

# MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION

## COVID-19: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS WINTER 2021 RETURN TO SCHOOL PLAN

JANUARY 29, 2021

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1. **[MODIFIED] What measures have been put in place for resuming in-person educational services for preschool and elementary school?**

The return to class took place on January 11, 2021, for preschool and elementary school.

**In red zones:**

Wearing a face covering is required for students in Elementary Cycles One and Two in common areas and when circulating within the school, as well as on school transportation. Additionally, students in Elementary Cycle Three are required to wear a face covering in class, with the exception of physical education and health classes where a distance of 2 metres can be maintained between all participants. Wearing a face covering in the schoolyard is not required for elementary students.

Preschool students may wear a face covering but are not required to do so.

In red zones, lunch must be eaten in the classroom if possible. If meals are eaten in the cafeteria, stable class groups must remain together and there must be 2 metres of physical distancing between different stable class groups. Students may remove their face coverings only once they are seated and ready to eat.

Parents can purchase face coverings in pharmacies, grocery stores, depanneurs and other stores of this type, which are still open during the day. If necessary, parents can also make their own face coverings. Information on this topic is available on the Québec.ca website: <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/wearing-a-face-covering-in-public-settings-in-the-context-of-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

2. **What are the requirements for wearing face coverings in multi-level classes?**

The rules must be the same for students in the same group. The health guidelines that apply to the higher level apply to everyone in the class.

3. **[MODIFIED] What measures have been put in place for resuming in-person educational services for general education in secondary school?**

**In red zones:**

Students in Secondary III, IV and V will continue to attend according to an alternating schedule (present in-class 50% of the time and distance education for the other 50%). As of January 18, 2021, secondary students must wear procedural masks rather than face coverings. Procedural masks will be required at all times: in class, when circulating, in common areas, on the school grounds and on school transportation. Two procedural masks per day will be provided to students by their educational institution.

4. **What measures have been put in place for resuming adult general education and vocational training?**

Educational services are provided based on the locally established school calendars. This also applies to continuing education offered as a service to businesses. Since January 11, 2021, distance education services have been preferred in vocational training centres or private institutions that provide vocational training.

Student attendance in labs or classrooms for practical training on specific equipment is permitted should a program or the competencies to be developed so require. In the case of students with specific needs who are unable to participate in distance education, in-person services may be considered so as not to hinder their progress.

Local evaluations can also take place at a distance, except in the case of certain programs and competencies to be developed, but ministerial exams must take place in centres, following public health guidelines. Internships can continue as planned in workplaces that are still capable of welcoming students. Training that takes place outside (in open spaces) may continue.

Additionally, travel to and from centres and institutions providing training in night classes is permitted during the curfew.

Wearing a procedural mask is now required at all times in centres and on their grounds. Procedural masks may be removed when students are seated at least 2 metres apart. There must be 2 metres of distance between students and staff at all times. If this is not possible, students and staff must wear personal protective equipment (PPE).

If students are less than 2 metres apart, even with physical barriers, they are still required to wear procedural masks. Students in different classes must remain 2 metres apart. During meals, the procedural masks can be removed when students are seated and ready to eat.

The educational institution will provide two procedural masks per day to each student.

5. **[NEW] An additional \$10 million has been announced as additional support for adult general education and vocational training. What will these funds be used for?**

These funds may be used to improve existing services or programs based on the local needs that have been expressed. For example, they could be used to implement various initiatives, such as:

- additional support for students affected by lockdown restrictions to foster their educational success, especially by adding resources and providing access to work spaces
- enhancement of personalized pedagogical support (tutoring, mentoring, resource teachers, etc.) particularly for programs that are being taught remotely
- training for teaching staff
- hiring temporary staff or adding hours to manage changes required by the educational institution (placement of interns, modifying schedules, logistics of using rooms, labs and workshops)
- support for organizing and implementing distance learning for staff and institutions that require it

6. **[NEW] Are services related to educational success that are provided to students in private clinics allowed to continue, even after the curfew?**

To encourage educational success, services helping students (remedial education, speech therapy, educational guidance or other services) that are offered privately, whether in a clinic or a home office, are authorized and are considered to be an essential service. The health measures and distancing requirements must be respected. Documentation justifying travel after 8:00 p.m. may be provided to the people concerned.

7. **Besides the specialized schools and classes that are not subject to these measures, are there any similar exceptions for special classes?**

In accordance with Ministerial Order 1346-2020 issued on December 9, 2020, and with the goal of fostering these students' educational success and not impeding their studies, the school team may offer educational services in person to certain previously identified students with disabilities, social maladjustments or learning difficulties, vulnerable students or students with special needs.

The provision of educational services through distance education is, of course, preferred, but it is the responsibility of the educational institutions to determine whether it is possible for these students to learn remotely and benefit from it. When required, educational institutions must therefore ensure that the appropriate staff will be available to offer these services. Distancing measures and health rules must be followed at all times.

8. **[MODIFIED] Are sports and recreational activities permitted?**

**Indoor activities**

Indoor sports and recreational activities are not permitted, except when they take place as part of physical education and health classes and special pedagogical programs in an educational context.

**Outdoor activities**

Outdoor activities are permitted if they are carried out on an individual basis or by the members of the same household, or as part of a physical education and health class or special pedagogical program in an educational context. Various locations near educational institutions can be used for physical activity, provided there is no need to use school transportation and no opportunity for class groups to mix, which would make it harder to follow distancing rules. All activities must comply with the physical distancing rules and health guidelines in force.

Extracurricular activities that take place entirely online or remotely are permitted.

9. **[NEW] Is it possible to rent equipment for outdoor activities?**

As part of physical education and health class, provided teachers ensure that students wash their hands before and after touching any equipment, it is possible to exempt winter sports equipment

(e.g. cross-country skis, snowshoes, skates) from quarantine, with the exception of protective helmets, which must be disinfected between uses or quarantined for 24 hours.

**10. What measures can be implemented in schools to reduce the spread of COVID-19?**

In addition to increasing the health measures that were applied in red zones after the holiday break, school staff are also asked to be stricter in their application of various measures. Correctly handling masks is key to avoid transforming them into vectors for infection.

