OSSTF/FEESO

Advice and Best Practices: Affiliate and Advocates Scan

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Introduction

With the rapid closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, students, families, education workers and teachers were given an enormous challenge: navigate the emotional, practical, health and financial challenges of the first global pandemic in 100 years while simultaneously creating a remote learning system, almost from scratch.

In the face of that challenge, many education unions and public education advocacy groups published their best advice and flagged issues that needed particular attention. Their goal, like OSSTF/FEESO's was to safeguard the wellbeing of everyone involved in emergency remote learning while nonetheless maintaining as much continuity of learning as possible.

This document distills guidance from education unions and our allies to identify common themes and areas of agreement. The guidance offered in this series comes from fifteen documents published by eleven unions and advocacy groups. Documents were coded using MAXQDA to identify common themes: education technology, equity, pedagogy, and teachers and education workers. Documents included in the overview provide direct advice and/or recommendations, as opposed to news releases or general statements about public education and COVID-19. Publications providing advice exclusively to parents and caregivers have not been included to allow a greater focus on policy and educational practice issues. The recommendations articulated here do not necessarily represent a consensus, so brief citations follow each recommendation to identify the source of specific advice. A full bibliography appears at the end of this document.

Our thanks go to those unions and allies who were able to mobilize their existing research and experience to rapidly produce the guides on which this summary is based.

Education Technology

1. **Technology cannot fully replace classroom teaching and learning.**
   A core principle that must be protected is that technology can never fully replace classroom teaching and learning. Notably, there exists considerable research on the benefits and downsides of online learning, but none of that research is based on emergency remote learning during a global pandemic.

Technology may provide support on a temporary, interim basis, but face-to-face interactions between teachers and students, education workers and students and among the students themselves remain invaluable for learning. Technology used during school shut-downs should not replace these interactions and should not be made permanent. To emphasize, interim reliance on education technology should not be allowed to contribute to the Ed Tech sector's broader attempts to de-professionalize teaching.

Further, having well-developed and clearly communicated policies and procedures in relation to emergency remote learning is an essential component of building and protecting relationships when face-to-face interactions are unavailable.

(Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 3, 5; Education International: 3; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation: 7)

2. **Design remote learning with age-appropriate limits on screen time.**
   The American Teachers' Federation (AFT) encourages age-based limits on screen time. Reflecting a lack of firm consensus on limits to screen time, AFT provides two schedules for time limits.

American Psychological Association Revised Guidance

Age	Screen Time
2 and under	Avoid media use other than video chatting.
Preschoolers	Limit to one hour of high-quality programming per day
Grade-schoolers and teens	Don't allow media to displace or disrupt other important activities (sleep, regular exercise, family meals, and 'unplugged' downtime)
All ages	Be a media mentor

Everyschool.org (based on a synthesis of multiple reports)

Age	Screen Time
Pre-Kindergarten	No screen time
K-2 students	Up to 20 minutes per day
Grades 3-4	Up to 30 minutes per day
Grades 5-6	Up to 40 minutes per day
Grades 7-8	Up to 50 minutes per day
Grades 9-10	Up to 60 minutes per day
Grades 11-12	Up to 70 minutes per day

(American Federation of Teachers: "Educational Technology": 2; EverySchool)

3. **Differentiate between types of screen time.**
   AFT also recommends distinguishing between types of screen time. They suggest considering whether any particular educational strategy involves transformative, supportive, restrictive or disruptive screen time and making decisions about its use accordingly.
   - Transformative screen time: Includes opportunities to learn or practice coding, critical-thinking projects and technology that assists students with special needs.
     Highly recommended.

- Supportive screen time: Watching TED Talks, reading articles online.
  Use in moderation.
- Restrictive screen time: Use of software or applications for skills that have already been mastered by the students.
  Use sparingly.
- Disruptive technology: Unrestricted cellphone use, social media, 'tech for tech's sake.
  Use very rarely.

(American Federation of Teachers: "Educational Technology": 3; EverySchool)

4. **Provide professional development in order to make best use of technological investments.**
   School and board tech decisions should focus as much on preparing teachers and education workers as on choosing devices and software. This includes allowing teachers and education workers to identify and obtain the professional development they most need. School Boards and unions have key roles to play in this process.

