

# COVID-19: FAQs

SEPTEMBER 11, 2020

## Table of Contents

Emergency protocol	2
Distancing measures	2
Wearing a face covering or a mask	2
School materials and disinfection	5
Organization of meals and food services	6
School transportation	7
Physical activity	9
Recess	9
Laboratories	9
School libraries	10
School organization	10
Special pedagogical projects, extracurricular activities and field trips	12
Students with disabilities, social maladjustments or learning difficulties	13
Daycare services	14
Vocational training	14
Adult general education	14
Distance learning	15
Doctor's note	16
Labour relations	17
English network	21
Private educational institutions	21
Francisation	23
Practical training in the workplace	23
COVID-19 costs	24
Provincial watch – Collecte-Info	24

# Emergency protocol

## 1. Must each educational institution send an emergency protocol to the Ministère, or is one protocol per school service centre or school board sufficient?

A single protocol per school service centre or school board is required, but each school is expected to be able to implement the required guidelines and measures in the event of another lockdown to ensure the continuation of learning. However, each private educational institution must establish its own protocol.

# Distancing measures

## 2. What about having parents present in school, specifically with regard to acting as Parent liaisons in the context of kindergarten for four-year-olds and participating in activities that are part of the Passe-Partout program?

Parents are allowed to be present in class to serve as a Parent liaison in the context of kindergarten for four-year-olds or to participate in the Passe-Partout program so long as a physical distance between adults (2 metres) and between adults and children (2 metres) from different families can be maintained. The size of the classroom or space must therefore make it possible to observe this distance.

Like all visitors, parents must wear a mask while at school (in class, in common areas, when circulating in the building, etc.).

## 3. Can annual general assemblies be held in person, or do they have to be carried out remotely?

It is not compulsory for annual general assemblies to be carried out remotely, though it is recommended. However, schools must be sure to follow the health rules in effect. An up-to-date version of these rules can be found on the Québec.ca website: <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/gatherings-events-covid19/#c62731>.

# Wearing a face covering or a mask

## 4. [MODIFIED] Reference is made to both “face coverings” and “masks.” What is the difference between the two?

“Face covering” is used to describe a reusable mask or well-fitting piece of fabric that covers the nose and mouth. In a school setting, these are worn primarily when circulating within the school and in situations where students, staff and visitors cannot maintain the required distancing.

A “mask” or “medical mask” is used to describe a disposable mask that covers the nose and mouth. In a school setting, these are worn in situations where a staff member must intervene with a student and it is impossible to maintain the required distancing (e.g. in preschool classes, with some students who have significant disabilities and when providing direct assistance).

## 5. What does personal protective equipment (PPE) consist of?

PPE consists of a medical mask and protective eyewear. Under no circumstances can a face covering be worn in place of a medical mask when the use of PPE is required.

## 6. Can educational institutions make wearing a face covering compulsory under conditions that differ from those prescribed by the public health authorities?

Educational institutions, whether public or private, have no legal authority in matters of public health and cannot force some students to wear a face covering at school or elsewhere if such a recommendation is not issued by the public health authorities.

## 7. Who is responsible for supplying masks and face coverings?

Face coverings for students do not fall under free educational services; rather, they are materials for personal use that the student must purchase. However, it has been made clear that medical masks will be provided on an exceptional basis to students who do not have their own face covering.

School service centres and school boards have been encouraged to contact various resources in the community. The government will pay for medical masks if the situation calls for it. The employer must provide them.

#### **8. [MODIFIED] In schools and administrative centres, which staff members are required to wear a face mask and which staff members are required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE)?**

The protection of workers and prevention of outbreaks are governed by the [Hierarchy of Control Measures in the Workplace](#) developed by the Réseau de santé publique en santé au travail (RSPSAT) and the INSPQ and [adopted by the CNESST](#).

##### **Main points**

- When 2 metres of distancing can be maintained most of the time (a cumulative total of 15 minutes of close contact is permitted), no PPE is required.
- Adjustments to scheduling and to the organization of work can help ensure that the 2-metre distancing rule is respected in many situations most of the time, especially in classes with older students.
- Physical barriers can be used in some workstations and rooms to ensure that the 2-metre / 15-minute rule is respected. This assessment must be made by the educational institutions.

##### **Wearing of face coverings**

- If the analysis of a work shift leads to the conclusion that PPE is required for workers (based on the above-mentioned hierarchy of control measures), PPE must be prioritized because the occupational health and safety standards govern the wearing of face coverings (see Order 810-2020).
- If the analysis leads to the conclusion that no PPE is required based on the hierarchy of control measures, workers must wear face coverings in common areas (except in the classroom or a private individual office), just like students.

##### **Specific cases**

- For classes with young children, an analysis must be carried out by the educational institution (employer and workers) to determine whether PPE must be provided. The public health authorities are of the opinion that PPE is required in the case of preschool classes.
- For classes of students with specific needs (behavioural issues, need for ongoing assistance, etc.), PPE (medical masks and eye protection) must be systematically supplied in sufficient quantities.
- Special care must be taken in the case of workers who are immunosuppressed or have a chronic illness. Employers must ensure that the 2-metre distance is respected at all times and that physical barriers are installed to help meet this goal. If this is not possible, these employees should be reassigned to other tasks or to work from home. These workers will have the opportunity to exercise their right of refusal under the *Act respecting occupational health and safety*, if they deem it necessary. The CNESST will then evaluate situations on a case-by-case basis.

#### **9. Does the use of plexiglass offer adequate protection to professionals when they are providing services to students who are less than 2 metres away?**

If the organization of the room and the nature of the services are such that the use of a plexiglass panel is sufficient to keep staff members and students safely separated, then personal protective equipment (PPE) is not necessary. However, the plexiglass panel must be appropriately sized, meaning it must be higher than the tallest person and must protect the body if there is no other physical barrier, such as a desk. Educational institutions are invited to contact the CNESST to find out whether the use of plexiglass offers adequate, appropriate protection in their particular circumstances.

#### **10. [MODIFIED] What steps must a student take to ensure they use their face covering safely?**

Before putting on their face covering, students must wash or disinfect their hands. The face covering should be held only by the elastics or strings. When removing their face covering, students should fold it with the insides together and store it in a clean bag. When they go to reuse their face covering, they should avoid touching the outside of it.

To be worn properly, the face covering must fully cover the nose and mouth. Care must be taken not to touch the inside or outside of the face covering and to never store a used face covering next to a clean face covering. It is also important that students not wear their face covering inside out or wear one that someone else has already worn.

**11. The public health authorities have provided new recommendations on using face coverings. Can parents and visitors enter the school if they wear a face covering or a mask?**

Yes. All visitors, including parents, must wear a face covering at all times, except when they are seated to eat or drink. Visitors are not required to wear a face covering when they are seated in a room designated for arts performances and a physical distance of 1.5 metres between spectators is maintained.

**12. Is it necessary to follow physical distancing measures when circulating in the building even if students are wearing a mask?**

When circulating in the school, students in Elementary Cycle Three and secondary school as well as school staff must wear a face covering. Nevertheless, physical distancing measures (1 metre between students from different groups and 2 metres between students and school staff) must be followed as much as possible. One-way circulation within schools, as recommended in the *Back-to-School Plan*, is intended to support the implementation of these measures.

**13. Who is not required to wear a face covering?**

Individuals in the following situations are not required to wear a mask or face covering:

- Students in preschool and Elementary Cycles One and Two
- Individuals with a specific medical condition that prevents them from wearing a mask or face covering:
  - individuals who are unable to put it on or take it off by themselves due to a physical disability
  - individuals with a facial deformity
  - individuals who are unable to understand the obligation to wear a mask or face covering or for whom doing so would cause disruption and significant distress, due to a cognitive disorder, intellectual deficiency, autism spectrum disorder, substance abuse problem or severe mental health disorder
  - individuals with a severe skin disorder on their face or ears that has become significantly worse from wearing a mask or face covering

These guidelines also apply to school transportation.

