

(Courtesy in-house translation)

Quebec City, April 27, 2020

Dear parents,

First of all, allow me to sincerely thank you for the increased support you have given to your child's learning over the past few weeks, despite some difficult conditions.

Your strong support and that of the entire population for the containment measures put in place since the beginning of this crisis have led to an overall improvement in the epidemiological situation. As a result, we can now proceed with the gradual, prudent and safe reopening of schools.

The plan for the return to school has been developed in collaboration with the Director of Public Health, Dr. Horacio Arruda, and his team. It will allow students to return to school to consolidate their achievements and complete essential learning by the end of the school year, while minimizing the risk of spreading Covid19.

Gradual Reopening Schedule

As of May 11, all pre-school and elementary schools in Quebec will be able to reopen, with the exception of those in the "*Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal*". As of May 19, these schools should be able to reopen their doors as well, if the situation permits.

The regular activities of in-school daycare services will resume as the schools reopen.

In all cases, schools will have to apply strict hygiene and distance measures as established by "*Santé publique*". In particular, the maximum number of pupils per room will be 15 and the 2-metre distance rule must be respected. New standards will also apply to school transportation services. This reopening will be subject to an ongoing re-evaluation plan.

Secondary schools will remain closed until September. Students will consolidate their learning and continue their distance learning thanks to improved pedagogical supervision by the school team. A work plan and activities will be sent out each week. In addition, teachers will be available to support students until the end of the year.

It is quite normal that returning to the classroom raises concerns. However, I would like to reassure you that schools will have to apply the strict safety and hygiene measures recommended by Public Health.

A voluntary return to school

If you are a parent of a preschool or elementary school student, you should know that this gradual return will be voluntary. Your child's learning can be continued from home, if you so wish. If necessary, the school will provide distance learning supervision.

Although this return will be voluntary, I strongly suggest that parents of children with learning or adjustment difficulties opt for a return to the classroom as soon as possible, so that they can benefit from maximum pedagogical support from their teachers and the school's team of professionals. The parents concerned will be contacted shortly by their school on this subject.

For health and safety reasons, if you have a health vulnerability (chronic illness, severe immune deficiency) or if this is the case for your child or anyone living in your home, you must keep your child at home and continue distance learning.

In order to optimally organize the pedagogical services that will be offered when the school reopens, we ask you to contact your school as soon as possible in order to inform it of your decision, whatever it may be. By notifying it at least one week before the planned reopening date, you will enable the administration to ensure that the students are accommodated in the best possible conditions, while observing the strict recommendations of Public Health. You will receive a communication to this effect in the next few days.

Preparing for the resuming of teaching activities

Obviously, this return to the classroom will be very different from the ones you have known. Strict safety and hygiene measures will have to be respected by the children. They will be explained to them by the school staff, but we are counting on your help to ensure that they are applied.

If you are a parent of a pre-school or primary school student and you choose to return to school:

- Make sure your child washes his or her hands thoroughly before leaving in the morning and when returning home.
- School transportation services will be kept to a minimum and will include significant limitations in order to meet Public Health recommendations. We therefore encourage you to provide transportation for your child unless it is absolutely impossible for you to do so. If your child must use school transportation, please remind your child of the importance of avoiding contact with other students.
- In the school, non-essential common areas, including gymnasiums and libraries, will be closed. The playground will be accessible, but with significant restrictions, and on an alternating basis. The aim is to ensure a barricade between the different groups and to minimize risks. Once again, we ask that you remind your child to avoid contact between students, especially those in groups other than his or her own.
- The cafeterias will be closed. If your child usually eats at school, make sure that he or she brings a meal to school every day. If your child comes home for lunch, it will still be possible for him or her to do so, but the same provisions apply for thorough handwashing on arrival and departure.
- After school hours, it is important not to expose your children to anyone with a health vulnerability (chronic illness, severe immune deficiency, pregnancy or breastfeeding, age 60 or older).

If you are a parent of a preschool or elementary school student and you choose to continue learning at home or if you are a parent of a secondary school student:

- To ensure that everyone completes the learning of essential knowledge by the end of the school year, a major digital equipment loan operation will be launched in the coming days. If you do not have a computer or tool with Internet access at home, please notify your school promptly.
- Make sure your child follows the work plan and carries out the activities that the school will provide.
- Ensure that your child follows the work plan and carries out the activities provided by the school.
- Ensure regular follow-up of your child's learning with the resource that will be designated by your school and call this person if necessary.

Whether your child continues his or her learning at school or at home, be aware that the Open School platform will continue to be improved on a regular basis. Télé-Québec will also continue to broadcast its special programming, both online and on television, until the end of the school year.

I am aware that you may have other questions about the end of the school year. I therefore invite you to consult the documents attached to this mailing and to stay tuned to the more detailed instructions that will be sent to you by your school in the coming weeks.

In closing, I would like to thank you once again for your cooperation during this difficult period. Together, we will get through it. It's going to be okay!

Sincerely,

(signed)

Jean-François Roberge
Minister of Education and Higher Education