

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR OCCASIONAL TEACHERS

*Practical advice and support to occasional teachers
and the teachers they are replacing*

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INTRODUCTION

Occasional teachers reap many benefits. Every day can be like the first day of school: every day *is* different. Occasional teachers work in a variety of schools and accept many diverse teaching assignments. It is a good introduction to teaching and a way to meet new colleagues, and gain experience and confidence. Occasional teaching allows you to control your own schedule as you can determine if and when you want to work, the type and length of assignments you will accept and the schools and areas where you want to teach.

Occasional teaching also has its challenges. Occasional teachers need to establish their credibility every time they step into a classroom. There is stress associated with being in new situations daily, frequently not knowing where to go, who to turn to, what to bring and what awaits. It is often difficult to understand the individual needs of students, particularly those who require modifications, accommodations and/or additional supports for learning.

Essential Information for Occasional Teachers, 2006 is intended to give practical advice and support to occasional teachers and the teachers they are replacing.

Ensuring smooth management of the classroom begins long before the occasional teacher arrives. With the support of the Principal and classroom teacher the partnership between the classroom teacher and the occasional teacher can flourish.

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Essential Information for Occasional Teachers is a project of OECTA's annual Summer Writing Teams, a program that brings together OECTA members to create classroom curriculum for teachers.

To become involved with the Summer Writing Teams, [click here](#) for more information.

OCCASIONAL TEACHING: THE BASICS

Overview

1. What is an occasional teacher?
2. What is the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association?
3. When should I contact OECTA?
4. What do I need to know about my collective agreement?
5. What do I need to know about Employment Insurance?
6. Are occasional teachers eligible for pregnancy and parental leave?
7. Can retired teachers be occasional teachers?

What is an occasional teacher?

Education Act: Definitions

Occasional teacher

- (1.1) *For the purposes of this Act, a teacher is an occasional teacher if he or she is employed by a board to teach as a substitute for a teacher or temporary teacher who is or was employed by the board in a position that is part of its regular teaching staff including continuing education teachers but,*
- (a) *if the teacher substitutes for a teacher who has died during a school year, the teacher's employment as the substitute for him or her shall not extend past the end of the school year in which the death occurred; and*
 - (b) *if the teacher substitutes for a teacher who is absent from his or her duties for a temporary period, the teacher's employment as the substitute for him or her shall not extend past the end of the second school year after his or her absence begins.*

What is the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association?

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) represents 36,000 women and men who have chosen teaching careers in the Catholic schools in Ontario. These teachers are found in the elementary panel from junior kindergarten to Grade 8, and in the secondary panel in Grade 9 through Grade 12 in publicly funded schools.

A teacher becomes a member of OECTA on the first day of employment. For teachers and occasional teachers, this is the first day worked. Annually OECTA sends out membership cards to occasional teacher members based on the most recent information received from occasional teacher local bargaining units. For newly hired occasional teachers, this may take a few months for the card to be processed.

All OECTA members pay Association dues. For occasional teachers, 1.47 per cent of every pay is deducted for supporting local and provincial OECTA programs and services. Dues are deducted in addition to any regular deductions such as pension, employment insurance premiums, taxes, etc.

OECTA unit membership

The OECTA Handbook determines unit membership by assigning all teachers and occasional teachers, who work within a particular Catholic district school board, to a unit. Each unit is comprised of both teacher and occasional teacher members. Within some Catholic district school boards, there may be an elementary unit serving all teachers and occasional teachers who teach primarily in the elementary panel and a secondary unit for teachers and occasional teachers who teach primarily in the secondary panel. In other boards a single unit provides services to both elementary and secondary teachers and occasional teachers.

All members of a unit have a right to all internal services.

The unit provides all internal services except collective bargaining:

- Administration
- Communications
- Counseling and Member Services
- Political Action
- Professional Development
- Social

For the purposes of collective bargaining, members of a unit belong to either an elementary, secondary or occasional teacher bargaining unit. Services related to collective bargaining include:

- Negotiations
- Grievances
- Health & Safety
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)

Elementary and secondary bargaining unit services are provided to the members of these bargaining units through the unit, whether it is separate or combined. The occasional teacher local bargaining unit (OTLBU) is composed of all occasional teachers (elementary and secondary) employed within a particular Catholic school board in Ontario. In many cases, collective bargaining services are provided to the OTLBU separately from the unit.

When should I contact OECTA?

Contact the OECTA unit for questions or concerns regarding matters that do not fall under the collective agreement.

Occasional teachers are advised to contact their occasional teacher local bargaining unit (OTLBU) president for questions specifically regarding the occasional teacher collective agreement.

Legal Assistance: Police/Children's Aid Society Allegations

If you are contacted by an external agency such as the police or Children's Aid Society regarding an allegation against you:

- Do not participate in an interview at that time.
- Inform the agency that you are willing to cooperate but will be unable to comment until you contact the Association.
- Make no comments to anyone regarding the allegations/charges.
- Call the OECTA Provincial Office Counseling & Member Services staff at 1-800-268-7230 or 416-925-2493.

Ontario College of Teachers

If you are contacted regarding an investigation of a complaint against you:

- Listen to the information provided.
- Make no response.
- Call the OECTA Provincial Office Counseling & Member Services staff at 1-800-268-7230 or 416-925-2493.
- Do not discuss the issue with anyone until advised.

Regarding a colleague:

- You must cooperate with the Ontario College of Teachers or risk a charge of Professional Misconduct.
- Give only **factual** information you have personally witnessed and can verify.
- Do not make any assumptions unless you can verify all the facts.
- Remember 18(1)(b) and (c) of the *Teaching Profession Act*.

What do I need to know about my collective agreement?

A copy of the current collective agreement governing the terms and conditions of employment as an occasional teacher should be provided by the school board upon hiring. This is one of the most important documents to review as an occasional teacher. When a school board violates the collective agreement, the Association takes action. Likewise, the Association expects all members to abide by their collective agreements, which have been negotiated in good faith in the best interest of all members of the Association. Overlooking violations of the collective agreement, even though it may be a benefit to an individual teacher, is always at the expense of other members.