To assist with this, the Ministère has produced a tool box for school staff to promote best practices when wearing and handling face coverings and procedural masks. The tool box contains suggestions for activities and ways to make students in elementary and secondary school aware of the behaviours to be adopted in order to best apply public health measures in a school setting. The tool box is available in English and French and can be found at <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/mask/>.

**11. How should the guidelines for handling a mask or face covering be applied during physical education and health classes?**

Students are permitted to remove their procedural masks or face coverings to participate in physical activities, provided that the 2-metre distance between students is respected. Compliance with the guidelines for safe handling of masks and face coverings may need to be adapted in some circumstances, such as during physical education and health classes. It is therefore recommended that ways of respecting these guidelines be identified, based on local realities.

For example, students could disinfect their hands before entering the gym and then keep a distance of 2 metres from other students when removing their mask and storing it in a personal bag labelled with their name. It may then be necessary to supervise the students to ensure that they stay 2 metres apart as they move in an orderly fashion to an identified location to store the bag containing their mask and to disinfect their hands a second time, in accordance with best practices. The details of the process may vary based on local realities.

**12. Are members of school staff who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 or who have been vaccinated still required to wear personal protective equipment?**

School staff members who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 or who have been vaccinated must wear the recommended personal protective equipment and respect the hygiene and distancing rules as well as the health measures in force in their region.

## Distance learning

**13. [MODIFIED] Will digital devices be made available for students who need to continue with distance education?**

According to the organization of educational services for elementary and secondary school, school service centres and school boards have a responsibility to lend equipment to students who do not have access to a dedicated digital device and an Internet connection (based on network availability) at home in order to continue their schooling through distance learning.

To assist school service centres and school boards in acquiring digital equipment and lending it to students, the Ministère has provided the network with a budget envelope for the 2020-2021 school year.

Due to the \$150M funding envelope, school service centres and school boards have been provided with all the material required to respond to student needs related to technology.

The Ministère has also created a reserve supply of digital equipment that school service centres and school boards can draw on in the event that their inventory and orders do not allow them to meet the needs of students immediately. This reserve, which was initially made up of 15 000 tablets and 15 000 laptops, saw the addition of 21 512 Chromebooks in November. As of January 20, 46 798 devices from the reserve had been distributed to the school service centres and school boards.

**14. [NEW] Should the distribution of digital devices to students that do not have a dedicated device at home take place immediately, or is it only required in the context of distance education?**

The distribution of devices can take place immediately, provided that sufficient equipment remains at the school for the standard activities to continue. Should distribution take place only after the

transition to distance learning, the material must be distributed within 24 hours in order to avoid any interruption to educational services.

15. **[NEW]** Can students who are returning from abroad and who will be required to quarantine still receive the minimum number of hours of educational services prescribed?

Students returning from abroad are not subject to the minimum number of hours prescribed and, therefore, are not eligible to receive the minimum number of hours of distance educational services.

## Wearing of face coverings and procedural masks

16. **[MODIFIED]** In what circumstances are students required to wear a face covering?

### In green, yellow and orange zones:

In these zones, students in Elementary 5 and 6 and in secondary school must wear a face covering when they come in contact with students from other stable class groups and when they cannot maintain 1 metre of distance from students in other groups or 2 metres of distance from staff. Wearing a face covering is also required for these students when they are on school transportation.

### In red zones:

Over and above the requirements that apply to everyone in green, yellow and orange zones, additional measures apply in red zones. For students in elementary school, wearing a face covering is required when circulating within the school and in indoor shared spaces as well as on school transportation. Students in Elementary Cycle Three are also required to wear a face covering in class.

Students in secondary school must wear a procedural mask as soon as they arrive on school grounds, in hallways, in their classroom and on school transportation.

At the preschool, elementary and secondary levels, 2 metres of physical distancing must be maintained at all times between students in different stable class groups. However, no physical distancing is required between students in the same stable class group, regardless of level, during meals. Students can remove their face coverings once they are seated and ready to eat and must put them back on when the meal is finished.

There must be 2 metres of distance between students when they remove their face coverings (or procedural masks for students in Elementary Cycle Three and secondary school) to participate in an activity that requires it (drama, dance, music, sports).

17. In what circumstances are students required to wear a face covering while attending school daycare?

For students in Elementary Cycle Three, who are already required to wear a face covering at all times indoors, this requirement is also applicable when attending daycare services.

Students in Elementary Cycles One and Two are required to wear a face covering when circulating and when they are less than 2 metres away from students in other stable class groups.

In red zones, educational daycare services are required to respect the principle of the stable class group. It is recommended that the creation of additional stable groups at the daycare, made up of students from different stable class groups, be kept to a minimum and that, whenever possible, a distance of 2 metres be maintained between these students.

The installation of physical barriers to separate students from different groups is encouraged. However, if this measure were to cause students to be isolated, these students could be allowed to form an additional stable group.

When these guidelines cannot be followed, the wearing of a face covering by students in Elementary Cycles One and Two should be encouraged.

Preschool students are not required to wear a face covering.

In all cases, face coverings can be removed when students are seated in order to eat and drink.

Note that no students in elementary school (including Elementary 5 and 6) are required to wear face coverings when they are outside. Therefore, daycare services may wish to prioritize outdoor activities.

18. **[NEW] In schools and administrative centres, when are staff members required to wear a face mask and when are they 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 masks**

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 masks in common areas (except in the classroom or a private individual office).

**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 (procedural 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.

**In red zones**

Please note that wearing a procedural mask is required for all school staff in indoor and outdoor common areas, in staff rooms and on school grounds.

19. **[MODIFIED] What should be done if the procedural masks provided by schools are too large for some students in secondary school? Is it possible to adjust them? Is it preferable to use a face covering?**

In red zones, as of January 18, 2021, secondary school students must wear a procedural mask instead of a face covering at all times. If the procedural mask provided to the student is too large, it is possible to adjust it by reducing the length of the elastics (by making another loop around the ears or by tying knots) so that the procedural mask securely covers the student's nose and mouth.

Steps are currently being taken to acquire smaller masks.

20. **[MODIFIED] Will the Ministère de l'Éducation provide procedural masks for secondary school students? How many masks will be required?**

The Ministère will provide each student in secondary school, vocational training and adult general education with two procedural masks per day.

