

Orientations for back-to-school 2021

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The orientations are based on the following elements:

- 75% of the population aged 12 and older have been vaccinated, among which 12- to 17-year-olds have, for the most part, received at least one dose
- Vaccination efforts among 12- to 17-year-olds will continue to ensure full protection in all regions of Québec
- The vaccination of elementary school children is not yet authorized, but clinical trials are currently being held. A positive outcome is expected, with vaccination possible by the end of 2021.
- The presence of variants in Québec calls for a cautious approach to the return to school and for the implementation of universal protection measures for students and staff.

Some measures may be added or withdrawn depending on the epidemiological situation and the progression of vaccination efforts.

The three areas announced in June continue to guide school organization:

AREA 1

Return to school under conditions that are as normal as possible for students and staff

Elements maintained for all levels (preschool, elementary, secondary, vocational training and adult general education):

- Normal school organization, without restrictions requiring stable class groups
- Full educational services including special pedagogical projects (concentrations, Art-études, Sports-études) and field trips
- Extracurricular activities
- Additional support measures for vulnerable students or those experiencing academic delays
- School transportation under normal rules and without physical distancing restrictions
- Cafeterias and lunch rooms organized as usual

Additional universal protection measures and specific conditions:

- Vaccination campaign in collaboration with the school network, targeting young people aged 12 and older during the back-to-school period to ensure that students receive their second, or in some cases first, dose
- Wearing of a procedural mask for students as of Elementary 1 and at every level thereafter, including secondary, vocational training and adult general education (in common areas, when circulating indoors and when using school transportation); masks do not need to be worn outdoors, in the classroom or during Physical Education and Health classes
- Procedural mask for staff, according to **CNESST** guidelines
- Assigned seats on school transportation to facilitate contact management
- At the secondary level, proof of vaccination will be required before students can participate in certain high-risk extracurricular activities

AREA 2

Maintain health measures and remain vigilant about air quality

Health measures maintained as they were announced in June

- Continue with cleaning and disinfection measures, particularly with regard to frequently touched surfaces
- Continue with hand hygiene routines for students and staff, as per CNESST recommendations
- Continue to evaluate individuals with symptoms and isolate them, if necessary

Air quality

The Ministère and the educational institutions maintain constant vigilance regarding air quality in classrooms, applying measures to correct any problematic situations. Various actions are planned:

- Guidance by an industrial ventilation expert from the Ministère-network technical committee in order to implement measures
- Development of a new protocol for constant monitoring of air quality in classrooms
- Summer 2021: purchase of specialized equipment to measure the level of CO₂ in classrooms
- Call for tenders launched on July 16, with the objective of having all sensors installed by December 2021; however, it is the responsibility of educational institutions to install the sensors as quickly as possible, based on their plan and the dates on which the sensors are received
- Summer 2021: implementation of a summer program for the maintenance of ventilation equipment and windows
- Program intended to correct problematic situations

AREA 3

Possible contingency measures, depending on how the epidemiological situation evolves

Certain one-time measures may be introduced by the public health authorities in the event of an outbreak during the school year or of a deterioration in the health situation of a given region. These measures will be based on the epidemiological situation in the region in question and on the scope of the outbreak. Measures that may be introduced include:

Preschool and elementary school:

- Additional distancing measures if in the presence of different classes (e.g. at lunch, during recess, at the daycare service)
- Wearing of a procedural mask under certain other circumstances (e.g. in the classroom, at the daycare service or during activities where physical distancing is more difficult)

Secondary school, adult general education and vocational training:

- Wearing of procedural masks in certain other circumstances (e.g. in the classroom)
- Should this measure prove to be inadequate, use the measures set out in the emergency protocol for distance education in the case of class closures:
 - Return to alternating in-person and remote attendance in Secondary III, IV and V
 - Use mainly distance education in adult general education and vocational training, except for exams, workshops and laboratories

Management of cases and outbreaks: Young people who have received two doses of the vaccine and who are considered to be adequately protected will not be systematically removed from their school or centre if exposed to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19; nevertheless, they may be required to self-isolate if they experience symptoms or test positive. At the elementary level, where there are no vaccinations, work is still being carried out with the public health authorities to make any possible adjustments to the protocol to be applied in cases of outbreaks. More details are forthcoming.