   In addition, planning for training and professional development requirements should already have started in order to ensure teachers and education workers are prepared to meet a range of demands, many of which will be unanticipated upon schools reopening.

   Education technology should NOT be used to monitor teacher and education worker activities and tremendous caution should be used when utilizing software that allows direct surveillance of students (i.e., to track time on task as well as student behavior). Education technology surveillance should not form the basis of evaluation of teachers or education workers.

   (American Federation of Teachers: "Educational Technology": 3, 4; American Federation of Teachers: "Professional Development": 3; Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 6; Education International: 4)

5. **Prioritize digital security.**
   Numerous models exist for online and remote learning (rotation model, a la carte, etc.). Regardless of the specific model used, online learning must be designed to ensure that unauthorized individuals and inappropriate content do not reach children (i.e., 'Zoombombing'). Many home devices lack adequate protection to ensure the safety of personal information and to prevent cyberbullying.

   Close attention should be paid to:
   - Copyright and privacy legislation and regulations;
   - Provincial, Board, and school-based legislation policies and protocols relating to the use of social media;
   - Provincial, Board, and school-based legislation and policies on responsible use of devices;
   - Whether devices and software adhere to School Board digital safety parameters as well as well-documented best-practices; and
   - Whether sufficient tech support and professional development is available to ensure teachers, education workers, students and caregivers understand how to protect their data, personal information.

   (American Federation of Teachers: "Educational Technology": 4; Education International: 3; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation: 7, 10)

6. **Be wary of efforts to use emergency remote learning as an opportunity for privatization.**
Ed tech companies see COVID-19 as an opportunity to make significant inroads into the "education market." Companies such as Pearson, D2L and K-12 Inc., with long histories of pursuing education privatization are actively promoting their products as solutions to the challenges of emergency remote learning. As such they are investing in marketing and lobbying activities to influence device/software purchasing decisions as well as decisions about content delivery.

   Technology-based privatization can take many forms. These can include content delivery platforms, learning management platforms as well as using surveillance and monitoring software to transform user information into a valuable commodity.

   Teachers, education workers and administrators should therefore be wary of emergency purchases and, if possible, ensure union representation in reviews of quality and usability and to ensure there is neither price gouging stemming from perceived urgency nor commitments that extend beyond the pandemic itself. The central goal must be to remain focused on how technology can support learning rather than investing in technology simply for technology's sake.

   (American Federation of Teachers: "Educational Technology": 3-4; Education International: 3)

7. **Ensure access to 'Help Desk' tech support for students, teachers, and education workers.**
Successful remote learning depends on students, teachers, education workers and parents/caregivers being able to access and use relevant software. Support needs could range from password resets to problems with software glitching and/or crashing. Therefore, schools and school boards ought to make clear what remote 'help desk' support will be available and ensure that this support will be timely and effective.

   (American Federation of Teachers: "Preparing": 2; Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 5; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "QPAT Position"; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation: 10)

Equity

1. **Make emergency remote learning strategies equity-focused.**
The various forms of inequality that shape our society constrain or reduce opportunities for some while expanding them for others. Public education is essential for mitigating, and at its best, eliminating the negative impacts of inequality. Given public education's function as a general force for equality, it follows that any strategy for emergency remote learning should place considerations of equity at its core.

   ETFO's guidance on supporting students with disabilities during COVID-19 notes the Ontario Human Rights Commission's (OHRC's) observation that "barriers to education…can be physical, technological, systemic, financial, or attitudinal, or they can arise from an education provider's failure to make available a needed accommodation in a timely manner."

   Although the OHRC document just referenced focuses on disability, barriers can also arise related to race, gender, income and other factors. Additionally, students often embody multiple, intersecting social identities and the intersection of these identities leads them to experience specific barriers.

Therefore, of deep importance for designing emergency remote learning strategies, is recognition that *pre-existing inequalities are exacerbated by school closures*. These inequalities may appear at multiple levels depending on family income, presence of a disability, or residence in neighborhoods that are particularly hard hit by COVID-19 (itself a marker of inequality).

