

# COVID-19 School Absence Reporting Tool Overview

Updated January 14, 2022

## INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

### Purpose

The COVID-19 Absence Reporting Tool (ART) allows daily school data to be communicated publicly via the Ontario.ca website. Principals or their designates are responsible for communicating information with the school community consistent with ministry guidance and relevant privacy legislation.

School boards must report daily attendance and school closures to the ministry through the ART. It is important to note that no personal information will be collected by the ministry.

For additional support and questions regarding the ART, users may contact their COVID-19 Board Lead who will be maintaining contact with the Ministry of Education. Principals should connect with their local public health unit if they have concerns about COVID-19 related absences or attendance concerns within their school community.

### Daily Reporting through the ART

- Principals and/or their designates are to complete the report by 11:00 a.m. daily.
- If information needs to be altered or added, principals and/or their designates can revise the data they have submitted until 2:00 p.m. that day.
- If changes to data are required for a previous report, click on the date of the past report to open the report. Edit the necessary data and click 'Save' at the bottom of the report.
- The total enrolment number only needs to be entered **once**, unless there is a change in the total enrolment (e.g. new student registrations or staff allocations). The number entered will carry over and be prepopulated on subsequent days.

### DEFINITIONS:

- **Before and after school program:** Before and after school programs are programs such as childcare, clubs or third-party programs that take place **on or off school premises** leading up to the start of the school day or taking place directly after the school day.
- **Class:** A class is defined as an in-person group or cohort of students as they would appear on the attendance register (e.g. Class 6A, English ENG1D).
- **Closure of a Physical Space:** Closure of a Physical Space indicates the closure of all or part of the school.

- **In-person:** In-person includes all staff physically working from a school or board site. This would include teachers who are physically present at a school or board site teaching students either virtually (i.e. a virtual teacher) or teaching students in a physical classroom. In this case, you would report a virtual teacher as in-person and not working remotely. In-person identifies if the student and/or staff person who is absent has been working from a school and may have had contact with students or other staff.
- **Remote learning:** Remote learning includes all students not physically in a school and that are learning remotely.
- **Staff:** Staff includes teachers, educational assistants, support staff, administrators, lunch staff, custodians, supply teachers, etc., who are supervised by the principal in the school. Staff also includes the principal and vice-principal(s) of the school. This would not include central staff such as social workers or others that are managed centrally.
- **School closure:** A school can be closed by the Public Health Unit and/ or by the school board (for operational or safety reasons). During a school closure, all in-person classes are moved to remote learning. It is important to note that, even though the school is closed, some students with special needs or some staff might still be allowed in the school. In this case, the school is still considered closed in this instance and should be reported as such.
- **Transitioned to online learning:** Transitioned to online learning includes students who have been sent home and are continuing their learning remotely. The remote learning could be provided by the regular home school or by joining a central remote learning option.
- **Transitioned to online teaching:** Transitioned to on-line teaching includes staff that have been sent home and are continuing to teach remotely. They could be teaching the classes they would normally teach in-person or supporting central delivery of remote learning.
- **Working Remotely:** Working remotely includes all staff not physically working from a school or other board site (i.e. you **would report all staff working from home**).

## Section 1: COVID-19 Report

### Step 1: Enrolment

#### DETAILS:

- Please identify the total number of students and the total number of staff the school **should** have physically in the school building.
- Report these two numbers in the in-person student enrolment and in-person staff allocation boxes respectively.
- This initial data provides a baseline of what the total in-person attendance **should be** if no one was absent.
- Once this data has been entered, this section will be prepopulated. This data needs only to be entered **once unless there are changes in the school student enrolment or staffing allocation.**

### Step 2: Number of Absences

### **DETAILS:**

- Please report **ALL** absences here.
- Please do not report absences for bus drivers.
- Absences for bus drivers should be reported to the COVID board lead to be counted in the Board Absence Reporting Tool.

### **Step 3: School Closure**



### **DETAILS:**

- Please continue to report the school as 'closed' each day until the school reopens.
- **NOTE: Please ensure that the 'YES' button to indicate a school closure has not been inadvertently checked off. Checking 'YES' indicates the school closure information will be recorded onto the Ontario.ca site.**

### **Exceptionalities**

### **Provincially mandated remote learning**

When the province mandates that all students must pivot to remote learning, schools and school boards are not required to report attendance during the remote learning periods for students engaged in remote learning.