21. **Will the Ministère provide masks with windows for students with hearing difficulties?**

The Ministère will provide masks with windows to school service centres, school boards, and to the Montreal Oral School for the Deaf and the École Oraliste de Québec in order to meet specific needs.

22. **Does a procedural mask have to be replaced each time it is temporarily removed? (e.g. to eat a snack, play the trumpet, during physical education and health class).**

Procedural masks can be reused if they still appear clean. It is recommended that the mask be stored in a clean bag, while maintaining proper hand hygiene, touching only the elastics or ties of the mask, and replacing the mask when it is soiled or wet. It is best to have two separate bags on hand for each mask in order to ensure appropriate storage.

23. **[MODIFIED] Can secondary school students bring their own fabric masks (face coverings) to school?**

In secondary school, procedural masks, not face coverings, must be worn at all times.

24. **Can secondary school students wear their own procedural masks at school?**

If it is not possible to confirm that a procedural mask is certified, it is preferable that secondary school students wear the procedural mask that is provided by their school.

25. **Are schools required to create a reserve supply of additional procedural masks in order to meet student needs as they occur?**

It is possible and recommended for schools to create a reserve supply of procedural masks so that students can be provided with more than 2 masks per day, if necessary (to replace a soiled mask, dropped mask, etc.).

## Physical education and health

26. **How many groups can use the gymnasium at the same time?**

Several groups can use the gymnasium at the same time.

In green, yellow and orange zones, the groups must remain separate. 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.

In red zones, the groups must not come into contact and a 2-metre distance must be maintained between groups.

27. **Is it possible to go to a park near the school for physical education and health class?**

Students can go with their teacher to parks near the school for physical education and health class. This is not considered a field trip, and various locations near an educational institution can provide an opportunity for physical activity. Getting to a nearby location must not involve transport on a school bus and must not provide opportunities for class groups to mix, which would make it harder to follow distancing rules. All activities must comply with the physical distancing rules and health guidelines in force.

28. **Can pools remain open for physical education and health classes, with access to locker rooms permitted for students who are in the same class group only?**

At the moment, schools and municipalities in red zones can decide to allow pools and locker rooms to remain open. Physical education and health classes can therefore take place, provided that the health measures are respected, especially the disinfection of locker rooms, distancing between students in different groups, the wearing of face coverings or procedural masks in locker rooms and when moving around, and controlling entry and exit to limit the number of people present at the same time (compliance with physical distancing and avoiding contact).

29. **What standards must be put in place to allow shared spaces to be used by multiple groups?**

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 specialized studio for any of the four arts subjects or a fitness room (in which the cardio and muscle training equipment is inaccessible),\* 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.

\*Gyms have been closed by Order since October 7, 2020.

30. **In Physical Education and Health class, can the competency *To interact with others in different physical activity settings* be included in activities?**

**In elementary school**

In red zones, this competency can be included for students in Elementary 1 to 4 in stable class groups with appropriate health measures. The wearing of face coverings is not required for students in Cycles One and Two during this class. In Elementary Cycle Three, this competency can be included, but students must wear face coverings inside the school as well as during their classes (gymnasiums and other rooms dedicated to physical education and health are included). When face coverings are worn, students from the same stable class group are not required to maintain physical distancing.

When students engage in physical activities that cannot be carried out while wearing a face covering, they may remove it for the duration of the activity. A distance of 2 metres must be maintained between students, even if they are members of the same stable class group, and they must put their face covering back on as soon as the activity has ended. Face coverings are not required for students in Elementary Cycle Three if the activity takes place outside.

**In secondary school**

In red zones, this competency can be included, but secondary students must wear a procedural mask inside the school as well as during their classes (gymnasiums and other rooms dedicated to physical education and health are included). When procedural masks are worn, students from the same stable class group are not required to maintain physical distancing.

When students are engaging in physical activities that cannot be carried out while wearing a procedural mask, they may remove it for the duration of the activity. A distance of 2 metres must be maintained between students, even if they are members of the same stable class group, and they must put their procedural mask back on as soon as the activity has ended.

## Laboratories and workshops

31. **Are students able to do lab work in teams?**

Yes, if the students in the course are all members of the same stable class group, they can work in teams in the labs since physical distancing is not required between students in the same stable class group. However, if the group is made up of students from different stable class groups, a 2-metre physical distance between students must be maintained.

32. **Can students on the same team use the same materials during lab work or workshops?**

Yes. However, it is recommended that the number of students using the same materials be limited as much as possible. Moreover, any materials and equipment must be disinfected after having been used by a class group.

33. **Can students clean the lab materials themselves after each use?**

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

## Food aid

34. **Under what circumstances are schools required to provide food aid to students in their community?**

Once a class has been closed as a preventive measure and regardless of the length of the closure, schools are to provide food aid to students who were receiving it prior to the closure as well as to those who express a need. These actions are consistent with the elements set out in the emergency protocols created by educational institutions. Schools are encouraged to form partnerships with local and regional community organizations that provide food support, to allow this aid to be provided directly in students' communities. If educational institutions use the funds allocated in the budget rules, they are not permitted to transfer these funds to any community organizations or individuals.

**35. Is it possible to provide food aid in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?**

It is possible to continue providing food aid regardless of the health measures in force. It is recommended that handling of food be kept to a minimum and that it be thoroughly washed before it is distributed to students. Baskets can be made up using fresh, ready-to-eat food items. For example, choose fruits that are an appropriate size for a single portion and ensure that they have been properly washed and handled following strict hand hygiene rules. If necessary, consult the standards that apply to the cafeterias and catering services working with your school (available in French only):

<https://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/msss/document-002618>

## Cultural activities

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

For now, no field trips or cultural outings are permitted. The situation will be reassessed before February 8, 2021. Note that once the lockdown period is over, outings and trips will be permitted in green, yellow and orange zones, provided that the health guidelines are respected. These outings have been forbidden in red zones since October 8.

On school transportation, all students from Elementary 5 to Secondary V must wear a face covering or mask and sanitize their hands when boarding. It is important to assess whether or not it is feasible to maintain physical distancing during travel and avoid class groups mixing, if there are multiple class groups on the same trip. Trips must be planned to comply with all guidelines to ensure student and staff safety at all times during the trip.

