

Back-to-school plan for education – Fall 2020

How will the resumption of educational activities be organized in elementary schools?

- 100% of students present in schools full-time
- Organization of stable class groups (the same students remain in the same group at all times)
- Compliance with the current physical distancing rules (no physical distancing required between students from the same stable class group, 1 metre between students from different stable class groups and 2 metres between students and school staff)
- Staff moving between rooms to teach different subjects
- All subjects taught (including Arts Education programs and Physical Education and Health)
- Modified access to common areas, while respecting health measures (gymnasium, music rooms, cafeteria, etc.)
- Reorganization of schedules and special projects based on the principle of stable class groups, with each student staying in their group no matter what courses they are taking

How will the resumption of educational activities be organized in secondary schools?

Secondary I, II and III

- 100% of students present in schools full-time
- Organization of stable class groups (the same students remain in the same group at all times)
- Compliance with the current physical distancing rules (no physical distancing required between students from the same stable class group, 1 metre between students from different stable class groups and 2 metres between students and school staff)
- Staff moving between rooms to teach different subjects
- All subjects taught (including Arts Education programs and Physical Education and Health)
- Modified access to common areas, while respecting health measures (gymnasium, music rooms, cafeteria, etc.)
- Reorganization of schedules and special projects based on the principle of stable class groups, with each student staying in their group no matter what courses they are taking

Secondary IV and V

[FAQ on www.quebec.ca/rentree](http://www.quebec.ca/rentree)

Two options are available to school service centres and school boards (English sector and special status) based on their situation and the needs identified in their respective school communities.

Option 1: The same school organization as for students in Secondary I, II and III, with reorganized schedules based on the principle of stable class groups (see previous question)

Option 2: If a reorganized course schedule (including optional courses and special projects) and the organization of stable class groups is not possible:

- Students present in schools as often as possible, with no less than 50% of the time usually prescribed for each subject, based on locally determined arrangements and the situation of each school
- All subjects taught (including Physical Education and Health and Arts Education programs)
- Compliance with the current physical distancing rules (1 metre between students and 2 metres between students and school staff)
- Online educational services and assigning of homework for days on which students are not in the classroom
- Prioritization of online learning resources and pedagogical activities outside regular classrooms

How will the resumption of educational activities be organized in adult education centres and vocational training centres?

Presence of adult learners and students in centres as well as the possibility of continuing with distance learning:

- Compliance with the current physical distancing rules, except in programs where it is impossible to do so, in which case students and teachers must use personal protective equipment
- A distance of 1.5 metres required between adult learners/students in classrooms when they are seated in a working position
- A distance of 2 metres maintained in laboratories, cafeterias and libraries, as well as between adult learners/students and teachers
- Possibility of organizing internships and training in the workplace while respecting the guidelines issued by the public health authorities

Which students may be exempt from the compulsory return to physical school attendance?

As of September, physical school attendance will once again be compulsory for all students.

Students who have a health condition that makes them vulnerable may be exempt from the compulsory physical attendance by providing a doctor's note. Physicians have been informed by the public health authorities of which conditions may justify an absence from school. Students living in the same household as a close family member who has a health condition that makes that person vulnerable may also be exempt.

Students who cannot return to school in person will receive distance learning services. A doctor's note is required.

What happens if a parent chooses not to send their child to school, but does not have a valid reason?

Starting this back-to-school period, all students residing in Québec and subject to compulsory school attendance, that is, students aged 6 to 16, must return to school, as prescribed in the *Education Act*.

Parents must take the necessary steps to ensure that their child meets the compulsory school education requirement.

What are the main health measures that will be implemented?

- Regular handwashing: at the beginning and end of the day, before and after meals, and before and after breaks and recess periods
- Wearing of face coverings (see the [information sheet](#), [PDF 233 Kb](#)) about wearing face coverings in different contexts)
- Janitorial services: cleaning and disinfection that complies with the Guide d'intervention prévention et contrôle des infections dans les services de garde et écoles du Québec (MSSS, 2015)
- Emergency kits containing a procedure mask, a visor, a smock (gown), gloves and alcohol-based hand sanitizer available for use in response to a suspected case of COVID-19 in a school
- Specific arrangements to manage circulation and the use of specialized rooms (e.g. minimizing the use of these rooms by different groups on the same day, perhaps by scheduling the extended use of a given room) and cleaning of these rooms between groups, if applicable
- Use of signage, particularly to facilitate circulation in hallways (e.g. one-way traffic)

Are students required to wear a face covering?

