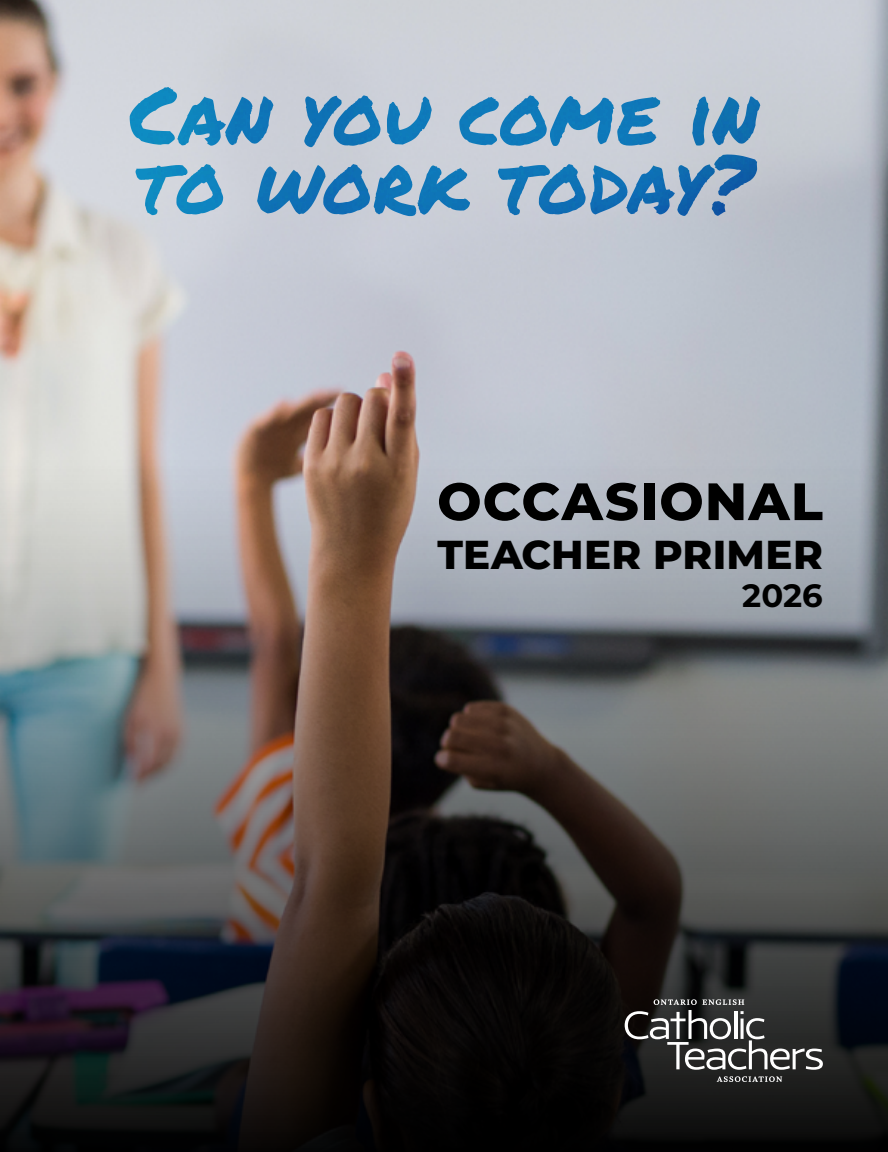


A blurred background image of a classroom. A teacher in a white shirt is on the left, and several students are seated at desks. One student in the foreground has their hand raised, pointing upwards. The text is overlaid on this scene.

**CAN YOU COME IN
TO WORK TODAY?**

**OCCASIONAL
TEACHER PRIMER
2026**

A Resource for Occasional Teachers

This resource has been created to give you some practical, useful advice on surviving and thriving as an occasional teacher.



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Definitions

Occasional Teacher

An occasional teacher is a member of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). According to the *Education Act*, “a teacher is an occasional teacher if they are 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.”