**37. Is it possible to use the funds allocated for field trips to cultural venues (Measure 15186) to organize cultural activities at school?**

Considering the evolution of the epidemiological situation and the health guidelines that schools and cultural organizations must abide by, an exception will be made during the 2020-2021 school year to allow the funds granted to school service centres, school boards and subsidized accredited private schools under the measure for field trips to cultural venues to be used to offer cultural activities at school.

In concrete terms, this additional flexibility will allow schools to co-operate with cultural groups listed in the Répertoire culture-éducation in organizing live or virtual shows, activities, exhibitions or performances, provided the health guidelines are respected. Details about terms and conditions are provided in the excerpt from the amendment that was sent to members of the education network. The flexibility afforded by this exception will allow transmission of culture, which is an important part of the mission of Québec schools, to continue and student motivation to be maintained.

**38. Is it possible to have organizations, artists or writers visit the classroom or school?**

Yes. Visitors or stakeholders from the health and social services network and various community organizations (DPJ, dental hygienists, artists in the schools, guest speakers, etc.) 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).

## Infrastructure

**39. Is construction work in schools permitted between now and February 8?**

Construction work in schools is permitted, but must be reduced to a minimum. It is important to limit the presence of workers on construction sites at the same time, in compliance with the standards and guidelines from the public health and occupational health and safety authorities.

**40. [MODIFIED] What is the Ministère doing to ensure air quality in schools?**

In order to ensure rigorous control of air quality in Québec schools, air quality tests were carried out by school service centres and school boards in December 2020 to measure the level of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). The level of CO<sub>2</sub> alone does not guarantee indoor air quality, but it is a good indicator of the intake of fresh air from outside the room. To ensure that the CO<sub>2</sub> levels remain in compliance, the

school network must carry out air quality tests in all establishments on a regular basis. A communication was sent to school service centres and school boards on January 15 to provide more details about this operation. In that communication, it was requested that rapid intervention take place when necessary, in compliance with the new guidelines. The school service centres and school boards were asked to apply all of the recommendations issued by the public health authorities in response to a report prepared by a group of scientific and technical experts, coordinated by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux.

To ensure indoor air quality in schools, the Ministère de l'Éducation has provided the school service centres and school boards with various documents: the *Document de référence sur la qualité de l'air dans les établissements scolaires*, the *Guide pour l'entretien de systèmes de ventilation en milieu scolaire – Responsabilités et bonnes pratiques* and the *Guide sur la Gestion de la prolifération des moisissures en milieu scolaire – Responsabilités et bonnes pratiques* (available in French only).

## Ministerial exams

### 41. **Have the ministerial exams been cancelled?**

Yes, in general education in the youth sector, all ministerial exams for the 2020-2021 school year have been cancelled, including the exams for the January, June and August sessions. This applies to compulsory examinations and uniform examinations. As a result, the school mark will count for 100% of a student's final result.

### 42. **Will the cancellation of ministerial exams for 2020-2021 have an impact on advancement to a higher grade?**

No. The decision to allow students to advance to the next grade will be made by the school team in elementary school and Secondary Cycle One. In Secondary Cycle Two, advancement will be determined by successful completion of each subject. These decisions will depend on the marks in the report card, which are based on evaluations conducted by teachers.

### 43. **Will the Ministère provide teachers with guidelines to help them determine whether a student is prepared to advance to the next grade?**

It is the responsibility of the teacher to determine their students' final results, based on the learning completed as set out in the program of study. However, taking into account the context of the current public health crisis, the Ministère will provide a list of learning to be prioritized by the end of January 2021. Teachers must take these elements into account when teaching, without, of course, limiting themselves to the items on the list based on the learning context.

### 44. **Why are ministerial examinations in vocational training and adult general education still being held?**

Ministerial examinations in vocational training and adult general education will still be held because there is no school mark or other possible means of evaluation. In vocational training, these are qualifying examinations and in adult general education, these are the only examinations that allow adult learners to progress in their schooling.

### 45. **What changes have been made to the date on which report cards in elementary and secondary school will be sent out?**

The date on which the first report card is issued was pushed back from January 22 to no later than February 5. However, schools that have finished preparing their report cards can send them to parents earlier than February 5.

### 46. **Does the change in report card dates also include a change in weighting for each of the terms?**

As the Minister announced, the weighting for the first term will be reduced in order to reduce some of the pressure on students and teachers.

### 47. **[NEW] Has the Ministère provided instructions to award a minimum mark on the first report card?**

The Ministère has not provided any instructions to this effect. It is the responsibility of the teacher to determine their students' final results, based on the learning completed as set out in the program of study. However, taking into account the context of the current public health crisis, the Ministère

will provide a list of learning to be prioritized by the end of January 2021. Teachers must take these elements into account when teaching, without, of course, limiting themselves to the items on the list based on the learning context.

## Strategy to provide academic assistance and support students' well-being

### 48. **What is the goal of the tutoring service?**

Tutors will encourage the success of students identified by the school team by providing help to those experiencing difficulties in some school subjects.

### 49. **Can parents require that their child be enrolled in the tutoring services provided by the school?**

Parents can contact the school about their concerns. However, it is the responsibility of the school team to identify the appropriate services.

### 50. **[NEW] Who qualifies to work as a tutor and what will the compensation be?**

Each school service centre, school board or private school is responsible for hiring the necessary staff to provide tutoring services based on community needs.

- College or university students
  - Must indicate their interest using the *Answer the Call!* platform
  - School service centres, school boards and private schools will receive applications using this platform and are responsible for the rest of the hiring process, using their own criteria based on the needs of students who will be accessing the tutoring services
  - Remuneration: a job category will be created for tutors, with two levels:
    - College students = \$20 per hour
    - University students = \$23 per hour
- Teaching staff who would like to offer their services
  - Must contact their school service centre, school board or private school to indicate their interest
  - Will be remunerated based on their current work contract and the working conditions applicable to teaching staff
- Retired teachers
  - Must indicate their interest using the *Answer the Call!* platform
  - Will be remunerated based on the working conditions applicable to teaching staff
- Professional staff and support staff who would like to offer their services (or retired staff in these categories)
  - Must contact their school service centre, school board or private school to indicate their interest
  - Will be remunerated based on their current work contract and the working conditions that are or would be applicable

### 51. **[NEW] Can a retired person who would like to provide tutoring services receive the temporary remuneration as set out in Order in Council 964-2020, which is intended to address the teacher shortage in the context of the public health emergency?**

Yes, provided that the person meets the criteria, meaning a person who has been retired from the education network since July 1, 2015, and holds a Québec teaching licence.