Students in preschool are not required to wear a face covering, either when in school or when using school transportation. However, they are allowed to do so.

Students in Elementary 1 to 4, inclusive, are not required to wear a face covering, either when in school or when using school transportation. However, it is recommended that they do so.

Students in Elementary 5 and 6 (Elementary Cycle Three) are required to wear a face covering outside of classrooms and in common areas of the school that are frequented by students from different class groups, as well as when using school transportation.

Students in secondary school are required to wear a face covering when circulating outside classrooms, in common areas and when in the presence of students who do not belong to their class group. These students are also required to wear a face covering when using school transportation or public transportation (10 years of age or older).

Students in adult general education and vocational training are required to wear a face covering, unless they are seated in a classroom and are maintaining 1.5m of distance from one another.

See the [information sheet](#) (PDF 233 Kb) on wearing face coverings in various other contexts.

What happens if my child forgets their face covering at home?

Parents are responsible for providing their child with a face covering.

If, for an exceptional reason, a student forgets their face covering at home, the school can provide one from their supply. However, this is a backup measure only.

The student will be encouraged to make sure they have their own face covering when it is time to wear it at school.

Must school staff wear a face covering?

Staff must wear a face covering at all times when circulating outside classrooms in elementary and secondary schools.

Preschool teachers (Kindergarten for 4-year-olds and 5-year-olds) must wear personal protective equipment in classrooms, since physical distancing between teachers and students is not required.

At all other grade levels of elementary and secondary school, staff are not required to wear a face covering so long as the 2m distance between them and students is respected.

See the [information sheet](#) (PDF 233 Kb) on wearing face coverings in various other contexts.

What happens if a student shows symptoms of COVID-19 at school?

- The student is automatically isolated.
- A single staff member cares for the student while waiting for the parent.
- An emergency kit containing the necessary materials (masks, glasses, gloves, etc.) is used.

- The student's parents are contacted so that the student can return home, where they are to stay until they have recovered.
- The room is ventilated, cleaned and disinfected once the student has left.
- The teacher may provide the student with educational support, if the parent requests it and based on the student's capacity.
- The school will quickly contact the regional public health authorities, who will complete an epidemiological survey and determine any action to be taken, based on various criteria (contact with other students, compliance with health guidelines).
- The parent must call 1-877-644-4545 as soon as possible and follow the public health guidelines that are provided. The student showing symptoms must remain in isolation at home until public health guidelines have been received.
- If the student tests positive for COVID-19, the public health authorities will determine the close contacts that occurred at the school, with help from the administration, teachers, school staff and the student concerned or their parents. Based on the level of risk, contacts will be informed by letter and guidelines will be communicated.
- The school will contact only the parents of students who were in contact with the student who tested positive for COVID-19.

Which and how many COVID-19 symptoms must a child show to be put into isolation and required to take the test?

In case of doubt, call 1-877-644-4545 as soon as possible if your child shows symptoms associated with COVID-19, and follow the public health guidelines that are provided. The child showing symptoms must remain in isolation at home until public health guidelines have been received.

Only one of the symptoms listed on the [Québec.ca website](https://www.quebec.ca/website) need be present in order to be tested.

It is recommended that children who show mild flu-like symptoms be kept at home and avoid contact with others. After 24 hours, the situation can be re-evaluated based on the evolution of symptoms. While flu-like symptoms may appear similar to those of COVID-19, they are not a sure sign of this virus.

Keep your child at home and immediately call [1-877-644-4545](tel:1-877-644-4545) if your child shows the following symptoms:

- a fever and decline in general health, or flu-like symptoms (fever and cough accompanied by headaches, fatigue, aches and pains or extreme fatigue)
- loss of sense of smell or taste

Will there be screening tests for COVID-19 in schools?

Students, like teachers and any other individuals showing symptoms of COVID-19, must stay home and seek appropriate advice. Information on where to undergo a COVID-19 swab test can be obtained by calling 1-877-644-4545. The location of the testing sites depends on the organization of services in each region. However, screening (testing of individuals without symptoms) may take place in certain schools in order to determine the general situation regarding the transmission of COVID-19, or in response to a local outbreak. In that case, it is possible that a specialized team will be sent to the school to carry out this screening.

Is a child who shows symptoms required to undergo a screening test before returning to class?