OECTA Membership

According to the OECTA *Handbook*, you are a statutory member of OECTA when you are, “employed by a Catholic district school board as an occasional teacher.”

Daily Occasional Teacher Rate of Pay

Occasional teachers who replace regular day school teachers for a short period of time are compensated based on a daily rate as per the collective agreement, 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, salary is paid according to the regular day school teacher salary grid.

Union Dues

See the OECTA *Handbook* for the most up-to-date information on membership fees, found under the Health, Wellness, and Benefits section of the [Members' Portal](#) at catholicteachers.ca.

Collective Agreement

A collective agreement is a legally binding, written contract between a union and an employer. It is achieved through the collective bargaining process, where both sides negotiate to reach mutually acceptable terms and conditions of employment for the group of unionized employees who are a party to the agreement. It outlines the work relationship between employer and employee including rate(s) of pay, working conditions, and other rights and entitlements. It also provides a process for resolving disputes between represented employees, managers, and employers. If something does not appear in a collective agreement, it may be addressed through legislation, regulation, policy/program memorandum (PPM) from the Ministry of Education, school board policy and procedure, or may be considered 'management rights.' [Contact your local unit](#) if you have questions.

Transitional Certificates

Transitional Certificates enable teacher candidates who are currently enrolled in an Ontario-accredited teacher education program to gain employment as Ontario Certified Teachers while completing their program. For more information, see the OCT's FAQs on [Transitional and Multi-Session Transitional Certificates](#).



Chapter *One*

Preparing Yourself to Thrive as an Occasional Teacher

FIRST STEPS

- > Register your email in the [Members' Portal](#) at **catholicteachers.ca**. You will find valuable resources and information that will assist you in preparing for your work as an occasional teacher.
- > Investigate the many virtual and in-person professional development opportunities [OECTA offers](#), including workshops, AQ courses, conferences, resources, and more.

KNOW AND UNDERSTAND YOUR COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

You can find your own local collective agreement (CA) in the [Members' Portal](#) of **catholicteachers.ca** in the [Collective Agreements](#) section.

Your CA will contain information related to:

- | | |
|---|--|
| > Benefits | > Long-term occasional teacher (LTO) rate of pay per your local collective agreement |
| > Call-out procedures/job postings | > Medical/physical procedures |
| > Casual daily rate of pay | > Other leaves |
| > Compensation | > Performance appraisal/evaluation |
| > Criminal record checks/offence declarations | > Rights |
| > Grievance procedure | > Sick leave |
| > Health & safety | > Travel |
| > Instructional day | > Working conditions |
| > Just cause/discipline/dismissal | |

...and so much more!



Chapter *Two*

After You Get the Call: Getting to the Classroom and Doing Your Job

PREPARING FOR THE DAY

- > Know the location of your school.
- > Know when your assignment starts and plan to get there at least 15 minutes before your assignment or morning duty.
- > Have the school phone number with you so if you are delayed unexpectedly, you can contact the school with your ETA.
- > Bring grade-appropriate materials with you just in case they are needed.
- > Dress for the weather. Do not forget about the possibility of having yard duty.
- > Dress comfortably and professionally.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE

- > Introduce yourself and state who you are replacing that day.
- > Give the job number if you have one.
- > Sign in, if required.
- > Obtain ID badge, if necessary.
- > Ensure you have parked in the correct area and obtain a parking pass from the office, if necessary.
- > Request and obtain the keys that you will require to complete your assignment.
- > If you do not know already, ask for the names of the principal, vice-principal and administrative assistant.

- > Find out the room number and its location.
- > Locate the staffroom, staff washroom, and photocopy room.
- > Locate the teacher's plan, the seating plan, and school handbook, if available. Check with the office in case the plans have been e-mailed in. There may be an emergency plan available too.