During times of provincially mandated remote learning, school boards are expected to make provisions for in-person support for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning.

In these cases, principals and/or the designates are to continue with full regular daily reporting if their school has:

- Students with special education needs are physically in the school building participating in in-person learning
- Staff are working physically in the school building to support in-person learning for students with special education needs
- Staff are working physically in the school building to delivery online learning to students

During times of provincially mandated remote learning:

- Schools should **not** change their enrolment numbers to reflect that students enrolled for in-person instruction are learning remotely
- If the school is closed, and there are no students and no staff present in the building, there should be no ART reporting.

### **Temporary school closure (e.g. PHU or board mandated closures) with transition to remote learning**

When students and staff are ordered to pivot to remote learning as ordered by the local public health unit, or due to an operational school closure decision made by the local school board (e.g. electrical, plumbing, inclement weather, safety concerns due to lack of available staff):

- Students and staff are considered as ‘in-person’ for the purpose of reporting since the shift to remote learning/working is **temporary**.
  - As a result, students and staff are **not** considered as absent and **are not** to be recorded as absent.
- 
- However, if during this temporary switch to remote learning, a student or staff member is absent from remote learning/working, this absence is reported in the in-person absence count in question 1 ‘Total number of absences today’.

When students and staff are ordered to pivot to remote learning as ordered by the local public health unit, or due to an operational school closure decision made by the local school board, students with complex needs may be allowed to continue with in-person

learning as per the advice/direction of the local public health unit and/or the local school board.

- If during these circumstances, a student or staff member is absent, this absence is reported in the in-person absence count in question 1 'Total number of absences today'.

### **Temporary school closure with no pivot to remote learning**

When a school is temporarily closed, **and** in-person students and staff **are not** temporarily switched to remote learning/working and **no instruction** is provided for the day:

- Students are considered as absent and should be reported as such.
- The staff are not considered as absent.
- If the school is closed with no instruction provided, no daily COVID-19 ART reporting is required.

### **Inclement weather or transportation cancellations**

School boards develop their own local policies related to snow days. Given the advancements in preparedness for remote learning, boards may decide to pivot to remote learning during school closures due to inclement weather.

There is no expectation from the Ministry of Education that all boards pivot to remote learning when schools are closed due to inclement weather.

If boards choose to move to remote learning for unplanned school closures, such as inclement weather, then they must follow requirements outlined in PPM 164.

### **For reporting in the case of inclement weather and associated bus cancellation/school closures:**

a) When bus routes are cancelled but school remains open:

- Schools follow the regular protocol for recording absences in ART
- The bus cancellation(s) should be noted in the board level ART

b) When bus routes are cancelled and school is closed, **with** remote learning:

- If your school is temporarily closed and in-person students and staff are temporarily switched to remote learning/working, they are **not** considered as absent.
- Since the shift to remote learning/working is temporary, students and staff are considered as "in-person" for the purpose of reporting.
- The bus cancellation(s) should be noted in the board level ART

c) When bus routes are cancelled and school is closed, **without** remote learning or instruction provided:

- Schools follow the regular protocol for recording absences in ART.
- For staff working remotely, who would regularly work from school, these should be reported as 'in-person' absence.
- School closures due to inclement weather should be noted in the board level ART.

### **Professional Activity (PA) Days**

- During PA days, there are no students present and affected schools do not report on student absences.
- Staff absences must be reported as usual in the ART.
- PA days should be noted in the board level ART.
- Schools that are **not affected** by the PA day should report as usual in the ART.

### **Statutory holidays or board designated holidays**

- During statutory or board designated holidays (e.g. Family Day, March Break, Easter, etc.), boards do not report on student or staff absences in the ART.

### **Reporting for students engaged in a cooperative education program**

#### **Students enrolled in a full-time remote learning cooperative education program**

- These students are considered full-time remote learners.

#### **Students enrolled in an in-person learning cooperative education program**

- These students are considered in-school learners.

### **Reporting on exam days**

During the exam period at secondary schools, student absences should be reported into ART in a similar manner as the school has always reported school absences for exam periods.

**Background:** During the exam period, it is possible that a student may only have an exam on some of the days that are scheduled as exam days. As far as the enrolment registers is concerned, a student would not be marked absent if they did not have an exam on one of the days - the "G" code would be used. Also, students would likely only be at the school for a portion of the day, depending on when their exam is scheduled.