The following is a summary of some important areas of all occasional teacher collective agreements. Although the following information applies to most collective agreements around the province, there is a lot of local variation. Occasional teachers should carefully review their own collective agreement and bring any concerns to the attention of the OTLBU President.

Compensation

Occasional teachers are compensated based on how many days they are replacing a regular day-school teacher. The specific terms of compensation will be found in the occasional teacher collective agreement of a particular school board.

Casual Daily Rate of Pay

Occasional teachers who replace regular day-school teachers for a short period of time are compensated based on a casual daily rate regardless of experience and qualifications, with some local exceptions. This may be a “flat rate” or it may be determined by a formula linked to the teacher salary grid.

Long-Term Occasional Teacher Rate of Pay

When an occasional teacher is assigned to replace the same teacher for a consecutive number of instructional days determined by the local collective agreement, he/she is paid according to the regular day-school teacher salary grid. After about two to three weeks of continuous assignment replacing the same teacher, an occasional teacher will be paid a regular day-school teacher’s salary retroactive to the first day of the assignment.

In the case where a regular day-school teacher’s long-term absence is known ahead of time, the occasional teacher replacement will be paid according to the regular day-school teacher salary grid from the first day of the assignment.

Since the regular day-school teacher’s salary grid is based on teaching experience and qualifications, it is extremely critical that all teachers ensure that their information on file with the school board in this regard is up-to-date. The occasional teacher collective agreement will detail the process of what teaching experience is recognized for credit on the grid, and the dates that this information must be sent to the school board. Occasional teachers must be sure to keep original records of all past teaching experience on official board documents, since it may be required to submit this documentation each time a long term occasional position is assigned.

Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO)

The Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO) determines the qualifications category for all OECTA members, free of charge. An occasional teacher may apply to have her/his qualifications evaluated by QECO as soon as employment by a Catholic school board can be confirmed (i.e. letter of hire, pay stub, etc.). A QECO evaluation takes a long time to process, so it is crucial that a teacher completes the application for evaluation upon being hired or as soon as she/he obtains confirmation of new qualifications. QECO will send a notice to confirm receipt of the application and all relevant documents, or request any missing documents. A copy of this notice should be sent to the board’s payroll department. Keep an original of your QECO evaluation and all relevant documents on file. It may be required to submit a copy of this documentation each time a long-term occasional position is assigned. The QECO website (www.qeco.on.ca) contains all information needed to apply for an evaluation. The occasional teacher collective agreement will stipulate timelines for notifying the board regarding changes in qualifications category.

Please remember that failing to supply the school board with up-to-date information regarding teaching experience and qualifications may result in the loss of hundreds or even thousands of dollars of salary for a long-term occasional teacher.

Benefits

The local occasional teacher collective agreement will determine whether extended health and dental benefits are available to occasional teachers. Generally, such benefits are only available to occasional teachers in long-term assignments, and usually only in the case of assignments that extend beyond two or three months. In some school boards, occasional teachers may enroll in the board's benefits plans at their own expense. In a few cases, the school board will pay an additional allowance to the occasional teachers in lieu of benefits.

Sick Leave

In most Catholic school boards, occasional teachers in long-term assignments have access to sick leave. Generally, sick days may be accumulated over the course of the long-term assignment, and in some cases unused days may be carried over in whole or in part to a subsequent assignment or even the following school year.

An occasional teacher may also contact the board to be placed in an inactive status for a period of time for which he or she is unavailable.

Working Conditions

Instructional Day and Additional Duties

Collective agreement language varies across the province with respect to the working conditions of occasional teachers. It is the position of the Association that an occasional teacher works the schedule of the teacher he or she is assigned to replace, including planning/preparation time and lunch. This means that additional duties (yard/hall supervision, on-calls, bus duty) should only be assigned to an occasional teacher if the teacher he or she is replacing would normally be assigned such duties. In any event, an occasional teacher assigned to a full-day of teaching duties should not be expected to work for a longer period of time than a regular day-school teacher would normally be expected to work.

On the first day of an occasional teacher's assignment to a school, most collective agreements provide that the period immediately before the start of the assignment be free of any assigned duties. This is one of the few cases where additional duties may be switched with another teacher for an assignment later in the day.

The schedule of classes, additional duties and other important information for an occasional teacher should be given to the occasional teacher upon arrival at the school for the first day of assignment. If there is any difficulty finding this information, the occasional teacher should inquire at the school office.

Travel

An occasional teacher may be expected to travel between work sites because the teacher being replaced is assigned to more than one worksite, such as in the case of replacing an itinerant French-as-a-Second-Language teacher. When travel between work sites is a requirement of the duties assigned to the occasional teacher, the board should pay a travel allowance to the occasional teacher in the same amount that the teacher being replaced would be paid. Travel time should always ensure that the occasional teacher receives the full amount of time for planning/preparation and lunch.

Medical/Physical Procedures

Teachers should not perform any medical or physical procedures on students such as the administration of medication, restraint, toileting, etc. There are employees specifically trained in these roles. Any instructions regarding the administration of medication, or physical procedure (such as restraint) should be referred to the school administration.

The only exception to this applies in the case where a student suffers from an anaphylactic reaction requiring the application of an Epi-pen. Sabrina's Law came into effect on January 1, 2006. This law imposes specific legal duties in respect to students with anaphylaxis. Occasional teachers must be included in all training, communications and identification at the school level in order to ensure that they are aware of students at risk of a life-threatening allergic reaction.

An occasional teacher should not be required to carry out any activities that may pose a risk to the occasional teacher, other employees, or students due to the lack of required training/qualifications, equipment or physical ability. As a teaching professional, occasional teachers may be required to modify lessons to ensure that there is no risk.

Rights

Occasional teachers benefit from many of the same rights as regular day-school teachers. These include the right to a safe workplace free from assault, discrimination and harassment, the right to just cause with respect to discipline and dismissal, and the right to a transparent job posting and hiring procedure.

Occasional teachers' employment rights are determined by the Employment Standards, Labour Relations and Education Acts of Ontario, in addition to those specifically dealt with in the collective agreement. It is important to review the collective agreement's rights provisions and bring any concerns regarding employment rights to the Association's attention.