KNOWING SCHOOL ROUTINES AND PROTOCOLS

- > Know the fire drill/evacuation procedures and exits.
- > Know the internal and external lockdown procedures.
- > Know how to contact the office from the classroom, and know the emergency number for the school.
- > Request information about other routines and expectations established by the regular teacher dealing with prayers, helpers, pencil sharpening, washroom use, snacks, computer use, etc.
- > Never leave students unsupervised. You are required to be in the room even if there is a student teacher, educational assistant (EA) early childhood educator (ECE), etc. present.

WHEN YOU GET TO THE CLASSROOM

- > Introduce yourself to neighbouring teachers. They can help you find things and offer advice about effectively managing students and situations.
- > Familiarize yourself with the material you will be teaching.
- > Photocopy any materials that are required.
- > Post your name, pronouns, and date on the board.
- > Post the day's agenda on the board.
- > Ensure you have access to internet and computer devices as required.

THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES

- > Greet each student as they enter the classroom.
- > In the classroom, place yourself where you can see and be seen until the class has settled down.
- > If you do not have a seating plan available, create one.
- > Be sure you record attendance accurately and ensure it is submitted as per school process in a timely manner.
- > Briefly introduce yourself to the class and explain that you will be following their teacher's plan for the day.
- > Review classroom expectations or community agreements if provided. If not, consider co-creating expectations that will support learning for the day.
- > Collect forms or notes the students may give you. Note what was submitted and by whom, and ensure private information is kept in a secure location (i.e. the main office) for safekeeping.
- > Include a note to the teacher as to where to retrieve the information.

SUPERVISION/LUNCH DUTY/BUS DUTY

- > Be on time.
- > Know where you are expected to go and what you are expected to do.
- > Actively supervise students to ensure their safety. Move around the area you are supervising.

AT THE END OF THE DAY

- > Younger students may need additional time to get organized and dressed at the end of the day, adjust your plans accordingly.
- > Leave time to collect materials or hand out notes, as required.
- > Leave the room in the condition that you found it.
- > Ensure students complete their agendas and place their homework in their backpacks, if required.
- > Leave a note for the teacher outlining what was covered and other pertinent factual information.
- > If it is imperative to leave factual notes about a student(s), be sure the notes are left in a completely secure location at the end of the school day (i.e. the main office). Note any important announcements or information (e.g., unexpected fire drill, last-minute staff meeting, etc.).
- > When the dismissal bell rings, walk students to the assigned exit doors to ensure safe dismissal.



Chapter *Three*

Classroom Management

MANAGING CONFLICT IN THE CLASSROOM

The best way to mitigate conflict is to ensure you centre relationships with students. OECTA has a Relationships Appropriate and Professional series of resources to help you navigate this. Click the links below to access these resources:

- [Relationships with Students](#)
 - [Relationships with Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers](#)
 - [Relationships with Colleagues](#)
- > Do not, in any way, use force or touch students at any time. When you need to have confidential conversations with students, leave your classroom door open to ensure you are visible to others, and and keep a desk between you and the student to ensure appropriate physical distance. Avoid being alone with a student, especially if disciplining a student. For more information on this, see OECTA's videos:
- [Understanding Professionalism](#)
 - [Professional Misconduct](#)
- > Aim to have at least one positive interaction with each student each day.
- > Keep expectations simple. Be consistent in applying them. Be firm, but fair.
- > Be very cautious in administering clear and specific consequences that are reasonable, logical, and proportional to the behaviour.
- > Avoid identifying consequences which you will have difficulty enforcing. Do not back yourself into a corner.

- > Say what you mean and mean what you say. Do what you said you would do.
- > Do not punish the whole class for the behaviour of a few.
- > Do not keep students in after school.
- > Expect to be tested by some students who want to determine the boundaries of behaviour acceptable to you and your competency to respond. It is essential you act immediately, calmly, and appropriately, but it is vital that you do not overreact or take it personally. Remain measured, factual, and professional.
- > Use light-hearted, non-offensive humour as it may diffuse an escalating situation. Do not use sarcasm, embarrass, or humiliate students.
- > Avoid power struggles/arguments with students.
- > Remain calm. Use a clear, low voice. Sometimes, lowering your volume will be more successful in getting the students' attention rather than raising your voice.