**14. Can a parent who says they have a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a face covering be allowed into a school without wearing one?**

Individuals with a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a face covering are not obligated to wear one. However, these individuals should stay home and not go to the school unless absolutely necessary.

**15. Can a student with a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a face covering still attend classes in person or must they learn remotely?**

Individuals with a specific medical condition that prevents them from wearing a face covering are not obligated to wear one. For the most part, the children who are exempt from wearing a mask are among those whose teachers are required to wear personal protective equipment (e.g. students with disabilities, social maladjustments or learning difficulties) or for whom the documented risks are lower (e.g. children younger than 10 years old). In all other cases, the children should be made aware of the importance of maintaining a 2-metre physical distance from other people at school (adults and children).

**16. What procedure should be followed if a student (or the parent on the student's behalf) refuses to wear a face covering?**

It is the responsibility of educational institutions to take the appropriate steps to ensure that students follow guidelines, just as with any other behaviour deemed harmful to others.

**17. Can students sing in class, with or without wearing a face covering?**

Yes. With regard to the wearing of face coverings, the guidelines remain unchanged in the context of this specific pedagogical activity, so the existing guidelines apply. If students are

within their stable class group, wearing a face covering is not required during pedagogical activities that take place in their classroom.

Whenever a different group uses a room, the floor in a singer's vicinity must be cleaned. Should students remain in their stable class groups, physical distancing measures do not need to be applied. However, it is recommended that the musicians be positioned in a way that ensures there is no one directly in front of a singer.

**18. [NEW] Is it possible to wear a face covering with a window when working with people who have hearing problems?**

Yes, it is possible to wear a medical mask with a window. These types of masks can be used, for example, while working with students who are deaf or have hearing difficulties and have an autism spectrum disorder or intellectual disability as well as with young children who are still acquiring language. The Ministère is working to make agreements to provide these through the Centre d'acquisitions gouvernementales. School boards and school service centres can also buy them from local suppliers.

## School materials and disinfection

**19. Can objects and equipment be used, for example, in music and in physical education and health classes? If so, must they be disinfected after each class has used them?**

Yes, it is possible to use materials that will be handled by various students. Objects and equipment must be cleaned and disinfected every time they are used by a class group. However, a particular object or piece of equipment that is used by several students, even within the same class group, should be disinfected more often.

As the possibility of transmission through contact with contaminated surfaces remains poorly understood, caution is recommended. The following general guidelines concern the cleaning and disinfecting of spaces where no infected individuals have been. Other guidelines must be followed in the case of infected individuals. Refer to:

<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/3054-nettoyage-desinfection-surfaces-covid19.pdf> (in French only)

The usual prevention measures (frequent handwashing, observing of respiratory etiquette, etc.) must be followed. Moreover, the most frequently touched surfaces (e.g. objects used in Physical Education and Health class, faucets, toilets, etc.) are more likely to be contaminated, and particular attention should be paid to how frequently and effectively they are cleaned and disinfected. For this reason, these surfaces should be cleaned often, and should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as they are visibly dirty.

The risk of spreading COVID-19 outside through outdoor urban furniture (e.g. park benches, handrails) is thought to be low. Regular cleaning procedures should still be maintained, but disinfection is not usually necessary. Nevertheless, safe, targeted disinfection could be carried out on frequently touched surfaces.

With regard to cleaning activities stemming from indoor and outdoor recreational activities, refer to the guidelines and recommendations established by the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité au travail at:

<https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/salle-de-presse/covid-19-info-en/Pages/toolkit-sports-outdoor.aspx>

**20. Can students in the same class group share objects (ball, jump rope, tablet) and equipment (traverse wall, balance beam, IWB)?**

Yes. Regular prevention measures (frequent handwashing, observing of respiratory etiquette, etc.) must be followed. Moreover, the most frequently touched surfaces (e.g. objects used in Physical Education and Health class, faucets, toilets) are more likely to be contaminated and particular attention should be paid to how frequently and effectively they are cleaned and disinfected. For this reason, these surfaces should be cleaned often.

It is therefore recommended that shared objects or equipment be disinfected after each class group has used them. Educational institutions may allow the use of objects or equipment that do not need to be handled very much or exchanged among peers. Note, however, that these standards are subject to change in accordance with the recommendations issued by the public health authorities (Québec.ca).

### 21. Must surfaces be cleaned after each class period?

Yes. As soon as there is a change of groups in a given room, laboratory or workshop, all surfaces and equipment must be cleaned.

### 22. Can teachers distribute materials and then collect them for evaluation?

Yes, within the same class group only, and taking care to limit the number of handlings and to engage in regular handwashing

### 23. Can school materials go back and forth between the school and the home?

Yes. However, *The ABCs of a Safe Start to the Year* specifically states that students and staff are to bring as few personal items as possible from home.

### 24. Can students play wind instruments?

Yes, it is possible to use materials that are handled by various students. It is necessary to disinfect the equipment after each class group. However, equipment that is handled by several students, even within the same class group, should be disinfected more often.

Whenever a different group uses a room, the floor in a wind instrument player's vicinity must be cleaned. It is recommended that the musicians be positioned in a way that ensures there is no one directly in front of the air outlet of a wind instrument.

As a reference document, see also the [Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide for Qualifying Training – COVID-19](#), which provides relevant information in the "Measures for singing or music courses" section on page 5.

## Organization of meals and food services

### 25. [MODIFIED] Where can meals be eaten?

In elementary school, depending on the nature of the physical distancing measures established to maintain stable class groups, eating meals could either be limited to the classroom or could alternate between the classroom and the usual dining area. In secondary school, priority should be given to scheduling separate, alternating lunchtimes to ensure that the physical distancing measures applicable to stable class groups can be followed and also to having students spread out over larger spaces, rather than having them eat only in the cafeteria.

However, if these proposals do not make it possible to meet the requirements for physical distancing or the capacity limits, stable class groups may use their classroom for eating meals.

### 26. Does the rule restricting indoor gatherings to 250 people apply to school cafeterias?

Yes. The standard of a maximum of 250 people gathered in the same indoor space applies to the inside of schools.

### 27. Is it possible to have meal services (meal service/canteen) inside the school?

Yes, but under certain conditions and in compliance with the current hygiene measures. The standards established for restaurants and community organizations specialized in food distribution must also be followed by the persons responsible for cafeterias and by catering services:

<https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/salle-de-presse/covid-19-info-en/Pages/toolkit-restaurant.aspx>

<https://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/msss/document-002618/> (in French only)

Additionally, the following elements must be taken into account:

- Service should be provided exclusively by staff on duty wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment (meaning no self-service, so buffet-style catering is to be avoided).
- The mixing of student groups in the cafeteria should be minimized (i.e. students from the same class should eat in the same place).
- It is also possible to work with catering services or community organizations specialized in meal services (e.g. Cantine pour tous), while ensuring that they comply with current hygiene measures.

## 28. Can students use the equipment available in the cafeteria?

Yes, but under certain conditions and in compliance with the current hygiene measures. It is important to make parents and students aware that the safest options in the current circumstances are individual cold lunches or hot lunches in an insulated container. Special attention should also be paid to surfaces that students touch frequently, such as microwaves and vending machines. Other options include:

- temporarily removing access to these appliances and encouraging the use of insulated containers
- assigning a staff member to the microwaves at lunchtime so that only one adult uses them
- ensuring that a staff member disinfects the appliances after each use
- selling alternative items (e.g. school canteen) to limit the handling of food products

## 29. Is it preferable to package food products individually for distribution to students to minimize the spread of the virus?

Packaging homemade food (e.g. in plastic wrap) is not a preferred method to limit the spread of the virus. Instead, minimizing the handling of food products and ensuring they are properly washed before distributing them to students is recommended. For example, a breakfast basket could be made with fresh, pre-washed foods. Commercial packaging, while less eco-friendly, does not require these measures.