If a child is showing one or more symptoms that justify being kept at home, it is strongly suggested that the child be tested. Please note that a child showing symptoms at school can be sent home. The criteria for returning to school (discontinued isolation) vary based on the diagnosis. In the case of COVID-19, isolation can only end when the following three conditions are met:

- at least 14 days have passed since the start of the illness
- absence of acute symptoms for at least 24 hours (excluding cough and loss of sense of smell or taste, which may last longer)
- absence of fever for 48 hours (without having taken fever-reducing medication)

Will students and the parents of students who were in contact with a child showing symptoms be notified?

The school will contact only the parents of students who were in contact with the student who tested positive for COVID-19.

In the event of an outbreak, the regional public health authorities will provide schools with guidelines. The schools will then contact the families or staff members who must be notified.

Do individuals who were in contact with a child showing symptoms need to self-isolate?

- The public health authorities will proceed with an investigation once the positive diagnosis of COVID-19 is confirmed.
- Depending on the identified level of risk, parents of students who had low-risk contact will just be asked to monitor symptoms.
- Individuals who had moderate- to high-risk contact will be asked to self-isolate at home for 14 days following the exposure and undergo a screening test.

If a member of the school staff has symptoms of COVID-19, do they need to self-isolate while waiting for results?

Yes, staff members who show symptoms of COVID-19 are asked not report to school.

Can the movement of personnel required to temporarily replace a teacher increase the spread of the virus?

Supply teachers must respect the same health guidelines as the rest of the staff in order to reduce the potential spread of the virus.

As long as these guidelines are followed, the public health authorities do not consider there to be a major risk.

If a school staff member is in voluntary isolation, can they continue to work?

Educational institutions must evaluate each situation based on its specific circumstances. They are welcome to assess the possibility of teachers continuing to work remotely.

If the situation is outside of the employee's control and it is impossible for them to return to school, their salary is minimally maintained in accordance with the known and agreed-upon schedule in the work contract.

What happens if a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19?

- Anyone considered to be at moderate to high risk is removed from the school and is tested.
- The student is provided with remote pedagogical support.
- The parent must call 1-877-644-4545 as soon as possible and follow the public health guidelines that are provided. The student who tested positive must remain in isolation at home until public health guidelines have been received.
- The student may only return to the school once all of the following conditions are met:
 - at least 14 days have passed since the start of the acute phase of illness
 - absence of acute symptoms for at least 24 hours (excluding a cough, which may last longer)
 - absence of fever for 48 hours
- All parents and staff are automatically contacted by the school when a case of COVID-19 is confirmed there.
- It is possible that intervention measures may be stricter (closing a classroom, closing a school, etc.) based on the public health authorities' analysis of virus transmission in the school and on the epidemiological factors specific to the school or region.

What happens if there are several cases of COVID-19 in the same class or if the outbreak involves several classes?

- In case of an outbreak, the regional public health authorities will provide the school with detailed instructions. The school will contact all the families or staff members.
- In collaboration with the school administration, the regional public health authorities will make recommendations as to whether a classroom or school should be closed based on the situation.
- With help from the administration, teachers, school staff and the student concerned or their parents, the public health authorities will determine the close contact that occurred at the school.
- Anyone considered to be at moderate to high risk will be removed from the school and tested.
- Staff will continue to work full-time and a minimum number of distance teaching hours per week will be guaranteed.

It is possible that intervention measures may be stricter (closing a classroom, closing a school, etc.) based on the public health authorities' analysis of virus transmission in the school and on the epidemiological factors specific to the school or region.

How will the school follow up with students who cannot attend class?

A student who is removed from class after showing symptoms (e.g. a student placed in 14-day isolation) will continue to be followed by their regular teachers, provided they are not too ill to do schoolwork. The teacher may provide them with work, but they are not subject to the minimum number of hours of educational services. The teacher will contact the parents to follow up on the student during this short period.

In the event of an outbreak in a school, the public health authorities may choose to fully confine certain groups or the entire school. Contrary to last spring, when only pedagogical support services were offered, educational services to students will continue this fall, meaning that school attendance will continue to be compulsory, but in a different format: distance learning.

In such an event, teachers will continue to work with the students in the groups they have been assigned to, but this work will take place partially through distance learning. The number of hours dedicated to distance learning will vary based on the students' grade level, and students will also be required to do some independent work each day. Thus, students will do several hours of distance learning as well as individual work on a daily basis.