DOCUMENTATION

- > Document and keep a copy of any incidents that seem out of the ordinary. Be factual – state what you saw and heard rather than your thoughts about what you saw or heard. Regardless of the age of the student, teachers are in a position of trust and must avoid relationships that cross professional boundaries.
 - Be friendly, but professional.
 - Be honest, but considerate.
 - Be helpful, but non-invasive.
- > You are required to fill out forms for some incidents. This might include safe schools forms, incident reporting forms, or other board-specific required forms. If you are unsure if a form is required, consult with the OECTA staff rep and/or school administrator.

IMPORTANCE OF IDENTITY-AFFIRMING, STUDENT-FOCUSED TEACHING PRACTICE

- > Understand professional boundaries and expectations. See OECTA's [Teaching in the 21st Century Resource](#) for details.
- > Understand the existence and impact of systemic discrimination on equity-deserving students (Indigenous, Black, 2S and LGBTQIA+, racialized, and students who have disabilities) and ensure that they are represented in the materials you select for your classroom. See OECTA's [Safer Spaces Series for more ideas](#).
- > Practice professional self-reflection to assess unconscious bias in the classroom.
- > Review and analyze your classroom resources regularly to detect bias with an anti-oppressive lens.
- > Read any information available that will help you identify and assist students who have an [Individual Education Plan](#) (IEP). Students are entitled to accommodations and modifications as listed in their IEP.
- > Information about students who have health concerns should be available to you (e.g. severe allergies, asthma, etc.). Ask the principal where to access these. Ensure you are aware of any procedures regarding these students.
- > Familiarize yourself with safety and/or behaviour plans applicable to students you are teaching.
- > Be responsive to the needs of each student.

A young boy with short brown hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, is sitting at a light-colored wooden table. He is focused on playing with various geometric blocks, including blue cubes, blue pyramids, and tan blocks. His hands are positioned over the blocks, and he appears to be in the middle of a construction or sorting activity. In the background, a blue storage bin filled with more blocks is visible, slightly out of focus. The lighting is warm and indoor, creating a calm and educational atmosphere.

Chapter *Four*

Motivating Students

SEVEN THINGS TEACHERS KNOW, UNDERSTAND, AND DO TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS TO LEARN WITHOUT USING PUNISHMENTS OR REWARDS

1. Teachers understand that positive rapport and high and reasonable expectations are key. Relationships with diverse learners are amplified through identity-affirming, [culturally relevant and responsive teaching practice](#).
2. Teachers communicate and manage classrooms in positive ways. They let their students know what they want them to do, and guide them, rather than tell students what not to do. As often as possible, notice students' positive behaviours and praise them.
3. Teachers inspire rather than coerce. They aim at promoting responsibility through [social-emotional learning](#) rather than obedience.
4. Teachers ensure that students are aware of the reasons that a lesson is being taught. This might be achieved by co-creating learning goals with success criteria and sharing it with their students. These teachers inspire their students through curiosity, challenge, and relevancy. They help students make connections to the real world.
5. Teachers improve skills that prompt students to want to behave responsibly and want to put effort into their learning.
6. Teachers are open to continually learning. They reflect on their practice, so that if a lesson needs improvement, they look to themselves to change before they expect their students to change.

7. Teachers know motivation is essential for learning. Teachers motivate students to engage in learning and to respect classroom expectations.

WHO CAN YOU CALL FOR HELP OR ADVICE?

- > Your local Unit President
- > OECTA Provincial **1.800.268.7230** or **416.925.2493**

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and a black vest, is sitting at a wooden desk. She is looking down and writing on a piece of paper with a red pen. On the desk, there is a laptop, a keyboard, a mouse, a stapler, a red apple, and some papers. Behind her is a bulletin board made of horizontal wooden planks of various colors, framed by a brown, wavy-edged border. Several papers and a yellow sticky note are pinned to the board. A computer monitor is visible on the right side of the desk.