For the most vulnerable students, school closures may create serious problems and obstacles. These challenges include loss of meals normally provided at school, loss of safe space in cases where there is violence or other major dysfunctions in home environments, loss of one-on-one supports from education workers and loss of opportunities to connect to and socialize with peers. For these students, barriers may include lack of access to technology and learning resources as well as lack of access to the social and professional supports that are normally provided in school.

The first step in removing barriers consists of identifying them. The next, and equally important step, involves ensuring equity-focused considerations are the center of emergency remote learning planning. These considerations need to be made at both the systems level and at the level of course design and instruction. Such planning should include careful consideration of how resources are provided and the potential harm caused by unnecessary mandatory criteria for assessment and advancement.

(Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 6, 7; Education International: 3; Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario: 2; National Education Policy Center: "Three Ways": 3; Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association: 2; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "QPAT Position": 4; Science and Bitnun: 11)

2. **Access to technology is a fundamental equity concern.**
   The documents reviewed here show a fairly broad consensus that access to the devices, software and internet connectivity needed to participate in remote learning is a basic equity concern. Primarily, these access questions affect students based on family income. However, attention to equity also demands attention to whether learning resources have been appropriately modified to accommodate students with disabilities and whether they are available in languages parents and caregivers need in order to support their children. Geography is also a major concern, particularly insofar as rural and remote locations are less likely to have reliable access to internet. In all cases, students who previously relied on libraries or other public spaces for devices and connectivity would lose that access during lockdowns/school closures.

   - School Boards should map out students' and families' actual access to devices, technology and connectivity. This includes ensuring all students have access to the internet without creating financial burdens for low-income households and without data caps and data throttling. Upon completion of this mapping, concrete strategies need to be put into place to make sure all students have equitable access to technology and connectivity or, short of that, well-articulated strategies for providing students with non-online alternatives for receiving and completing learning tasks.
   - Access to devices and connectivity should also be taken into consideration when assigning teachers and education workers to support students with disabilities.
   - IT support or suggestions should be provided by school boards with particular attention to the range of support needs families may experience.
   - Planning should recognize that students may not be the only ones facing barriers relating to access to technology: teachers and education workers may also require additional supports and/or accommodations.

(American Federation of Teachers: "Educational Technology": 3, 4; American Federation of Teachers: "Preparing": 2; Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 5; Education Endowment Foundation: 6; National Education Policy Center: "Data Privacy During COVID-19": 3; Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association: 2; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "Challenges and Recommendations": 5; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "QPAT Position": 3; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation: 6)

3. **Students benefit from access to a quiet learning space and help at home.**
   Beyond differential access to the technological supports needed for emergency remote learning, many students experience differential access to the environment and supports needed to support their learning.

   Again, this equity issue mainly affects students based on family income and wealth. Students may or may not have access to quiet, private space in which to do their schoolwork. Many will have to share devices with siblings who are also at home trying to learn. Further, parents and caregivers who earn lower incomes are also less likely to have flexibility in terms of work hours and whether or not they work from home. This creates considerable variation in the type of supports students have at any given time during the school day.

   The Canadian Teachers' Federation in particular emphasizes the gendered and racialized nature of the relationship between parents'/caregivers' source of income and the challenges they face in providing support for learning. They note that frontline workers in low wage service industries, nursing and other caring professions are disproportionately women and/or racialized. They further note a Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives report that finds racialized workers to be over-represented in supply chain, food manufacturing and warehouse work, often in non-unionized and dangerous/high risk environments.

   In fact, the stresses and anxieties produced by COVID-19 are not evenly distributed. Because lower-income and racialized workers are disproportionately less likely to be able to work from home, they may experience higher risks of exposure to COVID-19. This generates stress and anxiety to which students may be sensitive. Often these stresses are compounded by financial concerns. For some families, these realities create barriers to supporting their children's learning that are not experienced by other, higher income, families.

   (American Federation of Teachers: "Educational Technology": 3; Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 4, 5; Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario: 2; Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association: 2)

4. **Plan to support students with disabilities.**
   As in pre-pandemic learning conditions, the accommodations students may require in order to participate fully in remote learning will vary considerably. The recommendations made through the documents reviewed for this scan prioritize the mental health and wellbeing of students with disabilities, continuity of service and supports, provision of accommodations as needed, appropriate use of assignments and assessments.