### 52. **[NEW] Do the judicial records of tutors need to be reviewed?**

Yes, the judicial records of tutors need to be verified. Whether support is provided remotely or in person, schools must fulfill their legal requirements as employers. These obligations are listed in the *Education Act* (see, for example, sections 261.0.1 and 261.0.2).

53. **[NEW] Will digital devices be made available so that students can participate in remote tutoring?**  
When tutoring takes place remotely and the student does not have a dedicated digital device at home, the school service centre or school board must provide the required equipment.
54. **[NEW] Who is responsible for training newly hired tutors?**  
It is the responsibility of educational institutions to ensure that the staff they hire are properly trained.
55. **[NEW] Has the Ministère de l'Éducation set a student-tutor ratio?**  
No. Schools will do so, taking into consideration the nature and extent of student needs, as well as the experience and availability of tutors.
56. **[NEW] What is the budget provided to each school service centre, school board or private school, and how many tutors must be hired?**  
Each school service centre, school board or accredited private school will be allocated funds to apply this measure.
57. **[NEW] Is there a minimum period of time for which tutors need to be hired?**  
No. The period of time must be determined during the hiring process, based on tutors' availability and needs identified in the school.
58. **[NEW] Is in-person tutoring possible or is this service provided exclusively online?**  
Priority must be given to offering tutoring services remotely, but schools may make exceptions, provided that the appropriate health measures are implemented.
59. **[NEW] Can students and tutors contact a student's homeroom teacher?**  
Management of the tutoring program within a school is the responsibility of the school's administration. If necessary, tutors can communicate with the school team using the procedures established in each school.
60. **[NEW] What support will be provided?**  
Alloprof will take various steps to provide additional educational support to the school system, specifically by:
- offering Alloprof services on Sundays: teachers will now be available between 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.
  - hiring 100 additional tutors by recruiting education students in post-secondary
  - developing a new collaborative space where questions relating to academic subjects can be asked 7 days a week, moderated by post-secondary students
  - creating 150 short recaps of priority learning content in secondary school
- Alloprof estimates that this will allow 75 000 additional hours of support to be provided.
61. **[NEW] Can we use the tutoring measure (15021) to pay for any verifications that need to be carried out?**  
No. Educational institutions are asked to use the funds allocated for tutoring as efficiently as possible to provide students with the maximum number of services.
62. **[NEW] Are university students in education who are currently employed as substitute teachers considered to be teaching staff or student tutors? What remuneration applies?**  
If these students have already been hired by school service centres or school boards, they must be considered regular staff and remunerated for tutoring based on the working conditions listed in their collective agreements.
63. **[NEW] Can a teacher provide tutoring services to their own students or the students of a teaching colleague?**  
Yes. Educational institutions are responsible for pairing up students and tutors based on the nature and extent of student needs as well as the experience and availability of tutors.

64. **[NEW] Can students provide tutoring services regardless of what they are currently studying?**

The *Answer the Call!* platform specifies that students applying must be “current or future students in the field of education.” As employers, school service centres and school boards are responsible for managing human resources, including hiring staff based on their specific needs.

65. **[NEW] Can a person other than a current school staff member, a college or university student or a retired school staff member be hired to provide tutoring services?**

No. The list of people who can apply to become tutors is provided in the letter sent on January 27.

66. **[NEW] Can Secondary V students help with tutoring in the evening or on weekends?**

No. At the current time, only students in college and university are being recruited.

67. **[NEW] Can special education technicians and daycare service educators help with some aspects of this tutoring initiative?**

Yes. As the organization of tutoring services is the responsibility of educational institutions, they are responsible for identifying people who could contribute to the tutoring services, based on local needs.

## Psychosocial support

68. **[NEW] What type of psychosocial support will be implemented for students and staff and what kind of funding will be provided?**

In addition to the funds provided to Tel-jeunes to support young people, approximately \$15 million will be invested in support for students and staff in the school network. This demonstrates the value the Ministère places on promoting the well-being of students and staff in our schools.

This measure will support the implementation of initiatives aimed at building protective factors and fostering resilience in students. Teachers will be offered enhanced training and support in developing social and emotional competencies, which are important skills for facing the various challenges of the current context. By supporting staff, who have themselves been affected by the crisis, these actions will help school personnel to better model resilience for students.

This support for the well-being and psychosocial health of students and staff complements the joint announcement made by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux and the Ministère de l'Éducation in October 2020 regarding funding for the hiring of psychosocial resource persons to be deployed in the schools in collaboration with the regional public health authorities.

Depending on their specific needs and realities, schools can also launch their own projects to promote good mental health and well-being among their students and staff.

69. **[NEW] When will these funds be made available?**

These funds are available now. Schools have until June 30, 2021, to use them, and can start planning immediately how to implement the initiatives covered by the measures.

70. **[NEW] Are these funds specifically allocated and protected?**

Specifically allocated and protected funds apply to school service centres and school boards. Private schools are not affected.

In the public system, the funds associated with measure 15022 – *Bien-être à l'école* are protected, meaning that they cannot be transferred to other measures and must be used only for the elements targeted by this measure. Note that funding under measure 15021 – *Soutien additionnel à la consolidation des apprentissages et à l'engagement scolaire des élèves en contexte COVID pour le tutorat* is dedicated, meaning that it can be transferred to other measures in the same group.

71. **[NEW] When will these services be available to students?**

- End of January 2021 (shortly after the announcement):
  - Creating a service for contacting young people who have been identified by their schools. Students who have been referred by their teachers and whose parents have consented will be contacted by a Tel-jeunes staff member to initiate the personalized support process.