## 30. [MODIFIED] Can cooking activities and gardening with students resume? If so, how?

Cooking and gardening activities organized for students are permitted. However, it is important to restrict the activities to students from the same stable class group and to encourage physical distancing whenever possible. The usual prevention measures (frequent handwashing, observing of respiratory etiquette, etc.) must be followed. Moreover, the most frequently touched surfaces (e.g. counters, sinks, etc.) are more likely to be contaminated, and particular attention should be paid to how frequently and effectively they are cleaned and disinfected. For this reason, these surfaces should be cleaned often. It is also recommended that as few students as possible use the same kitchen tools.

# School transportation

## 31. In the case of children living in a joint custody situation, will they be offered school transportation based on both of their addresses?

It is the responsibility of the school service centres and school boards to organize morning and afternoon school transportation services for students who attend their schools and require this service.

Each school service centre and school board establishes its own eligibility criteria for school transportation, and must do so with the students' health and safety in mind.

Under the guidelines issued by the public health authorities in the context of the current pandemic, educational institutions have had to revise their school transportation eligibility criteria. This includes allowing fewer children aboard each school bus to comply with physical distancing measures

## 32. Can more than one student sit on the same bench even though this means not maintaining a distance of 1 metre between students?

Yes, two students can sit on the same bench. It should be noted that up to three students can share a bench if the students are siblings. Wearing a face covering is strongly recommended for students under age 10 and mandatory for students aged 10 and older in order to ensure their safety. As much as possible, students should sit on the same bench every day.

## 33. How will the cleaning products purchased by the school service centres, school boards and school transportation providers be reimbursed?

At the request of the Comptroller of Finance, the Ministère has called on the school service centres and school boards to make a list of any additional expenses directly associated with COVID-19 and informed them of the methods by which the data would be collected. To this end, a monthly report must be produced indicating all additional transportation expenses directly related to COVID-19.

The Ministère will announce the conditions of the reimbursement of COVID-19 expenses once specific guidelines have been determined by the government.

For information purposes, the Ministère de l'Éducation reimbursed the school network over \$66 million in COVID-19 expenses last spring.

**34. Are school buses required to have hand sanitizer?**

As mentioned in a letter from the Ministère dated August 12, 2020, hand sanitizer can be made available on school vehicles to promote hand hygiene. In addition to students being encouraged to wash their hands when leaving the house to take the school bus, the use of hand sanitizer is recommended by the public health authorities to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. Given that it is impossible to be completely sure that all students have washed their hands before boarding the school bus, hand sanitizer provides additional protection.

**35. Will additional funding be available to ensure proper school transportation?**

At the request of the Comptroller of Finance, the Ministère has called on the school service centres and school boards to make a list of any additional expenses directly associated with COVID-19 and informed them of the methods by which the data would be collected. To this end, a monthly report must be produced indicating all additional transportation expenses directly related to COVID-19.

The Ministère will announce the conditions of the reimbursement of COVID-19 expenses once specific guidelines have been determined by the government.

For information purposes, the Ministère de l'Éducation reimbursed the school network over \$66 million in COVID-19 expenses last spring.

**36. If a school bus driver wears both a medical mask and protective eyewear (safety glasses or visor), but their work compartment is not separated by a plexiglass barrier, can students use the benches located directly behind the driver?**

If the only physical barrier is installed behind the driver and the driver is not wearing any personal protective equipment, the benches directly behind them can be used, but the benches less than 2 metres diagonally across from them must not be used.

If no physical barrier has been installed at all, the first two benches on either side must not be used in order to respect the minimum 2-metre physical distance.

However, if the driver wears a medical mask and protective eyewear, the two benches directly behind them may be used. This also applies to drivers of sedans

**37. Is it possible to install partitions in school buses without running the risk of being told by the SAAQ that vehicles cannot be modified?**

The SAAQ states in its guide to the installation of partitions (available in French only), that it is possible to install partitions in school transportation vehicles provided that the partition does not affect normal, safe driving by impeding driver visibility or movement. No other requirements have been imposed by the SAAQ regarding partitions.

**38. In case of an accident with a partition installed in a school transportation vehicle, will insurance cover the carriers?**

Under the public automobile insurance plan, all residents of Québec are covered in the event of injury or death as a result of a traffic accident, especially passengers.

For example, a passenger who is injured while on the bus by coming into contact with a partition that has broken during a collision, or a passenger who falls while on the bus and is injured by hitting the protective panel or is injured by a panel falling on them when the vehicle comes to a stop are all considered to be traffic accidents under the *Automobile Insurance Act*, meaning they are covered by the insurance plan.

However, a school bus driver who is injured by a partition is covered by the CNESST (workplace accident), not by the SAAQ.

**39. [NEW] Does the requirement for educational institutions to inform school staff about a case of COVID-19 diagnosed in the school extend to drivers of school transportation vehicles for students at that institution?**

According to the *COVID-19 – Procedure to follow in educational institutions* guide, the public health authorities contact people determined to be at moderate or high risk. Therefore, if during the epidemiological investigation conducted by the public health authorities it is deemed necessary to contact people who are not employees of the school board or school service centre, such as drivers of school transportation vehicles, this will be done. In order to ensure good communication, school boards or school service centres may create a communication mechanism with their service providers (drivers, cafeteria staff, etc.) so that



general information about the school is given to all people concerned. However, specific information about the potential removal of a member of the school community, for example, will always come from the public health authorities.

## Physical activity

### 40. Are Physical Education and Health teachers required to wear a face covering or personal protective equipment?

Physical Education and Health teachers are not required to wear a face covering or personal protective equipment while teaching in school sports facilities and maintaining a 2-metre distance from students. However, all elementary and secondary school staff must wear a face covering at all times when circulating outside the classroom.

### 41. How many groups can use the gymnasium at the same time?

While several groups can use the gymnasium at the same time, they must be separate groups. The groups must not come into contact with one another and must remain 1 metre apart. To make it possible to maintain this 1-metre distance, it is recommended that the divider curtain be closed or that cones be used to mark the boundary between two groups.

In co-teaching situations, if the gymnasium is too small, prioritize teaching at least one of the groups outdoors.

### 42. Can locker rooms be used?

Yes, locker rooms may be used, but they must be disinfected between groups.

### 43. Must teachers wear a mask when assisting an injured student?

Adults who must temporarily approach a student must wear PPE. Teachers must wear the appropriate protection equipment if the tasks involved require them to be less than 2 metres from a student. However, the lack of this equipment should not prevent an individual from helping a student who is injured or in distress.

### 44. Can dance studios be considered a gymnasium?

The *Back-to-School Plan* gives some examples of shared spaces that are used by many groups. It does not provide a complete list, but makes reference to the gymnasium and library, for example. If a school has a dance studio or a fitness room, these spaces can be considered shared spaces. Thus, equipment must be disinfected every time a class group uses it. However, equipment that is used by several students, even within the same class group, should be disinfected more frequently.

## Recess

### 45. [MODIFIED] What guidelines must be followed during recess?

Although the 250-person maximum does not apply to schoolyards, the physical distancing guidelines must be followed during recess, and students will have to remain with their stable class group. Notably, the *2020 Back-to-School Plan* includes modifying the schedule for breaks and recesses to limit contact with other groups.

Objects and equipment used by students should be cleaned and disinfected. Moreover, the **Quebec.ca** website specifies that a 2-metre physical distance between students and adults must be maintained both indoors and outdoors.

## Laboratories

### 46. Will students be able to do lab work in teams?

Yes, since physical distancing is not required between students in the same class group.

### 47. Will students be required to wear a face covering during lab work?

No. At the secondary level, students are required to wear a face covering when circulating outside the classroom and in common areas and when students from other class groups are present.

#### 48. Can students on the same team use the same materials during lab work?

Yes, since physical distancing is not required between students in the same class group. However, it is recommended that the number of students using the same instruments be limited as much as possible. Moreover, any materials and equipment must be disinfected after having been used by a class group.

#### 49. Can students clean the lab materials themselves after each use?

Yes, provided that they clean and disinfect in compliance with the standards in effect.