   It is important to note that ensuring a full feeling of inclusion for students with disabilities requires recognition that the equity and access issues identified elsewhere in this document (access to technology, access to supportive learning environments) may also be experienced by students with disabilities. This creates double or multiple barriers for these students.

(American Federation of Teachers: "Preparing": 3; Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario: 2; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "Challenges and Recommendations": 5; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation: 13)

5. **Plan for the needs of English and French language learners**
   Emergency remote learning needs to specifically consider the needs of English and French language learners. Such planning should take into consideration the loss of the one-on-one support these students would normally have access to at school. It should also take measures to ensure parents or caregivers at home who do not speak the language of instruction have the resources they need to provide learning support. This includes access to communications about remote learning, generally and how to obtain supports from the school or school board.

   (American Federation of Teachers: "Preparing": 3; Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 5)

6. **Recognize the specific impacts of gender on emergency remote learning**
   Intersecting with race, income, and disability, gender significantly affects the experience of emergency remote learning. Teachers and education workers are disproportionately female, which means their normal workloads are disproportionately added to by the realities of working from home. Women shoulder a greater proportion of childcare and other familial obligations (including care for aging and elderly parents). Expectations placed on teachers and education workers by schools and school boards should therefore take into account the potential energy, labour and distractions created by gendered domestic obligations.

   (Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 4)

Pedagogy

1. **Education technology needs to be paired with professional development.**
   Teachers and education workers are digitally literate and highly skilled professionals. Nonetheless, success in their roles requires professional development to provide learning and other supports remotely. Such professional development should include resources on social-emotional learning, and trauma-informed practice (particularly as informed by research on supporting students with disabilities). For teachers and education workers who require adaptive devices to fulfill their professional roles, both the devices and training on using those devices, should also be provided.

   In addition, professional development should provide specific guidance on how to best use the technology selected by schools and/or school boards.

   For both general and specific professional development, coaching may provide an effective form of ongoing support, particularly as teachers and education workers design new strategies for interaction with and among students. Indeed, schools should be identifying and promoting strategies to foster ongoing collaboration, skills-sharing and lesson plans.

   (American Federation of Teachers: "Professional Development"; American Federation of Teachers: "Share My Lesson": 3; Education Endowment Foundation: 6; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation: 19)

2. **Education technology must be paired with direct instruction on remote learning strategies and software.**
Although students are often thought to have an intuitive grasp of digital technologies, there exists considerable research evidence showing that they in fact require direct instruction on how to learn remotely or online in general, as well as on the use of specific learning platforms. This includes direct instruction on how to work independently, including through self-reflection, checklists, daily plans, and prompting to consider alternative strategies. Further, students need to be instructed on who to ask for help and how to ask for help when they need it and they should be made to feel comfortable doing so. Disadvantaged students are particularly at risk when forced into independent learning and therefore benefit most from explicit guidance on remote learning.

(American Federation of Teachers: "Professional Development": 3; Education Endowment Foundation: 6; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation: 9)

3. **Professional judgement is key to successful emergency remote learning.**
Emergency remote learning generates novel demands on professional judgement. These include decisions about synchronous versus asynchronous learning, how to match learning goals with the available modes of content delivery, strategies for monitoring and assessment, how and when to differentiate instruction, how and when to have informal, non-mandatory contact with students, and more.

The Education Endowment Fund's review of research on remote learning (all of which was undertaken prior to the emergence of COVID-19) suggests that teacher quality is the main factor in students' success. What matters most, is their pedagogical practice. This suggests that providing teachers and education workers with both the tools and resources they need AND the autonomy to fulfill their roles according to their professional judgement is of paramount importance.

Given the breadth of these decisions and the rapid pace at which they need to be made, it is more important than ever that administrators provide concrete support to teachers and education workers and encourage their professional autonomy. Further, it is essential that teachers and education workers support each other through practical skills sharing, collaboration and encouragement.

(Education Endowment Foundation: 6; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "QPAT Position": 4)

4. **Seek out strategies already in use by colleagues.**
Given the diversity of professional practices employed by teachers and education workers, variations among learning skills within and across age groups, and variations in various forms of access to learning opportunities (see the Equity document in this series), a concise and comprehensive list of strategies is impossible.