Grievance Procedure

Any violation of the collective agreement by the school board, Association, or individual member may be subject to the grievance procedure. This is a dispute resolution mechanism that attempts to remedy any such violations. If the parties cannot agree to a resolution of a dispute over the interpretation of the collective agreement, a third party may be called to mediate a resolution, or determine whether the grievance is supported by the facts and arbitrate a remedy. A member who suspects that the collective agreement has been violated should bring that concern to the attention of the Occasional Teacher Local Bargaining Unit President.

Call-Out Procedures/Job Posting

Occasional teachers are assigned on a casual daily basis through a rotational call-out system. In most school boards across the province, the call-out system is centralized. As work becomes available, it is offered to occasional teachers on the call-out list from top to bottom, based on availability, and in some cases, qualifications. In a few of the very small school boards, daily occasional teacher call-outs are done on a school-by-school basis. OECTA supports a central call-out system that distributes work fairly and equitably to all available occasional teachers.

By the end of the summer each year, occasional teachers are expected to submit an outline of what days, geographic regions/schools and grade(s)/subject area(s) they are available to teach during the coming school year. It is usually only when the board receives this information that the occasional teacher is placed on the occasional teacher list and will be eligible to receive work. Occasional teacher collective agreements will state the deadline for submitting availability information to the school board. School boards may also ask occasional teachers to indicate whether they would be willing to work in a long-term assignment when this information is submitted.

There may be rules in a particular school board regarding refusing a casual daily assignment. Some boards limit the number of refusals, resulting in removal from the call-out rotation if the number of refusals is excessive. Occasional teachers should notify the board regarding changes in their availability.

Long-term occasional teacher assignments are posted for a period of time prior to the assignment, when the board becomes aware of the absence. In most cases, this is before the assignment begins. However, when short-term absences extend into long-term absences, the job may be advertised at that time. School boards place job postings on their website, or through an intranet site, and must be available internally only to current occasional teachers prior to any external advertisement.

Many collective agreements have language that attempts to ensure that qualified occasional teachers who have been on the occasional teacher list the longest have first access to available long-term assignments. This kind of seniority clause will ensure that a school board cannot simply hire a teacher directly into a long-term occasional teaching assignment when there are qualified occasional teachers, already employed by the board, available for the assignment.

It is the Association position that only certified teachers, and members of OECTA, be offered available occasional teacher work. There may be times, however, that the school board is unable to find a certified occasional teacher. Boards have the legal right to employ personnel without teaching certification to replace teachers if no qualified occasional teacher is available. Once a certified teacher is available, however, the Association expects that a certified teacher replace any uncertified personnel.

Also, when school boards are forced to lay-off regular day-school teachers, or, have over-hired regular day-school teachers, they may place these employees into long-term and even casual occasional teaching positions ahead of teachers on the occasional teacher list until a regular teaching assignment is available. The Association, however, expects that school boards hire qualified occasional teachers prior to teachers who are not currently employees of the school board, when there are available regular day-school positions.

Just Cause/Discipline/Dismissal

All members of OECTA have the right to just cause in the case of any disciplinary action taken by a school board. This means that a school board must be able to demonstrate that there is cause for any disciplinary action taken against an occasional teacher. In many occasional teacher collective agreements, there is a “probationary period” during which a lesser standard of just cause applies.

Occasional teachers must be particularly vigilant in ensuring that school boards do not attempt to change their employment status without notifying them. The change in employment status may be very subtle, and many occasional teachers may not even be aware that their employment status has changed. Ways that school boards may discipline an occasional teacher include:

- Placing a letter of concern in the occasional teacher’s personnel file.
- Refusing to call an occasional teacher for work at one or more schools on the occasional teacher’s availability list.
- Removing the occasional teacher from the eligibility list for long-term occasional teaching assignments.

Occasional teachers have the right to review their personnel file, and request copies of anything in their personnel file. Any letter or document of a disciplinary nature should be copied to the occasional teacher prior to being placed in the personnel file, and the occasional teacher has the right to request any such letter/document be removed, or append comments. Should any adverse or disciplinary letter/document come to the attention of the occasional teacher, he or she should contact the OTLBU president.

Health and Safety

Occasional teachers are entitled to a representative on every school board’s Joint Health and Safety Committee. The OTLBU president or a unit representative, at the request of the OTLBU, can fill this role. Concerns regarding safety issues should be brought to the attention of the OTLBU President.

Every school board has policies surrounding safety, including assault and harassment policies. As an employee of the school board, occasional teachers are advised to become familiar with these policies as well as the sections of the collective agreement related to these areas.

In the case where an occasional teacher has an accident during the course of his or her employment, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Form 6 (Worker’s Report of Injury/Disease) and Form 7 (Employer’s Report of Injury/Disease) must be completed. The occasional teacher should keep a copy of Form 6 and the employer should provide a copy of Form 7 to the OTLBU. If there are any concerns arising out of an accident during an assignment, occasional teachers are advised to contact the OTLBU President immediately.

Any incidents of assault, discrimination and harassment should be reported according to the board’s policy and the collective agreement. It is the employer’s responsibility to follow-up on complaints made in these areas. The OTLBU president should be contacted if there are any questions or concerns about the complaint procedure.

From the *Teaching Profession Act*:
Duties of a Member to Fellow Members:

18. (1) *A member shall,*
(b) *on making an adverse report on another member, furnish him/her with a written statement of the report at the earliest possible time and not later than three days after making the report;*

Criminal Record Checks/Offence Declarations

During the application process to receive a Certificate of Qualification from the Ontario College of Teachers, teachers must submit a recent criminal record check. Many school boards require proof of a criminal record check prior to hiring a teacher. Annually, all board employees must submit an offence declaration stating that he or she has not been convicted of a criminal offence under the Criminal Code of Canada during the past school year. Many school boards complete the offence declaration through some electronic means.

Criminal record checks and offence declarations are confidential documents and should be kept in sealed files available only to the person responsible for administering such documents at the school board. If there are any concerns arising out of a criminal record check or offence declaration, contact the OTLBU President.