## School libraries

#### 50. What measures must be followed in the school library now that it has reopened?

In order to follow the guidance of the public health authorities, the following practices are recommended to ensure the proper use of the school library:

- Students, staff and volunteers are required to wear a face covering when heading to the library, but can remove it once they have arrived. Students should keep their face covering on if there are other class groups there (during breaks, at lunchtime, etc.)
- Whenever possible, have one class at a time use the library and only for checking out and returning books:
  - Use a disinfecting solution to wash hands when entering and exiting the library.
  - Check out the books for the students.
  - When books are returned, leave them in a safe place for 24 hours before putting them back on the shelves.
- Ensure that the space is set up to comply with physical distancing rules, especially in libraries that welcome students during breaks and at lunchtime:
  - Favour furnishings and resources that can be disinfected quickly between groups, such as tables, chairs and computers. Fabric furnishings should be avoided.

Space out the work tables, adding signs or markings on the floor, if needed

## School organization

#### 51. **[MODIFIED]** Can a new group be created from two subgroups of students from different class groups?

Students must be divided into stable class groups (meaning that the same students always remain together), in compliance with the physical distancing guidelines issued by the public health authorities. It is therefore not possible to form a new group consisting of subgroups of students from different classes. However, as of September 14, it will be possible for a student to belong to more than one stable class group, as in the case of a student participating in a special pedagogical project, optional courses or extracurricular activities. The press release and a summary of the table sent to educational institutions is available here: <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/salle-de-presse/press-releases/detail/article/projets-particuliers-concentrations-et-activites-parascolaires-une-approche-prudente-et-mesuree-p/> (in French only).

#### 52. **[NEW]** Is it possible to have a student change groups, for administrative or class management reasons?

Yes. This decision is made by the school administration and only in exceptional cases, after analyzing the situation and determining what is in the best interests of the student and will encourage their success.

#### 53. **[MODIFIED]** In the case of students with disabilities, social maladjustments or learning difficulties and who have IEPs that provide for partial integration into the regular classroom over the course of the school year, is it possible to proceed with this partial integration if it always takes place within the same group?

Yes, it is possible if the school is located in a green or yellow zone and taking into account that each student can only belong to two additional stable groups.

**54. If a student must be absent for an extended period (e.g. leg fracture), is home instruction provided (a teacher going to the student's home) as is usually the case in such circumstances?**

Yes, home instruction is still possible in these cases. Note that home instruction services are not the same as the services that are offered as part of the response to the COVID-19 situation to students with a medical condition that makes them vulnerable to COVID-19, and who have provided a doctor's note exempting them from school attendance. These students are entitled to distance learning services.

**55. What services are available to students who are unable to return to school for an extended period for medical reasons that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19?**

It is the responsibility of the school service centres and school boards to organize their services in their students' best interests while making sure to maintain the minimum number of hours of educational services. As outlined in the back-to-school letter to parents, distance education services set up by the school service centres and school boards will be offered to any students who cannot return to school for specific medical reasons. Access to this service will be expanded to include students with a parent or close relative with a specific medical condition residing at the same address, once a doctor's note is provided. These obligations also extend to private educational institutions.

**56. [MODIFIED] When a student is taken out of class while waiting for instructions from the public health authorities or the results of their COVID-19 test, will their homeroom teacher assign their school work or will it come from a central group of teachers? Will the minimum number of hours apply?**

A student who tests positive is not subject to the minimum number of hours of educational services, in the same way that a student with gastroenteritis or illness requiring a short withdrawal from school is not. The student should remain in isolation for 10 days. During this time, they would remain in contact with their stable class groups from school and receive pedagogical services and assignments from the same teachers and professionals as they would have, had they been at school.

Distance education services are only offered in cases where the entire stable class group is required to stay home in self-isolation, or in the case of students who have been granted an exemption due to a medical condition that makes them, or a close family member, more vulnerable to COVID-19.

**57. What about students who need remedial services?**

Consolidation activities and remedial instruction will be provided based on student needs. Accordingly, teachers will be able to plan and carry out consolidation activities and remedial instruction throughout the school year based on these needs.

**58. When will the first communication for the first report card be?**

The first communication is determined locally. It is intended to inform the student's parents of their child's learning and behaviour by means of a written communication other than a report card and is issued no later than October 15. It is the first feedback that parents receive, and can take whatever form the school chooses.

**59. [MODIFIED] What support will be offered to students in a school in a red zone that goes into lockdown?**

School service centres and school boards must produce an emergency protocol that complies with ministerial guidelines and allows them to quickly transition to quality distance learning. This protocol must be sent to the Ministère no later than September 15. The minimum number of hours of educational services to be provided by all educational institutions has been determined, and the institutions must plan all the steps to be taken to provide this minimum, including preparing students to use digital tools. The school service centres and school boards must also provide for technical and techno-pedagogical support for students and parents. Regular virtual meetings should also be offered to students.

**60. [MODIFIED] Is it possible to deviate from the subject-time allocations to facilitate the organization of courses for Secondary IV and V students, especially with regard to Option 2?**

As indicated in the *Back-to-School Plan*, it is preferred that these students attend school in person, full-time and in stable class groups. Following the recent announcements, schools that have chosen Option 2, which allows for students to study from home while ensuring they are physically present at school for at least 50% of the time normally required, may decide to re-organize the school schedule now that it is possible to form additional stable class groups,

depending on the region's alert level. However, this second option does not in any way allow for deviation from the subject-time allocation provided for in the *Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary education*.

**61. If a student is taken out of school, what happens with their siblings?**

When a student is taken out of school, their siblings can continue attending class so long as they do not show symptoms. If the student tests positive, the public health authorities will determine which contacts need to be put into isolation.

More information is available at <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/covid-19-symptom-self-assessment-tool/>, which is a self-assessment tool created by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux.

## Special pedagogical projects, extracurricular activities and field trips

**62. [MODIFIED] What are the conditions for implementing special pedagogical projects?**

The organization of special pedagogical projects (concentrations, passions, profiles, Sport-études, Arts-études, etc.), which could not go ahead at the start of the school year, can now resume, and local authorities have the flexibility to reorganize schedules, provided that public health guidelines are followed. As of September 14, it will be possible for schools in green and yellow zones to assign students from the same special pedagogical projects to different stable class..

**63. [MODIFIED] With regard to Sport-études programs, can students from different grade levels, and therefore from different class groups, practise their sport together?**

Yes, students in Sport-études programs at schools in green and yellow zones under the regional alert and intervention system created by the public health authorities can belong to a maximum of two additional groups. Not only does this enable Sports-études students to engage in their sport, it also allows those in Secondary IV and V to take certain optional courses, just like any other students who need college prerequisites.

**64. [NEW] Will there be a recommended maximum number of groups?**

As long as the epidemiological situation remains under control, there is little transmission in the community and, as a result, the alert level stays either green or yellow, students can be part of two additional stable class groups as well as their current stable class group, and students in Secondary IV and V may continue with their optional courses to meet college prerequisites. This means that students in Secondary IV may belong to their class group for the majority of their subjects and an additional group for an optional course. Students will also be able to participate in the sports component of their Sport-études program and in another stable class group for extracurricular activities. At the orange level, only the class group, the stable class group for optional courses in Secondary IV and V that are college prerequisites, groups within childcare services and groups for professional services are permitted. At the red level, depending on the recommendation of the public health authorities, schools could transition to distance learning and extracurricular activities would be suspended.

**65. [NEW] What specific criteria will be used by the public health authorities in order to determine that the situation is under control and it is possible to relax the restrictions?**

Educational institutions must act collaboratively and consistently with the COVID-19 alert and gradual intervention systems being used in their region.

**66. [NEW] Which alert level must a region reach for extracurricular activities and special pedagogical projects to be cancelled again?**

Starting with the orange level, the activities offered will be restricted so that students only participate in activities with their stable class groups, their groups for optional courses and for professional services. In most cases, these activities can resume when the level returns to yellow or green.

**67. [NEW] What is the best way to reassure parents who are concerned that their children will be in contact with students who are also in sports, arts, science or other programs that have students attending multiple classes?**

These activities are permitted as long as the health guidelines in force are respected, and they are therefore safe. The health guidelines that apply to each subject and activity must be observed, meaning that the relevant guides and reference documents must be taken into consideration when planning these activities. Note also that these activities are allowed only in green or yellow zones, meaning when the level of transmission is low or moderate and the risk is reduced.