The following is a sample of specific advice for emergency remote learning. The advice does not necessarily represent a consensus, but it provides insights into the areas where teachers and educators may want to focus and seek out further guidance and, if possible, professional development.
   - Adopt strategies that support active, collaborative learning and student autonomy. This requires building flexibility into learning strategies.

- Be cognizant of the new challenges remote learning poses in terms of planning. Rethink curriculum as necessary and give access to learning materials (including multi-modal tools) in advance so time in class can be activity and connection-focused.
- Increase use of project-based learning as lectures become de-emphasized.
- Co-construct norms as a learning community in the context of emergency remote learning to increase trust, safety, and respect for privacy and confidentiality.
- Provide clear direction on where and how students can access the range of supports they may need (including learning, emotional, and technical).
- Cultivate the following with specific attention to the realities of emergency remote learning:
  - A shared understanding of pacing and time management (schedules, clear due dates);
  - A shared understanding of routines; and
  - A shared understanding of coursework goals and expectations during school closures.
- Re-emphasize the importance of proper citations and permissions when sharing content (videos, image, audio, text).
- Where possible, make learning multi-modal (i.e., incorporate video, audio and printed text) to improve student engagement and success.
- Decisions related to technology and digital resources (purchasing and pedagogical alike) should ensure that technology supports students and their learning and not the other way around (see Education Technology, above).
- Be strategic and intentional about incorporating technology and be sure to provide direct instruction on the skills needed to make use of tech tools.
- Prioritize 'transformative screen time' over 'supportive' and 'disruptive' screen time (see Education Technology, above).
- When designing remote learning materials, be particularly cognizant of the impact of design on accessibility.
  - Provide navigation supports (overviews, course tours, walk-throughs of outcomes).
  - Provide instructions and expectations in multiple formats (video, audio, print).
  - Adapt print materials to increase readability, paying particular attention to font.
  - Ensure inserted pictures have an attached title and/or description for students using screen readers.
  - Ensure videos have closed captioning.
  - Do not use online games or videos with flashing graphics as they may not be suitable for all students.
  - Attend to visual layout (lack of clutter and ample white space, visual organizing cues such as numbering, bullets and headings) and its impact on accessibility of navigation and comprehension.

(American Federation of Teachers: "Educational Technology": 3, 4; American Federation of Teachers: "Professional Development": 3; EverySchool; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation: 7, 9, 12, 13, 19)

5. **The importance of differentiation and adaptation of instruction and materials remains, but meeting these standards during emergency remote learning significantly increases workloads for teachers and education workers.**
   Notwithstanding the claims of personalization endemic to the education technology sector, remote learning often involves considerable standardization. Given the sudden and rapid nature of the transition from face-to-face learning to school closures, the default has been to provide

standardized, one-size-fits-all learning opportunities. This tendency is made worse by reduced opportunity to provide the one-on-one, individualized supports that are available within the classroom.

As emergency remote learning progresses it is essential that all learning partners develop and implement strategies to ensure full inclusion, particularly for students who have individual education plans and/or require adaptations. Although there is a consensus that teachers and education workers should not bear the entire responsibility for developing and implementing these strategies, there is no consensus on how that work should be distributed.

In addition to the strategies for ensuring accessibility described above, the following recommendations are intended to mitigate the tendency toward standardization during emergency remote learning.

- Provide students with as much choice as possible in terms of how they complete and submit work.
- Ensure schools and School Boards provide access to tools, resources and software (graphic organizers, speech to text, navigation supports) for students with disabilities.
- Ensure School Boards have developed alternative procedures and multiple methods for providing access to instruction (both digitally and mailed print versions).
- Develop plans to support students with exceptionalities for whom distance learning is not a viable option (both in terms of formal learning and in terms of personal or medical care normally received at school). These might include life skills and other activities to be performed at home but that do not require online access.

(American Federation of Teachers: "Preparing": 2, 3; Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 5, 6; Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario: 2, 3; Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association: 3; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "Challenges and Recommendations": 3, 5)

6. **Schools provide much, much more than formal curriculum.**
   There is broad consensus that COVID-19 has brought into relief the function and importance of schools beyond curriculum and content-delivery. Schools provide essential opportunities for social and emotional learning. They foster meaningful connections and relationships with peers and adults. Emphasis on pedagogy and curriculum therefore needs to be balanced against the urgent need to provide support to students through a world-historic crisis.