Performance Appraisal/Evaluation

Although it is not legally required, some school boards have a performance appraisal process for long-term occasional teachers. In some boards, the occasional teacher may request a letter of recommendation from the principal. In other boards, there are more formal appraisal procedures.

The Association advocates that such appraisals must be consistent with the performance appraisal criteria negotiated in regular day-school teacher collective agreements. These appraisals should focus on support and development of the occasional teacher, and occur during long-term teaching assignments greater than two months. Any evaluation process for occasional teachers must be developed through a discussion between the Association and the school board through negotiations or through an official joint committee with Association representation.

What do I need to know about Employment Insurance?

Occasional teachers are eligible for regular employment insurance benefits during non-teaching periods: Christmas break, March break and the summer. This is due to the fact that occasional teachers are hired on a casual or substitute basis and are not “contracted to teach” during the non-teaching periods like regular day-school teachers. Statutory holidays are not considered to be non-teaching periods unless they fall within a non-teaching period.

Long-term occasional teachers who sign consecutive 10 contracts and teach the entire school year may not be eligible for regular benefits unless the employment contract is actually terminated between assignments.

The basis of eligibility is that the occasional teacher must work from 400 to 700 hours during the 52-week period prior to the non-teaching period applied for, based on where the occasional teacher lives. For individuals who have entered the work force for the first time, or have returned to the work force after a two-year absence, there may be the requirement for 910 hours of insurable work in the prior 52-week period. This would not apply where pregnancy/parental leave benefits were collected 5 years prior to the 52-week qualifying period.

The basic regular benefit rate is 55 percent of average insured earnings up to a maximum of \$413 per week. Earnings from Employment Insurance are taxable. Benefits are paid after a two-week waiting period. The waiting period applies only once per claim.

Your employer should issue a Record of Employment (RoE) at the end of the employment period. Many school boards will issue the RoE to occasional teachers automatically at the end of each year while others will issue it on request.

Information regarding Employment Insurance benefits as well as all application information can be found on the Human Resources and Social Development Canada website at www.hrsdc.gc.ca. Specifically, occasional teachers should refer to “Employment Insurance (EI) and Teachers.”

Are occasional teachers eligible for pregnancy and parental leave?

Occasional teachers are entitled to a leave of absence from work for the birth and adoption of a child if the board has employed him or her for at least 13 weeks. In many cases, the occasional teacher may also be eligible to receive Employment Insurance benefits if the occasional teacher worked 600 hours in the 52 weeks prior to his or her last claim.

Statutory maternity leave is available for the mother up to 17 weeks for the birth of a child. A mother may begin maternity leave up to 8 weeks prior to the expected date of birth and no later than the week following the birth of the child. This period may be extended or suspended if the child is hospitalized. When applying for Employment Insurance benefits for a maternity leave, a Record of Employment as well as a signed declaration of the expected or actual date of birth.

Parental leave is available to biological or adoptive parents. Up to 35 weeks of statutory parental leave may be taken by one or the other parent or shared between two periods. Employment Insurance benefits may be paid during statutory parental leave based on eligibility. If the mother has already served the two-week waiting period for EI maternity benefits, it does not have to be served again for parental benefits, even if the other parent collects benefits.

Employers must maintain benefits in place prior to the commencement of statutory maternity and/or parental leave, for the period normally covered if the occasional teacher were working. If the occasional teacher were covered by an extended benefits plan that the board contributed to in whole or in part, those benefits would continue while the occasional teacher was on pregnancy and parental leave for the period the occasional teacher would normally receive benefits. The board must continue to pay its share of extended benefits during the statutory leave period.

The employee has the right to return to the same job upon return to work following a statutory pregnancy or parental leave. For occasional teachers, this usually means return to the regular rotation on the Occasional Teacher List. If an occasional teacher returns before a long-term occasional assignment has ended, the occasional teacher should be returned to the same position he or she left.

Information regarding Employment Insurance maternity and parental benefits as well as all application information can be found on the Human Resources and Social Development Canada website at www.hrsdc.gc.ca. Another valuable resource is OECTA Provincial Contract Services Department's publication Pregnancy & Parental Leaves: A Guide (March 2005)

Occasional teachers also have access to Sickness Leave for up to 15 weeks during a teaching period and Compassionate Care Leave for up to 6 weeks to care for a gravely ill family member in danger of dying within 26 weeks. Medical verification is required to qualify for paid benefits during both types of leave and eligibility is based on 600 hours worked in the 52 weeks prior to the claim. Check the Human Resources and Social Development Canada website at www.hrsdc.gc.ca for more information.

Can retired teachers be occasional teachers?

95-day rule

Retired teachers may be employed as occasional teachers and still collect their full retirement pension benefits from the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) for up to 95 school days for 3 school years if those school years occurred before September 1, 2001 or after September 1, 2006. Although only a single day taught counts against one of the three years eligible towards the 95-day maximum, the 3 years need not be consecutive. After the three years of teaching up to 95 school days, a retired teacher who is collecting pension benefits may only teach up to 20 school days.

Example 1: John retired August 31, 1999. The table below indicates the number of days taught each year since that time. The highlighted days qualify towards the three-year limit of 95 days taught after retirement. How many more years may John teacher up to 95 days without penalty to his pension?

School Year	Days Taught
1999-2000	95
2000-2001	18
2001-2002	95
2002-2003	95
2003-2004	45
2004-2005	95
2005-2006	95

John still has one more year that he is eligible to teach up to 95 days. After that he will be eligible to teach up to 20 days per year without penalty to his pension.

Example 2: Susan retired December 31, 2003. Since then, she has taught 95 days each and every school year. How many years can Susan teach up to 95 days starting September 1, 2006?

Since Susan retired during the “window” between September 1, 2001 and August 31, 2006; none of her years taught after retirement count against her three-year maximum to date. Susan may still teach three years of up to 95 days without penalty to her pension.

Example 3: Robert retired February 1, 1996. The table below indicates the number of days taught each year since that time. The highlighted days qualify towards the three-year limit of 95 days taught after retirement. How many more years may Robert teach up to 95 days without penalty to his pension?

