

TRANSLATION

October 5, 2020

To members of staff in the education network:

Thanks to your concerted efforts, we were able to take the important step in September of revitalizing our schools and enabling Québec students to return to class. The tremendous work you accomplished in applying the new rules was remarkable and allowed our students to resume their learning safely in spite of this unprecedented situation. While we are still facing difficult circumstances, we must safeguard the significant achievement of having hundreds of thousands of students attend school in person and of having created a safe environment for all.

The past few weeks have highlighted the instability we are all forced to deal with. A marked increase in infection rates has resulted in the maximum alert being declared in several regions. Thus, as recommended by the public health authorities, we must introduce initiatives to protect everyone in our school community and to allow our students to remain in class for as long as possible.

To ensure the safety of both students and staff in schools in red zones and following the introduction of new guidelines by the public health authorities, stricter health measures are required. While these measures are in addition to an already complex school organization, they are being put into place, first and foremost, to protect your health and that of students and their families.

Educational services continue to be offered when a region transitions into a red zone, unless otherwise specified by the public health authorities. As of October 8, the following measures are to be applied in preschools and elementary and secondary schools in these regions:

- Students will remain in a single stable class group, without any physical distancing between students within that group.
- Seats in school transportation will be assigned, with only one student per bench, if possible.
- Special pedagogical projects, such as Sport-études and Arts-études programs, will continue only within a stable class group. If it is necessary for students from different groups to come together, a 2-metre physical distance must be maintained between these students at all times. No group activities may be carried out while students are gathered together. Matches, games and competitions will not be permitted.
- Lunch can be eaten in the classroom or in the cafeteria, with a 2-metre distance between stable class groups.

- Professional services (e.g. remedial instruction) can continue to be offered to students either individually or in groups of no more than six students. If any of these six students come from different class groups, a 2-metre physical distance is required.
- From now on, school staff must wear a procedural mask in common areas, in staff rooms and in the schoolyard.
- All extracurricular activities and educational field trips will be suspended.

Measures specific to elementary schools

Daycare services will be offered in stable class groups or in subgroups separated by a 2-metre distance and/or physical barriers.

Measures specific to secondary schools

From now on, students will be required to wear a face covering as soon as they arrive on school grounds. This new measure is being put in place to make young people more mindful of physical distancing measures and public health rules.

In addition, face coverings are now compulsory when students are in the classroom. However, the face covering may be removed in the following circumstances:

- When a student is seated and eating or drinking.
 - When a student is in Physical Education and Health class and is maintaining a 2-metre physical distance from others.
 - When a student reports having a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a face covering.
 - When a student is receiving care, obtaining a service or practising a physical activity that requires them to remove their face covering, in which case they can remove it for the duration of the care, service or activity.
- From now on, students in Secondary IV and V will attend school in person every second day, an approach to ensure the continuation of their learning. They will follow their regular schedule, but will alternate between in-person and distance learning. When students are at home, their teachers could, depending on their planning, teach online lessons to the entire class, offer workshops intended for students with special needs or learning delays, or use this time to answer the students' various questions.
 - It may happen that students who are taking optional courses required for admission to college programs do not all belong to the same stable class group. In this case, they must wear a face covering and the 2-metre physical distancing rule must be maintained at all times. Alternatively, these courses may be offered through distance education.

- There will be an increased police presence near secondary schools to raise awareness among students and encourage them to disperse when necessary.

Measures specific to school staff

- All school staff will also be required to wear a procedural mask in common areas, including staff rooms, and outside on school grounds. The government will cover the cost of supplying all staff members with procedural masks.
- As stipulated in the various guides produced by the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité au travail (CNESST) and by the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ), adjustments must be made to minimize the risk of transmission of COVID-19. The government orientation prioritizes working remotely, whenever possible. Thus, it is recommended that the organization of work be revised to promote the use of the technological tools available in carrying out work-related tasks whenever possible.
- Specifically, it is recommended that teachers work remotely to perform "other duties" that do not need to be carried out in the presence of students. This arrangement is subject to approval by the administration and should not undermine team collaboration.

All of these measures will come into effect in red zones on Thursday, October 8, and will remain in effect until at least October 28, at which time the situation will be re-evaluated.

Additional support and massive recruitment of resources in the public system

Health measures will be reinforced, which will bring about an increased need for support staff. To facilitate the implementation of these key measures and lend a helping hand to educational institutions that already have significant needs in this regard, the government has created a dedicated web platform for the education network as part of its *Answer the call!* campaign.

This platform, to be launched today, will facilitate the massive recruitment of some 2000 candidates who are interested in becoming student supervisors, caretakers or school daycare educators. The hiring of these candidates will make it possible to maximize the implementation of health measures, thereby enabling the school team to fully dedicate their time to the students' educational success.

In the event of the closure of one or more schools by the public health authorities

No matter the region, the public health authorities could decide to temporarily close one or more schools. Should this be the case, and as provided for in their emergency protocols, educational institutions must be able to swiftly transition to distance learning. We will continue to support schools as we have done since the start of the school year.

In conclusion, we would like to once more commend you on the phenomenal work carried out over the past weeks and thank you most sincerely for the exceptional efforts you make every day to provide all our students with educational services.

Yours truly,

[Original signed by]

Jean-François Roberge
Minister of Education

[Original signed by]

Isabelle Charest
Minister for Education and
Minister responsible for the Status of
Women

Encl.