

## **Memo #13**

Date: January 16, 2022

To: Members

Re: **Back to In-School Learning Information (Part 2) - January 2022**

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### **Back to In-School Learning Information (Part 2) - January 2022**

#### School Closures and Mixing of Cohorts

The government has passed the responsibility to close schools to individual school boards. Public Health is not conducting contact tracing etc., which means they will not be closing schools because of a COVID outbreak (not that it was ever used in Simcoe-Muskoka/Parry Sound). Furthermore, if a school is notified of a positive case in a class, classrooms will not be moved to online, and notification to other families in the class may not occur. The Board's guidance from the government is:

- Closure of schools is a last resort
- Parents to be notified with as much notice as possible
- Limit the length of time schools are closed.

This leads to the reluctance of school boards to close schools, and trying everything before closing schools - these options have been in place since September 2020 - use of retired teachers, teacher candidates, unqualified individuals etc.

The Board has prepared a School Closure procedure, that it has shared with OECTA. Currently, the Board has not finalized its procedure, but we need to know that the decision to close schools may be made the day/night before or the morning of.

Teachers need to know the following:

Before closing a school is made:

- principal will have developed a list of all non-classroom teachers that may be reassigned to cover unfilled teacher vacancies
- if possible and necessary, principal will collapse cohorts in a manner that adheres to CA caps

Once the decision to close a school:

- principal will communicate with staff
- school building remains open; staff are to attend their primary work location on these days as the school is only closed to ALL students due to staffing shortage
- classes where a teacher is available will move to remote synchronous learning
- classes where no teacher is available will have students access their classroom VLE

#### Supervision

With the anticipated increase in staff absences due to illness, self-isolation and/or quarantine there may be extra strain on supervision of students.

Our Elementary Collective Agreement states teachers can have no more than 80 minutes of supervision per week. This supervision cannot be averaged over two weeks or a month.

**Teachers cannot volunteer to take on extra supervision, as that is a violation of our Collective Agreement. Furthermore, principals and/or vice principals cannot ask teachers to volunteer or sign up for extra supervision.**

If a principal or vice principal requires you to perform extra supervision, you are to state, “I am doing this under duress, and will be in touch with my union.”

We should not be guilted into providing extra supervision. The requirement of the determination for the safety of students rests with the Principal. We, as teachers, need to report to our duty and do as assigned. We are not liable for any injuries, so long as we are where we are supposed to be and perform our supervision. Contact the office immediately if you are being asked to do more than the 80-minute maximum per week.

### PPE

The Board has a supply of one (1) non-fitted N95 mask per staff member per day. (Note this is a change from a previous message which stated two (2) non-fitted N95 masks per staff member per day). The change comes from the Ministry, which likely has to do with supply chain issues.

Furthermore, the latest Ministry memo states that those wearing non-fitted N95 masks should not wear them outside, because if they get wet, they lose their effectiveness.

Please know, OECTA has made it clear that no teacher will be denied access to request to receive another non-fitted N95 mask.

It also advised that teachers wear eye protection during the workday, especially if the 2 metre distance cannot be maintained.

Additionally, schools will have 3-ply cloth masks for students to wear, if they or parents chose. This is not new, as schools have had a limited supply of masks for students to wear if needed, but the supply should increase during the upcoming weeks. Unfortunately, there is no requirement for students to be wearing a better mask. Therefore, we cannot demand they wear a better (safer) mask.

The Board has or will provide Rapid Antigen Tests two (2) to each staff member. The requirement is that the tests are only to be used if you are symptomatic.

The Ministry COVID-19 Guidelines for Schools state:

***If two consecutive RATs, separated by 24-48 hours, are both negative, the symptomatic individual is less likely to have COVID-19 infection, and the individual should isolate until symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms are present).***

### Health and Safety: Making a Complaint and Work Refusals:

OECTA Provincial has prepared several resources for members who are concerned about their working conditions. All members are encouraged to review this document in its entirety prior to the return to work:

#### [Guide to H&S Complaints and Work Refusals.](#)

This guide includes a checklist to enable all members to quickly evaluate the safety of their workplace. The checklist is comprehensive and is based on current Public Health and Ministry of Education direction. Please review the full checklist in the link above. A sample of questions to be considered when assessing the health and safety of your working conditions is included below:

**Do all staff and students self-screen every day before attending school?**



**Are government provided, non-fit tested N95 masks readily available for all staff in your school?**



**Is the student masking requirement enforced both inside and outside your classroom?**



**Are processes enforced to discourage student congregation outside the classroom (e.g., in hallways, at lockers, arriving on buses, going to and from the building, etc.)?**



**When students or staff eat indoors at school, is as much physical distance as possible maintained?**



**Are lunch times staggered to minimize physical contact? Have capacity limits been established and enforced for the cafeteria or other eating spaces?**



**Whenever possible is opening windows encouraged?**



[Members should also review the quick guide to work refusals to be fully aware of your rights.](#)

**If you have any concerns, please contact the Unit Office at 705-733-9625 or 1 800 558 4815 or email.**