complete the Progress Report/Initial Observations of Learning following the guidelines outlined in:

- *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools;*
- *Growing Success: The Kindergarten Addendum;* and
- *Growing Success: The Mathematics Addendum, Grades 1-8* guidelines.

Teachers' professional judgement remains essential in determining both ratings of progress and depth and breadth of comments.

As many pieces related to reporting are unique to locals, it is important that teachers familiarize themselves with their board's reporting guidelines. Teachers are reminded that the interview is an appropriate time to share how students have adjusted to new routines, how well students are engaging in learning, and how well students are completing review material and/or new learning. Ongoing communication with families

(sharing of student work, conversations, feedback, etc.) is an appropriate way to share progress or concerns throughout the term.

**Maintaining COVID-19 health and safety guidelines and classroom reorganizations continue to impact how I design and adjust the pace of learning in my classroom. Given these ongoing challenges, what is expected of me when completing reports?**

For a variety of reasons (e.g., classroom re-organizations, students pivoting to online learning), teachers may have gathered less evidence in the first six weeks of school. Teachers will complete the Progress Report/Initial Observations following *Growing Success* guidelines and will use their professional judgement when determining the depth and breadth of comments.

As always, teachers are reminded to keep up-to-date assessment records as reference when determining progress and describing initial observations of learning.

**Last year, we did not need to report on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills in Mathematics. Do we need to report on these skills in Mathematics this year?**

No. The Ministry of Education has said that, in the 2021-2022 school year, schools will not assess, evaluate or report on the overall expectations related to SEL skills in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8, Mathematics (2020)* and *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8, Health and Physical Education (2019)*. The Ministry expects instruction of SEL skills will continue while educators engage in ongoing professional learning.

**Completing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are challenging for me as COVID-19 continues to cause disruption to my teaching and assessment timelines. What is the expectation for completing IEPs?**

Members are reminded that:

- IEPs need to be created and in place within 30 school days of the start of the student's program, typically the first day of school or placement in a special education program. These IEPs will serve as the required reviewing and updating for the elementary progress report;
- An IEP must be developed within 30 school days of the student's placement in a special education program or identified as requiring special education support; and
- IEPs are a working document and can be adjusted at any point during the year.

**I am working with students remotely again this year. What resources does ETFO have that can support me as I navigate this virtual environment?**

ETFO has created a number of resources to help educators navigate remote learning, including:

- *Understanding Your Professional Judgement in the Virtual Environment*;
- *Protecting Yourself*; and
- *Understanding Copyright*.

Visit [our website](#) for these and additional resources.

## **How can we work towards a just and fair recovery through this pandemic?**

The ongoing pandemic has widened gaps, at an accelerated rate, for society's most marginalized communities experiencing historical inequities. To recover, governments, organizations and businesses must use a social justice framework to draw on and reimagine the undiscovered opportunities to build new and creative equitable systems that honour the dignity and equality of every human being. This requires organizations and decision-makers to centre the interests of marginalized groups.

As a union, we must continue to support one another and centre health and well-being through a social justice and anti-oppressive lens. Members are encouraged to:

- prioritize health and well-being;
- partner and work with communities, schools and families with an asset-based approach. Approach all collaboration and advocacy with a listening stance and work for equal reciprocity in relationships;
- build inclusive spaces in schools, classrooms and workspaces, honouring all and especially marginalized voices, and address micro-aggression and discrimination in all its forms; and
- provide processes for individuals and communities in need, who require supports in connecting with social, health, educational organizations in the neighbourhood.

For more on a just recovery: see ETFO's Women's History Month Poster: [A Socially Just Recovery](#); support [Just Recovery Ontario](#); and endorse [A Just Recovery for All | The Council of Canadians](#).

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