   Teachers and education workers are encouraged to create opportunities for peer interaction (peer marking and feedback, live discussions of content, etc.) to improve motivation and outcomes.

   (Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 7; Education Endowment Foundation: 6; Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario: 3; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "Challenges and Recommendations": 4)

7. **Ensure flexibility in terms of assessment and advancement.**
   Given the pedagogical and other limitations of emergency remote learning, policy-makers should be cautious about formal assessments and evaluations. In many cases, students will be best served through consolidation of existing knowledge and skills rather than new learning. The ability of students to learn under unprecedented and difficult conditions, combined with reduced ability for teachers and education workers to effectively monitor students (particular

students facing multiple access barriers and/or low motivation), makes assessment particularly difficult and problematic.

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation affirms the importance of scaffolding and considering assessment alternatives:
- Product evidence (assignments submitted through various modalities);
- Observation evidence (visible through digital pictures, vides, Zoom meetings, etc.); and
- Conversational evidence (primarily through forums and journals).

(Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "QPAT Position": 3, 4; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation: 19)

8. **Remote learning can be an opportunity for critically conscious curriculum**
The Network for Public Education argues that school closures due to COVID-19 provide an opportunity for intentional discussions with students about equity and access. These conversations can help build "cross-cultural understanding and empathy within a school community as well as raise consciousness about uneven access to food, shelter, safety, and healthcare alongside school materials, internet access, and electronic devices."

(National Education Policy Center: "Three Ways": 3)

9. **Attend to students' physical and mental well-being**
Students are at higher risk for depression and myriad other threats to mental health during school closures. The potential for isolation, loss of connection to peers, and loss of contact with adults who provide positive interventions all increase threats to mental well-being. Students may experience anxiety about COVID-19 itself and the uncertainty it creates. Some students may feel particularly anxious about the prospect of having peers virtually present in their otherwise private spaces (a particular concern for students who face conflicts with peers and/or bullying). Finally, the pandemic increases the potential for traumatic experiences of loss through illness and deaths of loved ones.

Students may not have access to the specialist staff such as guidance counsellors, child and youth workers, and psychologists who would normally provide support. Teachers and education workers should be aware of the need to accommodate students as they process difficult emotional reactions. There is evidence that students with disabilities are at particular risk due to loss of normally-available supports. Routines, including routines for physical activity should be established and encouraged as should explicit guidance on how to ask for and receive emotional support.

(Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 5; Education International: 4; Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario: 3; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation: 6; Science and Bitnun: 4)

Teachers and Education Workers

1. **Protect teachers' and education workers' ability to exercise the full scope of their professional judgment.**
While teachers and education workers maintain their general duty of care and professional obligations to provide high quality learning opportunities, emergency remote learning generates novel demands on professional judgement. These include decisions about synchronous versus asynchronous learning, how to match learning goals with the available modes of content

delivery, strategies for monitoring and assessment, how and when to differentiate instruction and more.

Teachers and education workers know their students and their students' needs and are best positioned to judge whether one or another learning strategy is likely to be successful. Schools, school boards and the Ministry should all work with teachers, education workers and their unions to identify the opportunities and challenges posed by emergency remote learning.

At the same time, teachers and education workers should be mindful of professional boundaries, including use of social media and during interactions with students, peers and the public. In general, interactions should be of an educational nature and within normal scope of practice.

Given the breadth of these decisions and the rapid pace at which they need to be made, it is more important than ever that administrators provide concrete support to teachers and education workers and encourage their professional autonomy. Further, it is essential that teachers and education workers support each other through practical skills sharing, collaboration and encouragement. Clearly, support for professional judgment means there will be numerous, different strategies for approaching learning during school closures. The goal is not consistency among educators, but finding the modalities that build on the strengths of everyone involved as much as possible.

(American Federation of Teachers: "Professional Development": 3, 4; Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 6; Education Endowment Foundation: 6; Education International: 3; Manitoba Teachers' Society: 3; Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association: 2; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "QPAT Position": 4; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation: 3)

2. **Plan specifically to incorporate the roles and skills of Education Workers.**
   Both prior to and during the pandemic, public discussions of education have tended to overlook the roles played by education workers in a wide range of roles. Many of the direct supports typically provided by education workers are impossible to provide remotely. Nonetheless, schools and school boards should be consciously and intentionally developing strategies to incorporate the professional insights of education workers into overall emergency remote learning plans and identifying opportunities to fill the gaps created by remote learning.