**68. [NEW] Are vulnerable students going to be required to choose between professional services and playing the sports that motivate them at school?**

No. These are priority services with regard to students' educational paths and will continue to be offered, even if the school is in a red zone and must transition to distance learning.

**69. [NEW] Will all sports be able to resume?**

All sports that are permitted in the wider community will be able to resume in schools located in green and yellow zones. The public health guidelines that apply to these sports must be respected.

**70. [NEW] Are local and interregional competitions permitted? What will be the protocol for transporting students? Are overnight stays in other regions permitted?**

As long as the alert level is green or yellow, competitions are permitted. However, participating in events bringing together students from other schools must be avoided if cases of COVID-19 have been detected in those schools, regardless of the alert level of the region where the school is located. The guidelines that apply to school transport must be respected, as well as the public health rules that apply to hotel establishments, if students stay in them.

**71. Can schools offer educational field trips?**

Field trips such as cultural outings are possible, provided that the current health guidelines are followed.

**72. Is it possible to host organizations to lead activities in the classroom or at school?**

Yes. Visitors and organizations (artists in the schools, guest speakers, etc.) invited to lead activities will be required to wear a face covering at all times, except when they are seated to eat or drink or when they are seated in a room and a physical distance of 1.5 metres between individuals can be maintained (2 metres when in the presence of students).

## Students with disabilities, social maladjustments or learning difficulties

**73. In the case of students who are taken out of school for long periods of time, how can the minimum thresholds for distance learning be met for those with severe autism spectrum disorders or social maladjustments?**

By analyzing student needs as part of implementing IEPs, school boards and school service centres are required to evaluate the different interventions that must be implemented to respond to the needs of students who are unable to reach the minimum thresholds for distance learning. Complementary educational services are planned for students who are unable to attend school (for medical or other reasons) to ensure the follow-up and continuation of their learning.

School service centres and school boards must implement services (or make these services accessible through agreements) that allow them to meet the minimum thresholds for all students, without exception.

If students, based on their specific needs, are unable to follow the distance learning activities, these activities must be adapted to meet the needs of the students.

## Daycare services

### **74. In daycare services, do the same groups need to be maintained throughout the day (including on pedagogical days and during extracurricular daycare activities)?**

For this question, you must refer to page 9 of the *Back-to-School Plan*. In daycare services, whenever possible, students must be kept in their class groups. If this is impossible, stable groups of students and staff members must be organized within the daycare and maintained throughout each day (including pedagogical days). This also applies to activities organized for pedagogical days.

## Vocational training

### **75. Does the minimum number of hours of educational services apply in vocational training?**

The minimum number of hours does not apply in vocational training because this training is based on competency development in preparation for working in a particular occupation. It is a matter of mastering all of the required competencies.

### **76. Is it possible to apply the concept of stable class groups or closed groups to vocational training and adult general education?**

The public health authorities do not believe the concept of stable class groups should be applied in vocational training or adult general education. It is possible to have stable groups in elementary and secondary school because the risk of serious complications related to COVID-19 is lower for people under 16 years of age. However, the risk for young adults is the same as the risk for the rest of the population. Therefore, physical distancing between young adults must be maintained at 2 metres when standing and 1.5 metres when seated. If physical distancing is not possible, wearing a face covering is necessary to protect against COVID-19.

The public health principles underlying the creation of stable class groups do not apply to young adults, despite all the potential benefits of this approach.

## Adult general education

### **77. Can individuals aged 70 and older be accepted to study in person at an adult education centre?**

Individuals aged 70 and older can be admitted to adult general education.

According to the public health authorities, the risk of complications linked to COVID-19 increases progressively with age and with certain medical conditions. Students aged 70 and older must be informed of the risk.

### **78. [MODIFIED] Is it possible to offer educational courses in community centres to people aged 70 and older?**

Individuals aged 70 and older can be admitted to adult general education. According to the public health authorities, the risk of complications linked to COVID-19 increases progressively with age and with certain medical conditions. Students aged 70 and older must be informed of the risk.

Community centres must ensure that they comply with the public health guidelines. The INSPQ has published an information sheet for community organizations that can be used by community centres. It is available at <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/publications/2946-community-organizations-covid19>.

### **79. Has the Ministère de l'Éducation determined a minimum number of hours for adult general education?**

The minimum number of hours does not apply to adult general education. The organization of the adult education program allows each adult to determine their own schedule based on their learning plan created according to their needs. The structure of the programs of study includes assessment for each course taken in the subjects where the adult needs to acquire competencies, thereby ensuring their learning progression.

# Distance learning

## 80. If a student tests positive and is taken out of class, will that student, if their health permits it, be provided with distance learning services?

No. If a student tests positive, they will not be entitled to the minimum number of hours of educational services, just as a student with gastroenteritis or any other illness that requires them to be absent from class for a short time is not entitled to such services. However, during the student's quarantine, they will remain in contact with their regular class and will receive educational services and assignments from the same teachers and professionals as they would have, had they been at school.

## 81. [MODIFIED] If classes have to be closed when a region becomes an orange or red zone, or for students who cannot return to class, what tools will be provided so they can work?

As stated in the Minister of Education's announcement on June 16 (see <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/salle-de-presse/press-releases/detail/article/le-gouvernement-du-quebec-devoile-son-plan-de-match-pour-la-prochaine-annee-scolaire/> [available in French only]): "In order to be ready for any eventuality, school service centres must be equipped with an emergency protocol before the return to school in the fall. This protocol must allow them to switch rapidly to distance learning should the situation call for it. The protocol must include a plan for the efficient distribution of tablets and laptops to students who will need them, established procedures for using digital platforms to maintain learning and communication, training for staff, students and parents on how to use these tools, and accountability measures for services provided to students."

## 82. A reserve supply of 30 000 digital devices has been announced. How will these devices be made available to school service centres and school boards?

The reserve supply is jointly managed by the Ministère and Ordinateurs pour les écoles du Québec (OPEQ). While the Ministère is responsible for the management process, tracking of inventory and bookkeeping, OPEQ is responsible for receiving and storing equipment, managing inventory, delivering equipment to school service centres and school boards and providing follow-up. School service centres and school boards are responsible for configuring the devices and distributing them to students who need them.

An equipment ordering platform is available to school service centres and school boards. Any order made will be sent simultaneously to the Ministère and OPEQ to save time. While the Ministère completes the necessary documentation, OPEQ prepares the order to send to the institution making the order. The school service centre or the school board receives the equipment and confirms reception before configuring the equipment and distributing it to the designated schools or students.

Remember that students targeted by this program are students who do not have access to digital equipment, do not have exclusive access to digital equipment, are in Secondary IV or V and attending school according to an alternating schedule, are at risk, or are disabled or have social maladjustments or learning difficulties.

The status of requests is tracked by the Ministère to respect the deadlines set for dealing with these requests. The Ministère will ensure that school service centres and school boards are prepared by continuously updating a dashboard with data provided by educational institutions.

## 83. What type of training will be provided to students and parents to allow them to continue with distance learning?

The memory aid regarding the creation of an emergency protocol in the event of another lockdown states that school service centres, school boards and educational institutions must provide technical support to staff, students and parents as part of the transition to distance learning. It is also important to make sure that students are prepared to use digital tools. Parents can refer to the videos in the "Supporting My Child Through Distance Learning" section of the TÉLUQ website and to the information in the Parents section of the Open School platform and on the Alloprof Parents website.

## 84. [MODIFIED] Are the minimum number of weekly hours of distance learning provided when a school is closed the same as the minimum number of hours provided for student who have a doctor's note and cannot attend school in person?