- Rapid contact between students in distress and Tel-jeunes by text message or email sent by the organization
- Contacts made by the existing staff at Tel-jeunes, whose hours will be increased
- Once the *Answer the Call!* platform has been launched and the initial bank of candidates has been created, new staff will be recruited, their judicial records will be verified and they will be trained by Tel-jeunes.
- Starting in March 2021:
  - Creation and release of short videos and content (mental health, prevention and other themes) promoted in schools and online.
  - Messaging for and with young people using a chatbot
  - Communication channel: a messaging service staffed by students (\*The bank of candidates from the *Answer the Call!* platform will be used for this.)
- Beginning of April 2021:
  - Platform for exchanges between young people (the interactive forum will be hosted and moderated by Tel-jeune staff [questions and answers, personal accounts, content]).
- **Summer 2021:** Start of the integration of solutions developed for the current operations of Tel-jeunes
- **For back-to-school 2021:** Mobile application integrating all of these features

72. **[NEW] Are Tel-jeunes services also available to people who do not have cellphones?**

Yes. Some services are available on the Internet and students can also make a request by email. A personalized response will be sent to these students.

73. **[NEW] Can our complementary educational services staff work on meeting psychosocial needs?**

It is the responsibility of educational institutions to organize services to meet psychosocial needs identified in their environment. Complementary services staff can certainly contribute. The enhanced services offered by Tel-jeunes are intended to complement the services already offered by the school network.

## Parental consent

74. **Are parents required to provide consent so that their child can receive tutoring services?**

Yes. Before a student in need of tutoring can be provided with these services, the holder of parental authority must provide written consent.

## Remuneration

75. **[NEW] In the context of back-to-school, can staff be permitted to work overtime and be compensated for it? What are the conditions that apply?**

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 staff

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

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

**Justified situations beyond the employee's control**

| Situation   | Remuneration  |
|---|---|
| <p>One of the following situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has one or more health conditions recognized by the INSPQ as making an individual vulnerable to COVID-19</li> <li>• Aged 70 or older</li> </ul>  | <p>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.</p>   |
| <p>One of the following situations:</p> <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>   | <p>The health of a loved one residing under the same roof does not constitute an exemption criterion recognized by the public health authorities.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Analyze the possibility of the employee working remotely.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Their salary is maintained for the time worked, if applicable.</p> <p>*Note that employees taking leave without pay may apply for the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB) if they meet the eligibility criteria.</p> |
| <p>One of the following situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In isolation and identified as having been in moderate-to-high-risk contact with a case confirmed by the public health authorities</li> <li>• In isolation due to noticeable symptoms</li> <li>• Waiting for COVID-19 screening test results, with symptoms or based on having been in moderate-to-high-risk contact with a case confirmed by the public health authorities</li> </ul> | <p>If the employee is able to work, whenever possible, encourage them to work remotely.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>If the employee is unable to work, the waiting period (use of accumulated sick days for the waiting period for up to five consecutive days) begins as soon as the employee is no longer able to work, including time spent waiting for test results and in isolation, if applicable.</p> <p>*Note that employees taking leave without pay may apply for the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB) if they meet the eligibility criteria.</p>  |
| <p>Contracted COVID-19 outside of the workplace</p>   | <p>The employee may be compensated through the wage loss insurance provided for under their working conditions.</p> <p>The waiting period (use of accumulated sick days for the waiting period for up to five consecutive days) begins as soon as the employee is no longer able to work, including time spent waiting for test results and in isolation, if applicable.</p>  |

|                      |          |    |     |  |
|----------------------|----------|----|-----|--|
| Contracted workplace | COVID-19 | in | the | 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). |
|----------------------|----------|----|-----|--|

| Other situations  |  |
|---|--|
| Situation   | Remuneration   |
| In isolation after returning from a personal trip, with or without symptoms | Analyze the possibility of the employee working from home. If the employee is unable to work full-time from home, for the time not worked, the employee must use the 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.<br><br>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.<br><br>Administrative or disciplinary measures may apply.   |

77. **[NEW] How are the new financial measures announced by the federal government applied?**

Please see the following link for more information about the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB), the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB) and the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB):

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/cerb-application/transition.html>

78. **[MODIFIED] Must the compensation for oversized classes be paid when distance education services are provided (Appendix 18)?**

The financial compensation for classes with more than the maximum number of students is set out in Chapter 8-0.00 and Appendix 18 (FSE), XVIII (FAE) and XXI subject to Appendix XX (QPAT) of the provincial collective agreements. In order to be entitled to the compensation for having more than the maximum number of students in a group, the following condition must be met: have a number of students registered for at least half the class days in a given month. The appendix also sets out a formula that takes into account the duration of the teaching provided to this group by the teacher during a given portion of the school calendar.

79. **[NEW] Does the minimum number of hours of educational services for students who are absent for more than 2 days for reasons related to COVID-19 involve financial compensation equal to 1/1000th of the annual salary for teaching staff who have exceeded the standard workload?**

Clause 8-6.02 C) of the collective agreements (FSE-CSQ, FAE and QPAT) provides for compensation when a teacher's workload is exceeded. However, a teacher's workload is only exceeded when the school service centre or school board assigns a teacher to a task with a longer duration than provided for in the collective agreements. In that sense, management of exceeded workloads must be evaluated on a case by case basis by employers, as each situation is different.

80. **[NEW] 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.

## Labour relations

81. **[NEW] What are the main guides available to the school system?**

**Public health tools**

- [Self-care guide](#)

- [COVID-19 symptom self-assessment tool](#)

#### CNESST guides

- [Questions and answers – COVID-19](#)
- [Toolkit for the school system](#)

#### INSPQ guides

- [Guide pour la gestion des cas et des contacts de COVID-19 dans les services de garde et dans les établissements d'enseignement préscolaire, primaire et secondaire](#) (available in French only)
- [Schools and teaching environments – COVID-19 Preventive Measures in the Workplace](#)
- [Recommandations intérimaires pour la protection des travailleurs avec maladies chroniques](#) (available in French only)
- [Recommandations intérimaires pour la protection des travailleurs immunosupprimés](#) (available in French only)
- [Mesures de prévention en milieu de travail: recommandations intérimaires](#) (available in French only)
- [COVID-19: Pregnant and Breastfeeding Workers – Preventive Measures in the Workplace](#)

82. **[NEW] Can an employee refuse to follow the health guidelines issued by the public health authorities?**

The current public health emergency requires that everyone respect the public health guidelines. It is therefore critically important that security measures not be relaxed by staff members, even when students are not present (e.g. in staff kitchen or dining room, or teachers' room).