School Year	Days Taught
1996-1997	30
1997-1998	0
1998-1999	0
1999-2000	45
2000-2001	95
2001-2002	95
2002-2003	0
2003-2004	45
2004-2005	0
2005-2006	95

Robert already taught for three years before the “window” between September 1, 2001 and August 31, 2006. Although he was able to teach up to 95 days during the window, he may now only teach up to 20 days each school year after September 1, 2006 without penalty to his pension.

Complete information regarding teaching after retirement can be found on the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan website at www.otpp.on.ca.

PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

With Students

Your students deserve to be treated with respect and care. The relationship between teacher and student is one that is:

- friendly but professional
- frank but considerate
- helpful but non-invasive

Regardless of the age of the student, teachers are in a position of trust and should take great care to avoid relationships with students that cross professional boundaries.

Unacceptable Behaviours

In general, activities that take a teacher beyond the expectations of the employer could easily qualify as boundary violations. These include:

becoming too personally involved with students – friend, confidante, surrogate parent

- seeing or meeting students in private or non-school settings
- writing or exchanging notes, letters or emails
- serving as a confidante with regard to a student's decision about his/her personal issues
- giving gifts or money to students
- inviting students to one's home or cottage
- having students stay overnight in one's home/cottage
- driving individual students to or from school
- giving one student undue attention
- being alone with a student with the exception of an emergency situation
- sharing your personal problems with students
- sharing personal information about a student with a third party
- being alone with a student

Always:

- speak calmly
- use positive phrases
- remain professional
- be non-judgmental
- be non-racial
- be reflective
- re-state and re-phrase for understanding
- be polite and respectful
- be receptive
- be open, honest, fair
- think before you speak, take a deep breath
- empathize

Never:

- swear
- threaten
- intimidate
- be sarcastic
- use personal attack
- dwell on past incidents
- yell
- use slanderous language
- demean
- trivialize
- say things you will later regret

Almost any teacher can fall victim to lack of understanding of professional boundaries. This can translate into the member making serious mistakes – career threatening ones – in the management of teacher-student relationships. What makes the issue of professional boundaries an important and dangerous one for teachers is the fact that teachers are responsible for recognizing in themselves whether they are ‘at risk’ of crossing boundaries and, if they are, subsequently addressing this issue. Further, teachers have a responsibility to address this issue when they witness a colleague who may be crossing boundaries. Administrators and colleagues need to recognize danger signals in other teachers’ interactions and intervene. In serious situations, reporting suspicion of child abuse may be required.

Any act of professional misconduct can lead to disciplinary measures being taken by the Ontario College of Teachers. Even an unfounded allegation of professional misconduct could be permanently damaging to a teacher, his or her family and the profession.

If allegations of improper conduct are made against you, contact the Counselling Department of OECTA at 1-800-268-7230 for advice before making a statement to anyone.

With Parents/Guardians

Parents and guardians deserve respect as the primary caregivers of the children they entrust in our care. In reporting to parents either orally or in writing, be open and honest, informative, considerate and helpful.

In difficult situations, do not tolerate abuse.

- Terminate the meeting politely but firmly.
- Offer to resume discussion when the parent is prepared to proceed in a calm, reasonable, non-abusive manner.

When socializing with parents, be aware of boundaries and professional standards.

Always:

- ensure Principal sees notes sent to parents re: entire class/sensitive issues
- utilize factual comments rather than interpretations/hearsay
- write notes when you are calm rather than in the heat of the moment
- keep copies of all communications sent
- be wary of grammatical structures and spelling

Never:

- write anything in haste that could be misinterpreted
- threaten, use negatives
- be tactless
- communicate in written form when a verbal discussion would suffice

With Colleagues

Your colleagues deserve the same respect as professionals that you do. At school, the relationship between colleagues is a professional one.

- Seek to resolve conflicts with colleagues personally, privately and directly before seeking third-party assistance within the school or board.
- Every person has the right to a workplace free from all forms of harassment.
- If you feel the obligation to make an adverse report, furnish your colleague with a written account.

References:

Hamilton-Wentworth ETFO Occasional Teacher Local (2005); *Hamilton-Wentworth Occasional Teacher General Information Guide*.

OECA Provincial Counseling and Member Services Department (2002); *Relationships: Appropriate and Professional*.

OCCASIONAL TEACHERS SEEKING FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT

Whether you are a relative newcomer to occasional teaching or a seasoned professional looking for a long-term or full-time position, it's in your best interest to familiarize yourself with the essential elements of a successful job search (i.e., cover letter, résumé, professional portfolio, and basic interview skills).

Tips

- Review the sections in your occasional teacher collective agreement pertaining to:
 - Job posting and hiring procedures for long-term occasional teacher assignments
 - Rights regarding priority hiring to regular day-school teaching positions
- Introduce yourself to administration and teaching colleagues when teaching on a daily basis (contacts can advance your career).
- Be visible – volunteer in schools, board committees, at your church and in the community.
- Take every opportunity to improve your professional knowledge through:
 - Additional Qualification courses
 - Professional conferences, e.g., “Educating for the Common Good” (August), “Beginning Teachers Conference” (February)
 - Professional reading
- Seek reference letters.
- Use long-term positions to demonstrate and develop your teaching skills
 - If there is a performance appraisal/evaluation during the long-term assignment, be familiar with the procedures and processes ahead of time to ensure the best possible report to support future job applications
- Ensure your board's Human Resources Department knows you are willing to take on unscheduled long-term assignments.
- Many school boards also advertise openings on their own websites, be sure to check postings regularly.
- School boards across Canada advertise jobs through two websites: Education Canada and Jobs in Education.

DAILY TO DO LIST

Going to a different school on a regular basis means that you will have to be prepared for a variety of situations and circumstances. Here is some helpful information to ensure success as an occasional teacher. You may wish to use this as a checklist as you proceed through the day. You may also find it useful to use this in conjunction with the form developed to provide needed information for occasional teachers at the Elementary and Secondary level. (link to elementary form, link to secondary form – open in a new window.)