Yes, the minimum number of weekly hours has been determined to ensure that students will be able to receive educational services that fulfill their right to education, even in a pandemic. The minimums apply to two categories of students:

- Students with long-term justification on medical grounds or who live with someone in this situation (with a doctor's note):
  - These students are entitled to the minimum number of hours and are provided with long-term follow-up by teachers and professionals, who, in the case of school boards and school service centres, are not working full-time with in-person classes, all based on the student's individual capabilities.
- Students whose class or school has been closed (due to an outbreak):
  - These students are entitled to the minimum number of hours and are monitored by the same teachers and professionals who were responsible for their learning before the closure.

#### 85. In the context of distance learning, must all the subjects be taught?

Yes. According to the subject-time allocation for the elementary level, all the subjects must be taught as part of the cycle. The time devoted to each subject is at the teacher's discretion, based on the needs of the students.

According to the subject-time allocation for the secondary level, all the subjects must be taught, based on the cycle and the level of education. The time devoted to the different subjects is determined through cooperative planning within the school team.

Note that one of the benefits of interrelated competencies and a cross-curricular approach is that they allow teachers to optimize their teaching time.

#### 86. **[NEW]** In the compulsory number of teaching hours that must be provided to students in a second lockdown, is it necessary to take specialized subjects into account (e.g. second language, music, physical education)?

The minimum number of hours for distance learning services must cover all the subjects provided for under the Basic School Regulation, including a second language, arts programs (visual arts, music, drama and dance) and physical education and health. The school team must collaborate with homeroom and specialist teachers.

The Ministère recommends that teaching time for each subject be allocated as follows:

- **Elementary:** time dedicated to each subject is at the discretion of the teacher based on the needs of students, but it must be determined in collaboration with specialist teachers
- **Secondary:** ideally based on the schedule previously planned in collaboration with the school team

## Doctor's note

#### 87. **[MODIFIED]** Can a doctor's note issued in another Canadian province be used to justify a student's request for a health-related exemption?

Doctor's notes from another province are valid. The date of the appointment must be recent.

#### 88. Do educational institutions have the right to refuse to accept a doctor's note that does not provide the reason justifying the student's long-term absence?

The school must accept the note as written by the physician. Due to the confidentiality rules that apply to medical treatment, physicians do not usually indicate a student's medical condition in a note of this kind.

#### 89. What should a school board or school service centre do if the doctor's note does not include the student's name?

School boards or school service centres must require the presentation of a doctor's note including the student's name, the date, a medical evaluation, the doctor's signature and practice number. In cases where the request for exemption is based on a parent's medical condition, the doctor's note may be in the parent's name.

#### 90. What should families do if it is difficult to find a physician who can write a doctor's note for their child?

It is necessary to see a doctor and obtain a doctor's note to be granted an exemption. If it is difficult to make a medical appointment, the Québec Medical Appointment Scheduler can help families find a clinic with openings. This site is available at the following address:



**91. Is there a standard form for the doctor's note that a student must present to be eligible for distance learning? What are the standards?**

No, there is no standard form or list of norms. Physicians have the necessary knowledge to determine if the medical condition of their patient requires that the student be taken out of the school environment. As for the vulnerability of people living with the student, the health of these people must be at significant risk for an exemption to be granted. Work is under way at the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux to create guidelines.

## Labour relations

**92. Do specific measures need to be taken for staff moving between schools?**

School service centres and school boards are responsible for the health and safety of all their staff. Therefore, they must implement the health and safety measures recommended in the [Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide for the School System](#), produced by the CNESST. Currently, based on the guidelines issued by the public health authorities, there is no reason that an employee cannot work at multiple locations. In the event of an outbreak in a school, the public health authorities will issue instructions to school staff, including itinerant staff working at that school.

**93. If there is a lack of staff in some schools, can we reassign remedial teachers and education consultants to teaching positions?**

Ministerial Order 2020-008 allows educational institutions to reassign their staff if, when and where they are needed. However, in the current context, these professionals should, whenever possible, be allowed to focus on their primary mandate, supporting the most vulnerable students. If all other alternatives have been exhausted (using the substitute bank, calling on graduating students in teaching programs, etc.), another professional may be assigned a teaching task.

**94. Will the teacher's workload include spending more time supervising?**

The management of staff must comply with the health and safety measures recommended in the [Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide for the School System](#) and the teacher's workload, including the number of hours allotted to teaching. The flexibility that the *Back-to-School Plan* affords teachers to manage their own time applies mainly to aspects other than teaching (complementary tasks, personal work and pedagogical days). It is the responsibility of institutions to provide the maximum amount of flexibility already provided for in the collective agreements. Additionally, supervision and some remedial measures do not necessarily have to be provided by the homeroom teacher. These tasks (homework help, tutoring, mentoring, etc.) can be delegated to other teachers, or where appropriate, to other staff members, depending on local arrangements.

**95. Other than when they are working with students, can teachers carry out their other tasks at home?**

Yes, with the approval of the administration. As much as possible, and provided that team collaboration is not affected, teachers are encouraged to work at home on tasks that do not require direct contact with students.

**96. In the context of back-to-school, can staff be permitted to work overtime and be compensated for it?**

Yes. Staff can be permitted to exceed their normal workload in accordance with the conditions stated in the relevant collective agreements.

**Teachers:** If, for specific reasons, the school service centre or the school board assigns a teacher a heavier workload with a longer duration than planned, the teacher is entitled to financial compensation equal to 1/1000 of their annual salary.

**Professionals:** Professionals who work overtime obtain compensatory leave or remuneration paid out for the number of hours worked, at the standard rate.

**Support:** The collective agreements that cover support staff provide for the possibility of working overtime.

### 97. Can staff living in the United States cross the border in order to work?

Employees in the school system can cross the border in order to work if they do not have any symptoms of COVID-19.

When these employees cross the border, they must answer questions about their health related to the symptoms of COVID-19. If they have no symptoms, they will be permitted to enter Canada in order to work. These employees will not be required to self-isolate when returning home. Border services will provide them with information, including the symptoms to watch for.

### 98. **[MODIFIED]** What are the health conditions that make an individual vulnerable to COVID-19 and that are recognized by the public health authorities?

The different health conditions that make an individual vulnerable to COVID-19 and that are recognized by the public health authorities are as follows:

- People with one or more of the following chronic conditions:
  - Chronic cardiac or pulmonary issues that are “uncontrolled” or “complicated” and therefore serious enough to require regular medical follow-up or hospital care
  - Diabetes that is “uncontrolled” or “complicated” and therefore serious enough to require regular medical follow-up or hospital care
  - Chronic liver problems (including cirrhosis) and chronic kidney disease that are “complicated” and therefore serious enough to require regular medical follow-up or hospital care
  - Arterial hypertension that is “uncontrolled” or “complicated” and therefore serious enough to require regular medical follow-up or hospital care
  - Significant obesity (for reference: BMI  $\geq$  40)
- A medical condition that reduces the ability to evacuate respiratory secretions or that increases the risk of aspiration (e.g. cognitive impairment, spinal cord injury, seizure disorder, neuromuscular disorder)

This list of conditions that increase the risk of complications from COVID-19 is taken from the interim recommendations published by the INSPQ. Please see the following links, available in French only:

- <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/publications/2914-protection-travailleurs-immunosupprimees-covid19>
- [https://www.inspq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/2967\\_protection\\_travailleurs\\_sante\\_maladies\\_chroniques.pdf](https://www.inspq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/2967_protection_travailleurs_sante_maladies_chroniques.pdf)

With regard to the age-based criterion, the risk of complication significantly increases after age 70. The guideline from the public health authorities states:

The risk of complications related to COVID-19 gradually increases with age and for certain medical conditions. Although the scientific knowledge is evolving rapidly, it is clear that the risk of complications is significantly higher after age 70.

### 99. **[NEW]** What are the guidelines that must be followed for staff that make a request for an exemption?

Once the employee has provided supporting documentation, the employer must verify whether the employee meets one of the exemption criteria, that is, whether the employee has one or more of the medical conditions that the public health authorities have recognized as increasing a person’s vulnerability to COVID-19 or is over 70 years of age.