It is also important to recall that employees have the obligation, under section 49 of the *Act respecting occupational health and safety*, to take the necessary measures to protect the health, safety and physical well-being of other people who are in or near the workplace.

83. **[NEW] 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.

84. **[NEW] If there is a shortage of employees in some schools, can staff in another job category be reassigned to the school in need?**

Ministerial Order 2020-008 allows educational institutions to reassign their staff if, when and where they are needed. The Order requires that the relevant unions and professional associations be consulted before this measure is used, unless the urgency of the situation makes this impossible.

85. **[NEW] If there is a shortage of employees in some schools, can staff who do not work full-time be reassigned to other tasks, such as disinfection? If this is permitted, is that considered an expense related to COVID-19?**

Yes. Ministerial Order 2020-008 allows educational institutions to reassign their staff if, when and where they are needed. The Order requires that the relevant unions and professional associations be consulted before this measure is used, unless the urgency of the situation makes this impossible.

Therefore, if the school service centre or school board is able to specifically identify the remunerated hours and to demonstrate that it is additional work taken on by the staff members that would not have been performed if not for the emergency situation, all of the expenses incurred due to the pandemic must be recorded in the additional costs directly associated with COVID-19. In that respect, for the 2020-2021 year, all educational institutions must record their expenses using specified methods so they can report on these expenses at the appropriate time.

86. **[NEW]** **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.

87. **[NEW]** **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](#) published by the CNESST 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. It is the responsibility of institutions to provide the maximum amount of flexibility already provided for in the collective agreements. Additionally, supervision may be delegated to teachers other than the homeroom teacher, or other members of the staff if necessary. This also applies to some catch-up measures (equivalent to "remediation" in the provincial collective Agreements), if necessary.

Note that Ministerial Order 2020-008 allows educational institutions to reassign their staff if, when and where they are needed. The Order requires that the relevant unions and professional associations be consulted before this measure is used, unless the urgency of the situation makes this impossible

88. **[NEW]** **What ratio applies for the creation of groups for distance education?**

The provisions of the provincial collective agreements apply (especially those regarding the creation of groups of students), taking into account the social distancing measures recommended by the public health authorities. The articles of the provincial collective agreements that relate to averages determined at the school service centre or school board level also apply.

89. **[MODIFIED]** **Are educational institutions required to provide Internet access to staff who are working from home?**

Internet connection fees for employees who are working from home are not reimbursable expenses. It is the responsibility of the employee to pay all the fees associated with the home, work set-up and telecommunications.

Note that the government is offering deductions to taxpayers who have worked from home because of COVID-19. For more information, consult Revenu Québec: <https://www.revenuquebec.ca/en/press-room/news/details/168066>.

90. **[NEW]** **Does the organization of work need to be modified in order to respect the recommendations from the INSPQ and the public health authorities and follow the government guidelines on working from home?**

As stated in the various guides published by the CNESST and the INSPQ, modifications must be made in order to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Ministerial Order 2020-105 states that all employees of businesses, organizations or the civil service who perform administrative tasks or office work will continue this work remotely from their private residence or its equivalent, except for employees whose presence is essential for the activities of the business, organization or civil service to continue.

Therefore, the organization of work should be reviewed in order to encourage the use of the technological tools available, job tasks permitting. Accordingly, requests to work from home should be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the employer.

With respect to teachers, teaching must be done in person or remotely, depending on the educational organization methods in place at the time. When distance education is in effect and working from home is possible, based on schedules, it must be prioritized. Working from home is also preferred, where feasible, for other tasks that do not require the presence of students and that can be performed remotely without hindering collaboration with colleagues. Requests to work from home should still be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the employer.

91. **[NEW]** If some classes are closed, which platform should we use for effective distance education?

For effective teaching, the use of a secure digital learning environment that applies the principles of personal information protection is recommended (e.g. Teams, Moodle, Google Classroom). These environments offer various communication and information features and make it possible to provide feedback, encourage collaborative work and promote discussion between students and their teachers.

In order to guide the school system in making this choice, an information document was sent to the individuals responsible for information security at educational institutions on October 15. The information document contains the following guidelines:

- The platform chosen for distance education must respect the best practices for information security and the protection of personal information. Specifically, the platform:
  - must include reasonable security methods, taking into account the sensitive nature of personal information
  - must not collect the personal information of students or their parents without a notification (if the selected platform allows the personal information of a minor student to be collected, teachers must ensure that they receive consent from a parent or guardian before using the platform)
  - must not allow personal information to be transferred to or stored in a country that does not offer the same level of protection as the province of Québec
- Prefer solutions that are available without additional fees.
- Teaching staff at the same institution should limit the number of platforms used for the same purpose in order to make it easier for students to master the platform and for parents to support their children.

In order to help teachers and students master the platforms and help parents support their children, school service centres and school boards are advised to avoid using multiple platforms for the same purpose.

Additionally, since distance education calls for a certain amount of adaptation, training for teaching staff is offered by different network partners. This training will increase teachers' knowledge of digital learning environments, among other things. For more information, see the page on training related to the Digital Action Plan: <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/current-initiatives/digital-action-plan/training-resources/>

92. **[NEW]** Does the role of teachers include providing distance education?

Yes. In the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Order in Council 885-2020, signed on August 19, 2020, and amended by Order in Council 943-2020, signed on September 9, 2020, states that the role of teachers includes providing distance education. Therefore, the teacher's workload has not been modified, other than by adding another form of teaching to fulfill their duties. Thus, the role of teachers includes both in-person teaching and distance education.

93. **[NEW]** 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.

94. **[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 ≥ 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 link to the [Recommandations intérimaires pour la protection des travailleurs avec maladies chroniques](#), which is available in French only.

#### **Individuals aged 70 and over**

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.

#### **Immunocompromised individuals**

It has been recognized that individuals who are immunocompromised have a greater risk of complications after respiratory infections. Please see the following link, which is available in French only: [Recommandations intérimaires pour la protection des travailleurs immunosupprimés](#).

Finally, the following link, which is available in French only, provides information on the prevention measures recommended for workplaces in the context of the pandemic: [Mesures de prévention en milieu de travail: recommandations intérimaires](#).