In addition, the teacher's workload will allow for time to carry out personalized follow-up with students. This will enable teachers not only to work with the larger group, but to provide students with more personalized support as well. To ensure that all students have access to distance learning with their teachers, schools will be able to lend students the digital equipment they need.

These measures will ensure that educational services can continue and that students can continue to learn new content, rather than simply consolidating prior learning as they did in the spring.

Additionally, a student whose health is such that a physician has determined it would be too great a risk for them to attend school is entitled to the same minimum level of services, the support of a designated teacher for distance learning support and school work, in accordance with the student's health and capabilities. The designated teacher will not be this student's regular teacher, but will be another teacher whose role will be to support students in this exceptional health situation. Students entitled to this measure will be required to submit a doctor's note to their school.

In the event of the full closure of one or more schools, how will the continuity of distance learning services be provided?

Each school service centre, school board and private educational institution is asked to prepare an emergency protocol, which is a tool for planning the rapid organization and implementation of educational services in the event of a closure.

This protocol must cover the following six aspects: management; communication; material and information resources; educational services; support for students with disabilities, social maladjustments or learning difficulties and for students with specific needs; and support with regard to mental health and well-being.

Teaching must continue if schools were to close. The distance learning services required based on students' needs are managed locally, in compliance with the applicable collective agreements.

Staff will continue to work full-time and a minimum weekly number of hours of distance learning will be set.

Contrary to last spring, students will continue to learn new content, rather than simply consolidate prior learning as they did in the spring.

Are specific pedagogical services planned for students who cannot return to school (vulnerable students) or who fell significantly behind last spring?

Distance learning must be offered to students who are unable to return to school. These services will be overseen by the school service centre, school board or private educational institution attended by these students. The required complementary educational services must also be offered to them, if necessary.

The school service centre, school board or private educational institution, in collaboration with the school team, must create a plan to provide educational and complementary services to students who have fallen significantly behind. These services include:

- Consolidation of learning planned for the start of the school year and that provides a significant amount of remedial instruction before introducing new content in order to bridge any possible gaps
- The implementation of a protocol for welcoming vulnerable students, including students with disabilities, social maladjustments or learning difficulties, and their families in order to create a personal connection with these families
- Paying close attention to the specialized services required to mitigate the negative impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown (accumulated delay, anxiety, loneliness, etc.), such as remedial education

and psychosocial services

Updated IEPs will be required for students with disabilities, social maladjustments or learning difficulties to enable them to adjust to their new reality.

Will IT support be provided to students required to continue their education remotely, but who lack the necessary equipment for doing so?

Yes. School service centres and school boards are responsible for loaning the necessary equipment to students who do not have it at home in order to ensure that these student can continue to learn remotely. To support educational institutions in acquiring equipment and loaning it to students, the Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ) has made an additional funding available to the network.

The Ministère is also stockpiling a reserve of technological equipment consisting of 15 000 tablets and 15 000 laptops to support the education network in its efforts. This equipment is intended for students who cannot attend school in person and who do not have their own equipment at home. School service centres and school boards may use this equipment if they are unable to meet students' needs by relying on their own inventory or orders.

School service centres and school boards will also provide IT support to students and parents who require assistance in using technological equipment and digital tools. The Ministère is also taking steps to establish a call centre. This IT support service will be available to students who have borrowed equipment and attend a school under the jurisdiction of a service centre or school board that is subscribed to this service, as well to their parents.

Families remain responsible for establishing and paying for an Internet connection. Students may download educational materials using a public Internet hotspot or their school's Wi-Fi connection. Institutions may also provide students with LTE mobile Internet keys.

What exactly will be provided through the ministerial stockpile of computer equipment to be available at the beginning of the school year?

To help the school network ensure that all students throughout Québec have access to computer equipment, the government has taken special measures to set up an emergency stockpile consisting of 30 000 devices.

Priority access to this equipment will be given to students:

- who do not have access to computer equipment
- who do not have exclusive access to computer equipment
- who are in Secondary IV or V and attending school according to an alternating schedule
- who are at risk (at-risk students are those at the preschool, elementary and secondary levels who have weaknesses that may affect their learning, success, behaviour or socialization)
- who have handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties

This special stockpile supplements the devices already acquired by the school network. Up to now, the network has acquired approximately 200 000 devices in preparation for the beginning of the school year. Orders will continue to be placed in the coming weeks.