Chapter *Five*

Helpful Resources

OECTA RESOURCES

OECTA Professional Development Department: For Your Classroom

OECTA provincial provides excellent professional development by teachers for teachers. This includes:

- > Professional Pursuits
- > Webexperiences
- > Learning Institutes
- > Curriculum Resources
- > Catholic Curriculum and Resources
- > Teacher Development Projects
- > Professional Development Network
- > Collaborative Learning Communities

Teaching in the 21st Century

The Teaching in the 21st Century guidebook and video series was curated to help Catholic teachers navigate the complexities of their profession in the modern context. This resource includes key information on the investigative bodies which govern the teaching profession, professional boundaries, and more both in video and print form.

Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity & Equity

OECTA has curated many resources related to accessibility, inclusion, diversity and equity (AIDE). These are located in the [Members' Portal](#) at **catholicteachers.ca** and include:

- > AIDE Strategy & Tools
- > Learning from Diverse Voices Video Series
- > AIDE Events
- > Racial Justice
- > Disability Justice
- > Gender and Sexuality Justice
- > Safer Spaces Series
- > Human Rights Complaints Form and Process

Member Mental Health and Wellness

OECTA has curated many resources related mental health and wellness. These are located in the [Members' Portal](#) at **catholicteachers.ca** and includes:

- > Mental Health and Wellness Series
- > Starling Minds Digital Mental Health Program
- > Safer Spaces Series
- > Support with Grief Series
- > Additional Resources

Curriculum Resources

This is a list of OECTA resources related to the classroom, followed by external organization websites in alphabetical order by subject. You can find lesson plans and other learning materials related to your teaching assignment with ease. While not exhaustive, this list provides a variety of ready-to-use classroom resources.

Catholic Curriculum and Resources

This is a list of Catholic curriculum and resources curated by OECTA, which include:

- > Foundational Catholic Teaching
- > Religious Education and Family Life Curriculum in Catholic Schools
- > Catholic Curriculum Corporation: Cross-Curricular Supplements
- > Eastern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Corporation
- > Faith Formation & Mental Wellness
- > Prayer
- > Catholic Education Week Resources
- > Professional Associations and Organizations
- > Additional Resources

New to OECTA and Beginning Teachers

Check out the resources that have been created for beginning teachers to help you navigate as you start your career:

- > Welcome to OECTA (PDF)
- > Welcome to OECTA (video)
- > FAQs and Overview of the NTIP Program
- > Teacher Performance Appraisal
- > A Teachers Guide to the *Health and Safety Act*
- > Resources for Beginning and Pre-Service Teachers

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Ontario Teacher Insurance Plan (OTIP)

OTIP is the provider of group benefits for most teachers across the province of Ontario. Visit their website to find out more about what they offer.

Ontario Teacher Pension Plan (OTPP)

The Ontario Teacher Pension Plan website contains a wealth of information regarding your pension. As a contributor, you can log in to review your own pension, name a beneficiary, and more. You can also call the OTPP at **1-800-668-0105**.

Service Canada

Service Canada provides information about eligibility for and process of accessing unemployment insurance.

The Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO)

All OECTA members need to be evaluated by QECO to obtain a salary category placement between Category A and Category A4.

Ontario Ministry of Education

The Ontario Ministry of Education is the governing body for education in Ontario. They have a [page specifically for teachers](#) which covers the curriculum, and other areas related to education.

They also have the following sites:

- > [Curriculum and Resources: Discover What Students are Learning](#)
- > [New Teacher Induction Program](#)

Ontario College of Teachers

The Ontario College of Teachers has three primary responsibilities:

1. Licensing Ontario Certified Teachers (OCTs)
2. Accrediting initial and ongoing teacher education programs
3. Investigating and disciplining instances of professional misconduct.

They also have the Margaret Wilson Library which offers numerous academic research resources. Log in to your account on oct.ca to review titles.

Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association
catholicteachers.ca