When I arrive at school

- Check-in at the office to announce your arrival.
- Introduce yourself to the Secretary and/or the Principal.
- Introduce yourself to the staff members working near you, in conjunction with you, or in the same division.
- Pick up the keys to the classroom.
- Locate the classroom and other rooms you may need through the day. A school map may be provided to you or there may be one in the classroom.
- Be sure to locate the staff room, workroom, and the staff washroom.
- Familiarize yourself with the attendance routines.

Preparing for the day

It is to your advantage to be well prepared before the day starts. The following are some suggestions that may help you prepare for the day prior to the students' arrival.

- Familiarize yourself with the day/lesson plan.
- Perform any necessary tasks to execute the lessons, for example, photocopying, cutting, reading information in a textbook, acquiring any needed audiovisual equipment.
- Find a seating plan; if there isn't one, be prepared to make one.
- Familiarize yourself with school safety routines, for example: fire drills and lockdown procedures.
- Familiarize yourself with any school procedures, for instance, yard duty or on-call supervision schedule, school timetable and school discipline policy.
- Familiarize yourself with classroom routines including where to meet students at arrival times, prayers, procedures for using the washroom, getting drinks, lunch, recess and snacks.
- Find a class list and either prepare ahead of time, or have the students make their own name tags.
- Review any behaviour plans that exist to ensure you will maintain consistency for those students involved.
- Identify the names of students with high needs, allergies, and those requiring medication. It is a good idea to identify those students as soon as they enter the classroom.
- Review the in-school support program timetable, for example: special education and ESL.

- Find out if you need to collect anything from the students, for example: money for trips or homework.
- Find out if there are any special events happening in the school, for example: hotdog day, school assembly, or a special visitor.

Day/Lesson Plan

If a day/lesson plan has been left, try to follow it as closely as possible. Sometimes it may be necessary to make amendments to that daily plan, for reasons such as time constraints, safety, or it may be inappropriate for your comfort level and/or physical ability. You will have to deem this in your professional judgment. If you do have to make an amendment to the plan, ensure that you leave a polite, factual note for the absent teacher.

If a day/lesson plan has not been left or cannot be found, you will want to have some lessons that you will be able to use. Please see the section on Useful Websites for Occasional Teachers to assist you with building your own “tool box.”

Classroom routines and procedures/classroom management/continuity

Review the established classroom routines, rules and expectations. Try to follow the rules and routines as closely as possible in order to maintain consistency for the students.

Often there will be helpful students in the classroom who will be able to assist you if needed. Sometimes students also need to leave the classroom to assist other classes. Ensure that you know when students are leaving the classroom, for what purpose, to where and for how long.

During the day you will want to maintain an atmosphere of respect and courtesy. The following are some suggestions to help make the day pass successfully:

- Try to maintain a positive attitude with a light sense of humour.
- Avoid power struggles/arguments with students.
- Be courteous.
- Give special attention to those who appear in need.
- Praise students when appropriate.
- Never ridicule or embarrass students.

For a more detailed description of professional boundaries and relationships with students, with parents/guardians and with colleagues see the fact sheet entitled "Professional Boundaries".

End of the day

Here are some guidelines to help you end your day on a positive note:

- Ensure that students have completed their usual end of day activities.
For example: fill out day planners, review homework expectations.
- Distribute newsletters or any notes that need to go home with students.
- Ask the students to assist with tidying the room according to established classroom procedures, for instance: all garbage in the garbage, chairs up etc.
- End with positive comments to the class and perhaps to specific individuals.

After students have been dismissed

There are several things that you will want to do before leaving the classroom. You may find this list helpful:

- Finish tidying the room, if necessary.
- Collect all your own teaching resources and personal effects.
- Thank staff who assisted you during the day.
- Check-in at the office and return the classroom keys.
- As a courtesy, say goodbye to the school Secretary and/or Principal before departure.

Write a note to the Classroom Teacher

Leave the absent teacher a positive and factual note regarding how the day went. The absent teacher needs to know what happened during the day and where to start when he/she returns. It is helpful when a clear and detailed outline of the day is provided. The note to the classroom teacher may include:

- anecdotal comments about the day and the students - be truthful but positive;
- a list of students who were helpful;
- a list of students who were absent or late;
- make reference and attach any notes sent in by parents/guardians;
- a list of students who brought in money and for what;
- an explanation of what work was completed and what still needs to be finished;
- a review of material with which students had difficulty;
- an explanation of any disruptions to the day (for example: unexpected assembly, fire drill);
- if you were unable to follow the prepared lesson plans provide an explanation as to why and a copy of the lesson you gave;
- sign your name and date the note.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR OCCASIONAL TEACHERS

Teacher to Teacher: Communicating for Success in the *Elementary Classroom*



When you are away from your classroom for a day or longer, it is important to ensure that there is minimal disruption for your students and the occasional teacher. To ensure success in your classroom, please create a folder including:

- school timetable
- school map
- seating plans
- supervision schedule
- class list

TEACHER'S NAME	

CLASS/GRADE	ROOM

WHERE TO FIND IT ... WHO TO ASK FOR HELP

PRINCIPAL

VICE-PRINCIPAL

SECRETARY

CUSTODIAN

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Special Needs (name/accommodations)

TEACHERS WHO CAN HELP ARE:

NAME ROOM

NAME ROOM

Special Health Concerns (name/concern)

STAFF WHO COME TO MY ROOM ARE:

NAME

NAME

NAME

NAME

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR OCCASIONAL TEACHERS

Teacher to Teacher: Communicating for Success in the *Elementary Classroom*

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE CLASS BEGINS

Classroom Routines and Procedures

ARRIVAL TIME

ENTRY PROCEDURE

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE

DRESS CODE

PRAYERS/ANTHEM

WASHROOM/DRINKS

PHYSICAL EDUCATION/GYM

LIBRARY

MONEY COLLECTION

DISMISSAL TIME

DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

RECESS

LUNCH

SNACKS

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES (IPODS, CELLPHONES, ETC.)

