

June 30, 2020

To the Directors general of school service centres and school boards, and the principals of private schools:

As you know, on June 16, the Minister of Education, Jean-François Roberge, alongside the strategic medical advisor to the Direction générale de la santé publique of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, Dr. Richard Massé, announced the back-to-school plan for the 2020-2021 school year.

Since then, discussions between the Ministère de l'Éducation and the partners in the education network have been ongoing.

The Ministère is aware that the school transportation guidelines issued by the Direction générale de la santé publique on June 16 present major logistical challenges, particularly the physical distancing guideline of one metre between students. The Ministère has been conferring with the Direction générale de la santé publique in order to adjust this guideline.

We are pleased to inform you that, following these discussions and as a result of the notable improvement of the overall epidemiological situation, the Direction générale de la santé publique has issued new guidelines regarding school transportation.

The new guidelines are as follows:

- The physical distancing rule of one metre between students in school transportation is no longer required.
- Starting now, **no more than two students can be seated on the same bench**, bringing the number of students who can be on board a school bus at the same time to 48:
 - Opt for seating siblings together.
 - The same two students must remain seated together on the same bench every day. This arrangement in school buses makes it possible to rigorously and consistently implement methods for identifying individuals who have come into contact with a person who contracted the virus, regardless of the places they frequented (classroom, daycare, school bus), if necessary.

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- **Preschool and elementary education:** It is strongly recommended that face-coverings be worn while in the vehicle.
- **Secondary education:** Face-coverings must be worn while in the vehicle.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be made available to students at the entrance of the vehicle.
- The vehicle must be fully cleaned after transporting each group of students.
- Measures to encourage good respiratory and hand disinfection hygiene must be communicated to students and their parents at the beginning of the school year.

School bus drivers will have access to the necessary personal protective equipment (e.g. mask, visor). The installation of a physical acrylic glass barrier could be an additional option to ensure their safety.

Despite this major progress, the organization of school transportation still cannot proceed as it would under normal circumstances. To limit the risks of contagion as much as possible, the Direction générale de la santé publique recommends promoting some alternatives to school transportation, and counting on a collective increased awareness to enable students to get to school:

- Ask for the cooperation of parents whose children have a right to school transportation, by requesting that they bring their children to school themselves, if possible, to reduce the number of students who require school transportation.
- Encourage alternatives to school transportation that promote an active lifestyle, such as participation in initiatives like Trotibus and school corridors. School corridors encourage a safe walk to school while helping students to develop a healthy lifestyle.

We are confident that the implementation of these conditions will allow you to organize student transport more easily while minimizing the risk of contagion.

We encourage you to share this information within your organization and to ensure that parents, students and school transportation providers are properly notified and well aware of this information, and that all those involved work together. Information regarding the implementation of these guidelines will be communicated shortly.

Over the coming weeks, we will remain at your complete disposal to make sure that you have all the tools needed for a most successful and safe back-to-school season.

Thank you for your collaboration.

Yours truly,

Eric Blackburn
Deputy Minister of Education