#### 95. **[NEW] Are pregnant women automatically required to leave the workplace?**

No. See the document entitled [COVID-19: Pregnant and Breastfeeding Workers – Preventive Measures in the Workplace](#).

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

#### 96. **[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*.

97. **[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>.

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.

98. **[NEW]** How is it determined that a worker contracted COVID-19 in the workplace and is therefore covered by the CNESST?

It is the responsibility of the CNESST to determine if the worker meets the eligibility criteria, including for cases of COVID 19 contracted in the workplace, in order to be covered or not covered under the *Act respecting industrial accidents and occupational diseases (ARIAOD)*.

To learn more about the procedure for making a COVID 19 related claim, see Question 56 of the CNESST Questions and Answers page: <https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/en/prevention-and-safety/covid-19/questions-and-answers-covid-19>

99. **[NEW] Will measures be implemented to help school staff who are experiencing significant stress?**

It is the responsibility of educational institutions to implement an employee assistance program (EAP) in order to support the members of their staff who are experiencing difficult situations.

Additionally, the CNESST has prepared a memory aid discussing the work-related psychosocial risks in order to help employers in all fields ensure that mental health issues are taken into account in the current context: <https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/en/forms-and-publications/quick-reference-work-related-psychosocial-risks>

Finally, the government of Québec has created a digital tool to allow individuals to manage their own emotional health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The *Getting Better My Way* tool is available at: <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/protecting-your-well-being-in-the-covid-19-pandemic/>.

100. **[NEW] If an employee contracted COVID-19 after travelling to a foreign country and was required to remain in that country until they recovered from COVID-19, are they still required to self-isolate and quarantine upon arriving in Canada?**

Yes. Based on the federal government rules, any person entering Canada, whether or not they have symptoms and whether or not they have contracted COVID-19, must self-isolate or quarantine for 14 days. For more information, please see <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html>.

## Retired staff

101. **[NEW] Who are the retirees targeted by the new measure introduced under Order in Council 964-2020 to address the shortage of teachers during the public health emergency, what is the remuneration offered and when will this measure end?**

Any person who retired from the school system after July 1, 2015, and who holds a Québec teaching licence is targeted by this measure. They will be compensated at the rate called for in the single salary scale starting on the first day they return to teaching or supply teaching. This remuneration applies as of September 21, 2020. As long as the health emergency continues and Order 964-2020 is renewed, individuals who are covered by this order are entitled to the applicable remuneration.

102. **[NEW] Are the retirees who benefit from this measure going to see a negative impact on their retirement pensions?**

A retired teacher who is a beneficiary of the RREGOP and who is returning to work in a position covered by the RREGOP (e.g. teacher) can no longer participate in the RREGOP. They do not contribute to the RREGOP and they continue to receive their pension.

A retired administrator (e.g. school principal), who is a beneficiary of the PPMP and who returns to work in a position covered by the RREGOP (e.g. teacher) may choose to participate again in the PPMP. In that case, their pension is suspended, and they start to contribute to the PPMP again. However, the majority of retired beneficiaries of the PPMP who are returning to work will find it more advantageous to not participate in the PPMP again. In that case, they do not contribute to the PPMP and they continue to receive their pension.

103. **[NEW] What is the temporary relaxation of requirements related to the Pension Plan of Management Personnel (PPMP) referred to in Ministerial Order 2020-102?**

As of December 9, 2020, for the duration of the public health crisis, a retired PPMP beneficiary who chooses not to participate in the plan upon returning to work may come back to work in a senior or non-managerial position in a school service centre, school board or private educational institution without their salary being included in the calculation of the limit, provided that this return to work is related to a need resulting from the health crisis and the employer can demonstrate this to Retraite Québec.

As a reminder regarding the limit provided for in the PPMP: a retired person may receive their retirement pension in full provided the sum of their annual pension and their salary earned upon their return to work does not exceed the salary they were earning prior to retiring (limit).

## Costs related to COVID-19

104. **[NEW]** Expenses related to eco-friendly treatment of used procedural masks in schools can be considered an additional expense associated with the pandemic. Educational institutions can declare this type of expense.

The Ministère will analyze the evolution of the situation and the financial consequences for the school network based on the impacts experienced during the school year. Information will be provided in due course about the measures related to additional costs associated with COVID-19.

105. **[NEW]** Our educational institution has estimated that we will lose several million dollars in the 2020-2021 school year due to lost revenue and additional expenses related to COVID-19. Will more financial aid be awarded?

Currently, the relevant guidelines come from the Comptroller of Finance, who has provided instructions to all ministries and organizations regarding additional expenses related to the pandemic, lost revenues and savings. For the 2020-2021 year, all public organizations must keep detailed accounting record using the specified procedure in order to report them at the appropriate time.

Since the return to school last fall, the Minister of Education has announced various additional financial aid measures.

The Ministère will analyze the evolution of the situation and the financial consequences for the school network based on the impacts experienced during the school year. Information will be provided in due course about the measures related to additional costs associated with COVID-19. Note that it is essential to declare all impacts of the pandemic in the relevant documentation, both lost revenues and savings (unused budget measures), as well as the additional expenses.

Private schools are asked to record expenses related to the health emergency that may be eligible for compensation at a later date.

## Private educational institutions

106. **[MODIFIED]** Do these measures apply in the same way in the private network?

The standards and requirements listed in the Winter 2021 return 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.

107. **[NEW]** Are private educational institutions required to provide distance learning services to students with medical conditions that make them vulnerable?

Yes. Since September, in-person attendance at school is compulsory for all students. However, 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.

108. **[NEW]** Can a private educational institution break a contract to provide educational services by claiming that it is incapable of providing the required services, as in the case of 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 service centre or school board with jurisdiction over the student's compulsory school attendance of the termination of the contract to provide educational services.

109. **[NEW]** 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.

110. **[NEW]** Will the Ministère de l'Éducation also provide computer equipment to students attending private schools?

Apart from these measures, it is the responsibility of educational institutions to manage the digital tools necessary for providing educational services. All private schools may be required to provide distance education services, depending on the health measures in effect. However, a school may seek a specific service agreement with parents to cover the additional costs associated with new service methods. Measures are included in the budget rules for accredited subsidized private schools in order to support the digital transition throughout the school network. However, the Ministère does not offer a specific program for subsidizing the purchase of equipment for families.