AUDIO VISUAL EQUIPMENT

COMPUTER USE

PHOTOCOPIER LOCATION

CODE

Exercises/Announcements

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR OCCASIONAL TEACHERS

Teacher to Teacher: Communicating for Success in the *Elementary Classroom*

Students to Ask for Assistance

NAME

NAME

NAME

Students Who Monitor

NAME

TIMES

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

NAME

TIMES

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

Supervision

Classroom Management Strategies

Other

Inclement Weather

Fire Drill Procedures

Emergency Procedures

LOCATION OF FIRST AID KIT

LOCATION OF ACCIDENT REPORTS

NAME (TO WHOM THE REPORT IS SUBMITTED)

TEACHER TO TEACHER: USING THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM FORM

Special Needs Accommodations

Make note of students who leave the classroom for program support or those who need in-class accommodation. For example: a differentiated work assignment, additional time, computer support or learning aids such as an FM system.

Special Health Concerns.

Are there students in your class who have medical concerns? What are those medical concerns? If a situation occurs, what is the procedure? Who is to be contacted? Where is the individual medical information form with picture, if available? Is there a school policy regarding food brought into the school? (**Please note** that except in the case of administration of an Epi-pen during an anaphylactic reaction teachers and occasional teachers are not to perform any medical/physical procedures on students.)

Opening Exercises/Announcements

Make note of the regular routine for anthem, announcements, prayers, etc.

Supervision

List supervision duties. Attach the supervision schedule. Note any special instructions. For instance, is there a vest the occasional teacher needs, a sash whistle or bell?

Please note: The occasional teacher will not be responsible for supervision prior to the beginning of class on the first day of assignment.

Inclement Weather

List the inclement weather duties. Are there any special instructions? Is there a different supervision schedule for inclement weather days? Make note of any different location or supervision time.

Fire Drill Procedures

What are the Fire Drill Procedures? For instance: Which exit is used? What are the attendance procedures? What is the “all clear” signal to return to class etc. Attach an extra copy of your attendance for Fire Drill attendance. What does the occasional teacher do if the fire alarm rings during planning time or during recess/lunch time?

Emergency Procedures

If there is an emergency what is expected of the occasional teacher? Who is the occasional teacher to contact? Note special instructions for lockdown, tornado procedures, etc.

First Aid

If First Aid is needed what is the procedure the occasional teacher is to follow? Who are the people on staff who are qualified in First Aid? Where is the First Aid Kit located?

Accident Reports

Where are Accident Reports located? Who can assist in the completion of the form? To whom is the form submitted?

Audio-Visual Equipment

What are the procedures to sign out equipment? Where is equipment located? Are keys needed? Is there someone who can assist if needed?

Photocopier Location and Code

Where are photocopies to be made? Is there a code needed? If so, what is the code?

Money Collection

Is there any money that will need to be collected? What are the procedures? To whom is money submitted? Is there a secure location to store funds if these can not be immediately submitted? Ensure any tracking forms and/or collection envelopes are attached.

Computer Use

What are the policies concerning computer usage? Are there any individuals who are not permitted to use the Internet? Is there a computer available for teacher use?

Please note: Do not provide your personal login.

Library

Is there a scheduled library time? Are there any policies or procedures of which the occasional teacher needs to know?

Physical Education/Gym

Note any pertinent information. For instance: Are keys needed? If so where can these be found? Do students change their clothing for physical education? Are there time restrictions that need to be followed? Ensure that any physical education plans will allow for a wide range of options for an occasional teacher. Some may not be comfortable or able to carry out your normal Phys. Ed plan. Please provide alternatives should they be necessary.

Distribution/Collection of Materials

What special instructions does the occasional teacher need? Are students allowed to sign out materials to take home? Is there a sign out procedure for instruments, textbooks, art supplies, etc.? If so, where can this be found? What needs to be done if equipment is damaged or missing?

Dress Code

Is there a dress code or uniform? Is there any information that the occasional teacher needs regarding this? Are there any procedures regarding dress code violations?

Use of Electronic Devices

What are the school/classroom policies regarding the use of iPods, cell phones, etc.

Arrival/Dismissal times

Entry Procedures

What are the procedures for students entering the school? Is there a specific entrance at which students are to be met? What supervision in the hallway is expected? Are students allowed to come into the classroom prior to the start of class? What are the procedures for coats/bags/shoes, etc. Are there any other procedures that are regularly followed?

Attendance Procedures

What is the routine regarding attendance for occasional teachers? For instance: are attendance forms picked up or are they delivered to the office? What time(s) is attendance due? If attendance is entered electronically a separate attendance form may need to be provided. What are the policies for students who arrive late?

Prayers

Identify the daily prayer routine. Attach any prayers needed.

Washroom/Drinks

What are the classroom policies regarding drinks or leaving to use the washroom? What are the sign-out procedures if any?

Lunch

What are the lunch time procedures? Do students eat in the classroom or somewhere else? How are students dismissed for lunch?

Recess

Are there any instructions you would like the OT to have? For instance: are students permitted to take food out into the yard? Is there equipment that is permitted to be taken out? How are students to be dismissed at recess, etc.

Snacks

Is there a snack program in the school? How is it administered? When are snacks permitted?

Students who monitor

Are there students who come to the class or leave the class to monitor and at what times? Are there any special instructions?

Students to ask for assistance

Note any students who tend to be of assistance to you and would be of assistance to the OT. Is there a schedule of helpers?

Classroom Management Strategies

Note any classroom management strategies that you use in the classroom that may assist the OT in getting the attention of students or maintaining order in the classroom.

End of Day/Dismissal Routines

What are the "end of day" procedures? Do students complete agendas? put chairs up? other expectations? What is the procedure for dismissing students? Attach a list of the students who are picked up, walk home, take a school bus or attend an after school program. Note any special instructions.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR OCCASIONAL TEACHERS

Teacher to Teacher: Communicating for Success in the *Secondary Classroom*



* Please complete this form for each class/grade/period you teach.