If the employee meets one of the exemption criteria:

- Each situation must be analyzed by the employer on a case-by-case basis. As the employee has been determined to be at risk, it is the responsibility of the employer to assess whether the employee’s presence in the workplace is necessary.
- Employers who believe that the employee’s presence in the workplace is necessary must ensure that the public health guidelines are being respected in the workplace, including the 2-metre requirement for physical distancing and sanitation measures.
- Additional protective measures intended to protect workers (2 metres of distancing maintained at all times or the presence of physical barriers), the possibility of working

from home (full-time or part-time) or reassigning the employee to other tasks must be considered.

If the worker does not agree with a decision made by the employer, they can exercise their right of refusal as provided for under the *Act respecting occupational health and safety*.

**100. [NEW] What is the right of refusal provided for under the *Act respecting occupational health and safety*?**

The right of refusal and the associated conditions are defined in sections 12 to 30 of the *Act respecting occupational health and safety* (AOHS).

Section 12 states that “A worker has a right to refuse to perform particular work if he has reasonable grounds to believe that the performance of that work would expose him to danger to his health, safety or physical well-being, or would expose another person to a similar danger.” To exercise this right, the worker must call the general number of the CNESST at 1-844-838-0808 and ask to speak to the inspector on duty.

The danger must be real and objective and not founded on apprehension. A worry or fear is not sufficient to constitute a danger.

Although all the necessary measures to protect the health and ensure the safety and bodily integrity of workers may have been implemented under section 51 of the AOHS, a worker has the right to refuse work if the following conditions are met:

- The worker has reasonable grounds to believe that the performance of that work would expose them to danger to their health, safety or physical well-being, or would expose another person to similar danger.
- The worker’s refusal to perform the work does not put the life, health, safety or physical well-being of another person in immediate danger

It is important to note, however, that the assessment of the right of refusal requires that the circumstances specific to each case be analyzed. The following elements are taken into account by the CNESST when analyzing the right of refusal:

- The refusal cannot be founded on conditions foreign to the workplace. For example, the worker’s personal condition cannot singlehandedly justify a right of refusal.
- The danger must come from the conditions in which the work is performed. Conditions related to work include the premises, the organization of the space, the equipment and the work methods.
- The existence of a personal condition does not eliminate the possibility of exercising a right of refusal.
- The conditions in which the work is performed combined with a personal condition can justify a refusal to work.

For more details, see the following website: <https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/salle-de-presse/covid-19-info-en/Pages/back-to-work.aspx>.

**Procedure**

As soon as the immediate supervisor, employer or employer’s representative is informed of the situation, they must contact the prevention representative to have them examine the situation and determine the corrections that must be made.

If the employer and the union do not agree on the corrections that must be made and the worker continues to refuse the work, a CNESST inspector is required to be present on-site. The inspector will determine, as soon as possible, if there is a danger or not, ensuring that the process described in the AOHS is followed.

For more information about CNESST intervention, see [the document describing interventions related to the right of refusal](#), available in French only.

**101. [MODIFIED] What remuneration applies in the case of staff who cannot or who refuse to work in schools?**

Justified situations beyond the employee’s control	
Reason	Remuneration
- Has one or more health conditions recognized by the public health authorities as making an individual aged 70	- Employees who meet one of the criteria for exemption will have their salaries maintained based on the schedule known and agreed on in the work contract.

or older vulnerable to COVID-19

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to work and residing with a loved one who has one or more health conditions that make them vulnerable to COVID-19</li> <li>- Able to work but whose presence is required by their child or a family member for health, safety or educational reasons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The health of a loved one residing under the same roof does not constitute an exemption criterion recognized by the public health authorities.</li> <li>- The employee must provide a supporting document certifying the vulnerability of the person concerned.</li> <li>- The employee must demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable measures to ensure that another person can be with the vulnerable person, thereby minimizing the duration of their leave.</li> <li>- Analyze the possibility of the employee working remotely.</li> <li>- If the employee is unable to work full-time, for the time not worked, the employee must first use their leaves for parental and family responsibilities and then the other leaves permitted under their work conditions (e.g. vacations, unpaid leaves). However, sick days may not be used for this purpose and must be reserved for illness.</li> <li>- Their salary is maintained for the time worked, if applicable.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In isolation on the orders of the public health authorities, with or without symptoms</li> <li>- In isolation and identified as having been in contact with a case confirmed by the public health authorities</li> <li>- In isolation on the orders of the employer due to noticeable symptoms</li> <li>- Waiting for COVID-19 screening test results, with or without symptoms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If the employee is able to work: Whenever possible, encourage them to work remotely.</li> <li>- Their salary is maintained in accordance with the known and agreed-upon schedule in the work contract, for the duration recommended by the public health authorities, whether or not the employee carries out any work.</li> <li>- If the employee is unable to work, the waiting period begins as soon as the employee is no longer able to work, including time spent waiting for test results and in isolation, if applicable.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contracted COVID-19 outside of the workplace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The employee must obtain a medical certificate confirming the diagnosis.</li> <li>- The employee may be compensated through the wage loss insurance provided for under their working conditions.</li> <li>- The waiting period begins as soon as the employee is no longer able to work, including time spent waiting for test results and in isolation, if applicable.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contracted COVID-19 in the workplace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The employee must obtain a medical certificate confirming the diagnosis.</li> <li>- Provided that the eligibility criteria are met, the employee may be entitled to benefits provided under the <i>Act respecting industrial accidents and occupational diseases</i> (ARIAOD).</li> <li>- The waiting period begins as soon as the employee is no longer able to work, including time spent waiting for test results and in isolation, if applicable.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contracted COVID-19 either in or outside of the workplace, but is able to work since the symptoms are very mild</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If it is possible to work from home, the employee's salary is maintained.</li> <li>- If it is not possible to work from home due to their state of health, the employee will be compensated through the wage loss insurance provided for under their working conditions. In that case, the waiting period begins on the date of the test results.</li> </ul>

Other situations	
Reason	Guidelines and remuneration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In isolation after returning from a personal trip, with or without symptoms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analyze the possibility of the employee working from home.</li> <li>- If the employee is unable to work full-time, for the time not worked, the employee must first use their leaves for parental and family responsibilities and then the other leaves permitted under their work conditions (e.g.</li> </ul>

vacations, unpaid leaves). However, sick days may not be used for this purpose and must be reserved for illness.

- Their salary is maintained for the time worked, if applicable.

- 
- Refusal without any valid reason
  - Each situation must be analyzed on a case-by-case basis by the employer.
  - Administrative or disciplinary measures may apply.
- 

#### **102. [MODIFIED] Are pregnant women automatically required to leave the workplace?**

No. See the document entitled *COVID-19: Pregnant and Breastfeeding Workers – Preventative Measures in the Workplace* (<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/publications/2920-recommendations-workplace-pregnant-nursing-summary-covid19>).

Pregnant women are considered a vulnerable group making it necessary to implement specific preventive measures in their workplace.

Therefore, the INSPQ recommends that the educational institution implement measures for the pregnant worker immediately and for the duration of the pregnancy, regardless of her immunity status, so that:

- a minimum 2-metre physical distance between the worker and her colleagues can be assured
- if work must be carried out within less than 2 metres of other people, an appropriate physical barrier, such as a glass partition, can be installed; personal protective equipment (masks, safety glasses or visors) is not considered a physical barrier

#### **103. What are the rules concerning in-person working meetings?**

The measures proposed by the CNESST in its *Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide for the School System (Preschool, Elementary, Secondary, General Adult Education and Vocational Training) – COVID-19* must be adapted to ensure that activities can resume or continue in the safest, healthiest way possible in the context of COVID-19.

Administrators are asked to review how work is organized to promote the use of the available technological means whenever possible. If meetings are held in person, staff members are required to maintain a minimum physical distance of 2 metres between one another.

## English network

#### **104. What resources are provided for the English network?**

The Ministère will continue to work with its partners in the English network to ensure that improved resources will be available to English-language educational institutions.

## Private educational institutions

For answers to questions regarding the wearing of a mask or face covering, refer to the “Wearing a face covering or a mask” section above.

#### **105. What about private educational institutions?**

The standards and requirements listed in the *2020 Back-to-School Plan* apply equally and without exception to the network of private educational institutions.