   This should include targeted professional development opportunities where appropriate alongside training on technological tools and resources.

   (American Federation of Teachers: "Preparing": 2)

3. **Create the conditions for robust collaboration.**
   Effective teaching always requires a team effort. Classroom practices are embedded in a network of formal and informal resources and professional relationships. Collaboration is even more urgent as teachers, education workers and administrators scramble to find ways to make the best out of an exceedingly difficult situation.

   In this light, collaboration and mutual support needs to be intentional. Time and space for collaboration need to be made available. Open and effective channels of communication are essential, but do not simply 'happen.' They require planning and commitment from all parties involved. Collaboration strategies may include opportunities for board-wide, formal and informal union involvement in consultations, and ongoing working groups.

(American Federation of Teachers: "Educational Technology": 4; American Federation of Teachers: "Professional Development": 3, 4; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation: 6)

4. **Provide professional development opportunities specifically related to students' social and emotional needs during school closures.**
    Students are at higher risk for depression and myriad other threats to mental health during school closures (see Pedagogy, above). Therefore it is vital that teachers and education workers (as well as parents and caregivers) receive training and support on how school closures impact social-emotional learning. Training needs to include trauma-informed practices and allow teachers and educators to support the full range of students in their care. There is evidence that students with disabilities are at particular risk due to loss of normally-available supports.

    Although teachers and education workers may feel comfortable providing these supports under typical circumstances, many would value and benefit from direct professional development to allow them to provide the supports during school closures.

    (American Federation of Teachers: "Professional Development": 3; Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 5; Education International: 4; Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario: 3)

5. **Prioritize health and safety.**
    The health and safety of teachers and educators is as important as the health and safety of students. In the context of COVID-19, this means:
    *   Adherence to guidance of local public health officials, especially relating to social distancing and staying home;
    *   Provision of personal protective equipment as needed;
    *   Attending to the emotional and trauma-related dangers posed by living through a global pandemic;
    *   Consciously seeking opportunities to reduce anxiety for teachers and education workers, particularly through clear and reliable communications with clear directions and expectations;
    *   Access to the training and professional development identified elsewhere in this document and other documents in the series;
    *   Understanding that teachers and education workers cannot be expected to shoulder the tremendous burdens imposed by emergency remote learning by themselves; and
    *   Protecting the privacy and digital safety of teachers and education workers who are participating in remote learning.

    (Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 7; Education International: 3; Manitoba Teachers' Society: 3; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "Challenges and Recommendations": 3; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "QPAT Position": 4, 5)

6. **Ensure a fair distribution of workload.**
    Although teachers and education workers consistently exceed the formal expectations placed upon them, the demands placed on them during school closures are often likely to go beyond what is feasible while maintaining health and safety. Therefore, it is essential that collective agreements, salaries, and working conditions be respected during emergency remote learning.

At the individual level (although supported by administrators), teachers and education workers need to maintain professional boundaries with students and parents. This may include adhering to scheduled times for availability and communication. Recognition should also be given the fact that many teachers and educators will face additional challenges relating to child care during work hours (see the Equity document in this series).

Finally, the recommendations relating to collaboration, above, should also attend to an equitable distribution of work among all job classifications and functions. This distribution should take into account scope of professional practice, availability of resources and the number of students who require support.

(Canadian Teachers Federation - Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants: 4; Education International: 4; Manitoba Teachers' Society: 3; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "Challenges and Recommendations": 5; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "QPAT Position": 4)

7. **Communicate regularly with students and families.**
   Education during school closures is rife with uncertainty and isolation. Regular and consistent communication with parents and caregivers as well as with students is therefore recommended. Regular check-ins with students provide an opportunity for connection and to demonstrate the work they have done remotely.

   It may be useful for school teams to agree on common procedures for communicating with students and families, but should not let those agreements over-ride individual professional judgement.

   (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario: 3; Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers: "Challenges and Recommendations": 5)

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