When you are away from your classroom for a day or longer, it is important to ensure that there is minimal disruption for your students and the occasional teacher. To ensure success in your classroom, please create a folder including:

- school timetable
- school map
- seating plans
- supervision schedule
- class list

_____ TEACHER'S NAME	
_____ CLASS/GRADE/PERIOD	_____ ROOM

WHERE TO FIND IT ... WHO TO ASK FOR HELP

PRINCIPAL

VICE-PRINCIPAL

SECRETARY

DEPARTMENT HEAD

CUSTODIAN

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Special Needs (name/accommodations)

TEACHERS WHO CAN HELP ARE:

NAME ROOM

NAME ROOM

Special Health Concerns (name/concern)

STAFF WHO COME TO MY ROOM ARE:

NAME

NAME

NAME

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR OCCASIONAL TEACHERS

Teacher to Teacher: Communicating for Success in the *Secondary Classroom*

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE CLASS BEGINS

Classroom Routines and Procedures

ARRIVAL TIME

DISMISSAL TIME

OPENING PROCEDURES

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE

DRESS CODE/UNIFORM

KEYS

WASHROOM/DRINKS

SIGN-OUT PROCEDURE

MONEY COLLECTION

FOOD/SNACKS

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES (IPODS, CELLPHONES, ETC.)

AUDIO VISUAL EQUIPMENT

COMPUTER USE

PHOTOCOPIER LOCATION

CODE

Materials/Supplies Required

Students to Ask for Assistance

NAME

NAME

NAME

NAME

Fire Drill Procedures

Emergency Procedures

LOCATION OF FIRST AID KIT

LOCATION OF ACCIDENT REPORTS

NAME (TO WHOM THE REPORT IS SUBMITTED)

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR OCCASIONAL TEACHERS

Teacher to Teacher: Communicating for Success in the *Secondary Classroom*

Exercises/Announcements

Classroom Management Strategies

Other

TEACHER TO TEACHER: USING THE SECONDARY FORM

Homeroom/Opening Procedures

Make note of the regular routine for anthem, announcements, prayers, etc. Are there any other items that need to be address through the homeroom?

Fire Drill Procedures

What are the Fire Drill Procedures? For instance: Which exit is used? What are the attendance procedures? What is the “all clear” signal to return to class, etc. Attach an extra copy of your attendance for Fire Drill attendance. What does the occasional teacher do if the fire alarm rings during planning time or during recess/lunch time?

Emergency Procedures

If there is an emergency what is expected of the occasional teacher? Who is the occasional teacher to contact? Note special instructions for lockdown, tornado procedures, etc.

First Aid

If First Aid is needed what is the procedure the occasional teacher is to follow? Who are the people on staff who are qualified in First Aid? Where is the First Aid Kit located?

Accident Reports

Where are Accident Reports located? Who can assist in the completion of the form? To whom is the form submitted?

Attendance Procedures

What is the routine regarding attendance for occasional teachers? For instance: are attendance forms picked up or are they delivered to the office? What time(s) is attendance due? If attendance is entered electronically a separate attendance form may need to be provided. What are the policies for students who arrive late?

Sign-Out Procedures

Are students expected to report back with their sign-out permission slip prior to leaving the school? Does anything need to be reported to the office?

Washroom/Drinks

What are the classroom policies regarding drinks or leaving to use the washroom. What are the sign-out procedures if any?

Uniform

Is there any information that the occasional teacher needs regarding the uniform? Are there any procedures regarding dress code violations?

Food/Snacks

When are food/snacks permitted?

Use of electronic devices iPods, cell phones, etc.

What are the school/classroom policies regarding the use of ipods, cell phones etc.

Special Needs Accommodations

Make note of students who leave the classroom for program support or those who need in class accommodation. For example a differentiated work assignment, additional time, computer support or learning aids such as an FM system.

Special Health Concerns

Are there students in your class who have medical concerns? What are those medical concerns? If a situation was to occur what is the procedure? Who is to be contacted? Where is the individual medical information form with picture, if available? Is there a school policy regarding food brought into the school? (Please note that except in the case of administration of an Epi-pen during an anaphylactic reaction teachers and occasional teachers are not to perform any medical/physical procedures on students.)

Classroom Management**Audio-Visual Equipment**

What are the procedures to sign out equipment? Where is equipment located? Are keys needed? Is there someone who can assist if needed?

Photocopier Location and Code

Where are photocopies to be made? Is there a code needed? If so, what is the code?

Money Collection

Is there any money that will need to be collected? What are the procedures? To whom is money submitted? Is there a secure location to store funds if these cannot be immediately submitted? Ensure any tracking forms and/or collection envelopes are attached.

Library

Note: Library is not listed on the Secondary form.

Are there any policies or procedures of which the occasional teacher needs to know? Can individual students be sent? Are there booking procedures?

Distribution/Collection of Materials

What special instructions does the occasional teacher need? Are students allowed to sign-out materials to take home? Is there a sign out procedure for instruments, textbooks, art supplies, etc.? If so, where can this be found? What needs to be done if equipment is damaged or missing?

Students to ask for assistance

Note any students who tend to be of assistance to you and would be of assistance to the OT.

Classroom Management Strategies

Note any classroom management strategies that you use in the classroom that may assist the OT in getting the attention of students or maintaining order in the classroom.

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR OCCASIONAL TEACHERS

www.media-awareness.ca

Search by topic or by curriculum expectation including province and grade level. Full lesson plans that are easy to execute. Subject areas include physical education: Healthy, active living, English, Geography, Social and Canadian Studies.

www.educationworld.com

Lesson plans, which are updated regularly and suitable to that time of the school year. For instance; in September listed are 100 icebreaker activities. Here are many lesson plans to choose from. Lesson plans are listed by subject and by grade level. No membership or sign up is required.

www.thecanadianteacher.com

Tools and lesson plans, fun classroom activities including; Bingo, Word Search, Word Scramble, Sentence Scramble, Crossword and Maze Generators. Use the templates to make nametags or desk tags. Links to many other sites with lesson plans and freebies for teachers.

www.linktolearning.com

Links you to other sites that have lesson plans based on the Ontario Curriculum. These are organized by subject and by grade.

<http://www.sitesforteachers.com/index.html>

Links to over a thousand different sites, ranked according to popularity.