Will computer support be provided for students who must continue their education through distance learning, but who do not have the necessary equipment?

School service centres and English school boards will offer technical support to students who must continue their education through distance learning.

Steps are also being taken to set up a call centre to help organizations in the network with their efforts in this regard.

Will support be provided to teachers working with students whose learning has been significantly delayed?

Memory aids for each program of study have been made available to all educational service departments of school service centres and school boards. These tools aim to support education consultants and teachers in targeting essential learning, at both the elementary and secondary levels, in order to complete the 2019-2020 school year. They will be equally helpful during the catch-up period in fall 2020 in targeting essential learning based on each student's needs.

Training aimed at supporting the education network throughout the next school year will be available at the start of the school year. This training offers a new look at the principles, concepts, processes, approaches and strategies used in the teaching profession. It will also provide food for thought on how to prepare for and proceed with the new school year. The training videos will be available on the Ministère's YouTube channel, and can be viewed at any time. The training will consist of three parts:

- Learning and Enabling Learning: Embracing and Implementing Curricula
- Identifying Students' Needs to Optimize Planning and Learning
- Differentiated Instruction Through Pedagogical Flexibility: A Response to Student Group Heterogeneity

At the start of the new school year, will vulnerable employees be asked to remain in lockdown and not report to school?

Employees with a health condition or in an age bracket that makes them vulnerable (chronic disease, severe immunodeficiency, pregnancy or aged 70 or older) may be exempted.

How will high-quality courses be offered in the event of a teacher shortage due to absences or illness?

As employers, school service centres and school boards are responsible for managing their human resources based on their own needs and in compliance with the legal frameworks and collective agreements. They can also turn to their pool of supply teachers, which may be extensive.

In an effort to prevent and counter the negative impacts of a teacher shortage, the Ministère has taken various steps over the last few years to promote the teaching profession and foster the recruitment of competent and qualified individuals.

Will special programs, Sports-études and Arts-études, concentrations, extracurricular activities and field trips (e.g. to cultural venues) continue to be offered?

- Some special pedagogical projects, extracurricular activities and field trips are possible, provided the current health guidelines are followed.
- It is a local decision, made jointly with the partners involved (e.g. sports federations, partners in the arts sector, scientific organizations).
- Access to sports facilities is permitted and the same [guidelines that apply to sports federations must be applied to sports in schools](#).
- Note, however, that dividing the year into terms (e.g. for Anglais intensif) is to be avoided to ensure that students are not penalized should another lockdown be necessary.

Can schools allow access to play structures?

It is anticipated that school play structures will be accessible.

How will recess be organized?

- The physical distancing rules of one metre between subgroups of students and two metres between students and adults must be respected during indoor and outdoor activities.
- For the moment, given that it is difficult to avoid touching your face with your hands, especially during physical and sports activities, it is recommended that shared objects or equipment be disinfected between each use.
- Children will be able to play with balls, provided they only make contact with their feet. It is important not to touch the balls with their hands. However, it is possible that the guidelines will change, based on new recommendations issued by the health authorities.

What about school transportation?

No more than two students can be seated on the same bench, bringing the total number of students who can be on board a school bus at the same time to 48.

- Siblings should be seated together on the same bench.
- The same two students should remain seated together on the same bench every day, if possible.
- Students in Elementary Cycle Three (Elementary 5 and 6) and secondary school are required to wear a face covering when using school transportation. Students in preschool education and in Elementary Cycles One and Two may wear face coverings when using school transportation, if they wish to do so.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be available to students at the entrance of the vehicle.
- The vehicle must be fully cleaned every day.
- If a vehicle must be used for more than one run in the morning or afternoon, the areas most frequently touched by students must be disinfected (e.g. tops of seat backs, handrail).

Parents who can transport their children themselves are, once again, encouraged to do so.

Transportation providers must implement the school transportation recommendations made by the CNESST. School bus drivers will have access to the necessary personal protective equipment (e.g. mask, visor). The installation of a clear plastic barrier could be an additional option to ensure their safety.

Will school daycare services remain available in their current form?

School daycare services will resume their regular operations (regular fees, regular 1-to-20 ratio), while complying with the health guidelines issued by the public health authorities. Each school will implement the guidelines based on its respective situation.

What health measures will be implemented in daycare groups, given that they will be made up of children from different class groups?

All health measures implemented in schools also apply to school daycare services. In addition, students from the same stable class groups should be placed in the same daycare groups, wherever possible.