As the Ministère was not a party to the contracts between parents and private educational institutions, it is the responsibility of each institution to discuss with parents and establish methods to respond to the current exceptional circumstances.

In this light, the institution can create a specific service agreement with parents to cover, for example, additional fees related to new service terms and conditions.

However, the terms and conditions established must comply with the relevant public health guidelines.

#### **106. Are private educational institutions required to provide distance learning services to students with medical conditions that make them vulnerable?**

Yes. Starting in September, in-person attendance at school will once again be compulsory for all students. Students who have a health condition that makes them vulnerable can be exempted from in-person attendance by providing a doctor’s note. Physicians have been

informed by the public health authorities of the conditions that may justify an absence from schools. Students living in the same household as someone with a health condition that makes them vulnerable may also be exempted.

Provision has been made for a minimum number of hours of educational services to be offered through distance learning by school service centres, school boards and private educational institutions for students in elementary and secondary school who have a health condition or who live with someone who has a health condition that puts them at risk for serious complications if they contract COVID-19, should a physician recommend that these students not attend school in person.

Private educational institutions are therefore required to provide distance learning services. The institution may, however, seek a specific service agreement with parents to cover the additional costs associated with new service methods. If such an agreement cannot be reached, the institution must still offer distance learning services, as it is a matter of public health under section 123 of the *Public Health Act*, to protect the health of the population.

**107. [MODIFIED] Can a private educational institution break a contract to provide educational services by claiming that it is incapable of providing the required services in the case of a second lockdown or a request for exemption from school attendance?**

The institution must take all possible steps to honour the contract. In order to do so, it may seek a specific service agreement with parents to cover the additional costs associated with new service methods.

However, if it proves genuinely impossible for the institution to offer distance learning services due to exceptional circumstances, as a last resort, the contract may be broken. In such a case, the educational institution must, under section 38 of the *Education Act*, inform the school board with jurisdiction over the student's compulsory school attendance of the termination of the contract to provide educational services.

**108. Do the guidelines for staff remuneration also apply to private educational institutions?**

Private educational institutions are the employers of their staff and are therefore able to make their own employment-related decisions, providing they are in compliance with collective and local agreements.

**109. Are staff required to wear a face covering?**

Preschool teachers (kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds) are obligated to wear personal protective equipment in class, since maintaining a physical distance from the students is not required.

**110. Can a preschool student wear a face covering?**

Preschool students are not obligated to wear a face covering at school or when using school transportation. However, they are allowed to wear one.

**111. Can objects be used within a class group without them having to be disinfected after each use?**

Yes. It is important to remember that play is the preferred method of learning for four- and five-year-olds. Play areas should be maintained as provided for in the different preschool education programs.

As the possibility of transmission through contact with contaminated surfaces remains poorly understood, caution is recommended. The different areas of the classroom (e.g. stations for symbolic play, blocks, puzzles) can be used, but should be cleaned often. Moreover, the most frequently touched surfaces are more likely to be contaminated, and particular attention should be paid to how frequently and effectively they are cleaned and disinfected.

See the following document, available in French only:

<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/3054-nettoyage-desinfection-surfaces-covid19.pdf>

**112. Are there specific rules for disinfecting kindergarten classes?**

The rules for disinfecting kindergarten classes are the same rules that apply to all other grade levels.

### 113. Can students play outside?

The risk of spreading COVID-19 outside through outdoor urban furniture (e.g. park benches, handrails, play structures) is thought to be low. Regular cleaning procedures should still be maintained, but disinfection is not usually necessary. Nevertheless, safe, targeted disinfection could be carried out on frequently touched surfaces.

### 114. [NEW] How are the minimum number of hours of educational services applied to distance learning for preschool students?

Based on the workload of preschool teachers, these minimums include:

- time for distance learning
- time to provide independent activities to students
- time for teachers to be available to respond to the needs of students and questions from their parents

In the time planned for teaching, all areas of development (physical and motor, emotional, social, language and cognitive) must be targeted by the activities provided.

These minimums are presented in an exceptional context. However, it is important to respect the goals of preschool education, the development of 4- and 5-year-olds and to consider their learning pace and interests. Play remains the best way to learn and encourages overall development. It promotes development in different areas and helps build skills.

A supporting document created by the Ministère will be provided to preschool teachers to support them in their planning in the context of these minimums.

## Francisation

### 115. Will remedial measures need to be implemented for allophone students who were in the process of learning French before the start of the pandemic?

School service centres, school boards and the teams of professionals in schools must ensure, above all, that the interruption of studies for students learning French has the minimum possible impact on their educational path. For example, they must ensure that when students return to class, they are placed in groups that match their needs and that they receive the appropriate support.

### 116. How will the Ministère ensure that information about health and safety guidelines is communicated to families that speak little or no French?

The Ministère will support the distribution of resources (generally developed by stakeholders in school boards or school service centres or in the community) that translate the information into multiple languages.

## Practical training in the workplace

### 117. Can students in Work-Oriented Training Path programs do external internships this year?

Students enrolled in Work-Oriented Training Path programs can complete their practical training under the usual conditions provided that:

- the employer has identified the COVID-19 transmission risks in the workplace and has implemented measures intended to reduce and control infection risk
- prevention measures have been applied: exclusion from the workplace of people with symptoms, physical distancing, handwashing, respiratory etiquette, and the introduction of sanitation measures with respect to materials, tools, equipment and frequently touched surfaces
- the internship workplace applies the CNESST guide that is relevant to their occupational field.

### 118. [NEW] What is the procedure to follow if there is an outbreak in the workplace?

If a case is detected in the workplace, the regional public authorities must be advised. The authorities will be responsible for managing cases and contacts and will determine the measures to take.

## COVID-19 costs

**119. [NEW] The reimbursements we have received until now to cover our expenses related to COVID-19 only cover a small amount of those expenses. Can we count on receiving a reimbursement in 2020-2021?**

In 2019-2020, the Ministère reimbursed more than \$66 million throughout the network to cover various expenses incurred or losses of revenue. This reimbursement covered supplying sanitation materials and protective equipment as well as compensation for some of the lost revenue from daycares within school service centres and school boards. Savings have also been made in the network up to this point, considering the closure of institutions. At the moment, these savings are merely estimated amounts, but the Ministère is waiting for more accurate information as part of the audit of financial statements as at June 30, 2020.

The Conseil du trésor has provided instructions to all government departments and agencies regarding expenses incurred during the pandemic. For the 2020-2021 year, all agencies must record their expenses using specific methods in order to be able to provide financial statements at the appropriate time.

The Ministère will analyze the financial situation of school service centres, school boards and other educational institutions in the coming months, after the submission of the financial statements for the 2019-2020 school year. If the information provided demonstrates that the viability of the organization's activities is threatened and that the situation is directly related to COVID-19, one-time allocations may be considered.

**120. [NEW] As problems have occurred when declaring who is eligible for some budget measures, will the Ministère relax certain requirements?**

The Ministère is aware of the impacts related to the halt in training activities and is working to implement measures to address this type of problem. At the moment, funding is based on the Operating Budget Rules approved for the 2019-2020 school year. Compensation may be granted, but the funding may not be confirmed until sometime in the fall of 2020.

## Provincial watch – Collecte-Info

**121. [NEW] Taking into account the realities of a school, is it possible to gather reliable data about an "Absence due to symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (without a diagnosis)" In this case, the only reliable and important data for us and for the Ministère is an absence for preventive isolation, isn't it?**

The role of observation in public health is to stay ahead of potential problems, and the biggest problem that COVID-19 poses in a school environment is an outbreak. Recording absences due to symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (without a diagnosis) is intended to anticipate the possibility that an individual showing symptoms may become a confirmed case of COVID-19. If the number of individuals in a class or a school who are marked absent for this reason is out of the ordinary, an alert will be sent to the public health authorities so they can prepare for a possible intervention.

In the case of an absence for preventive isolation, this individual is already being monitored by the public health authorities. Their absence is therefore known and should be recorded on the form as an "absence for any other reason."