

June 16, 2020

TO MEMBERS OF SCHOOL STAFF

Dear educators:

First of all, I would like to take the opportunity during this last week of classes to thank you for the incredible effort you have made in recent weeks.

I know that this has not been easy. The pandemic forced you to constantly reinvent yourselves to provide the best for your students. We have all had to face the challenge of finding innovative solutions in unusual and changing circumstances. We were forced to make choices and sometimes difficult decisions in an extraordinary context.

Your efforts have paid off. The success of the gradual reopening of many educational institutions in the spring and the current evolution of the pandemic provide some encouraging news. We are now able to anticipate a new school year that is a little closer to normal, and I would like to share with you the orientations that will guide this year's back-to-school period. These orientations concern the health and well-being of students, as well as their educational success.

The orientations draw on comments and suggestions you have made in recent weeks through your organizations. They take into consideration that each school environment has unique characteristics and are based on the recommendations of the public health authorities.

The main points of these orientations are summarized in the document accompanying this letter. This will allow all stakeholders to have a common understanding of each aspect. The principal guidelines, which have been approved by the public health authorities, are presented below.

Preschool to Secondary III

It is anticipated that all students will return to school full-time for in-person instruction within stable groups and subgroups. Students will remain in the same room each day. In order to limit the risk of contagion, while promoting learning and socialization, students in each group will be divided into subgroups of no more than six students. The various subgroups must be separated by a distance of at least one metre. As the students remain in the same room, the teachers will move from one classroom to another. Adults must ensure they keep a distance of two metres between themselves and the students. For students in Secondary I, II and III, the schedules for courses and special projects will be reorganized based on the principle of closed groups. Accordingly, each student will stay in their group no matter what courses they are taking.

Secondary IV and V

With regard to students in Secondary IV and V, school service centres are provided with two options, depending on their realities and the needs identified in their respective school communities.

The first option is based on the model used for students in Secondary I, II and III. Essentially, it consists in reorganizing the schedule, special projects and the choice of optional courses to comply with the principle of closed groups.

The second option is to have an alternating schedule. Under this option, groups of students formed in accordance with the rules of physical distancing would attend school at least every second day. Online learning and work to be done at home would round out the educational services offered.

Adult general education and vocational training

It is anticipated that students will return in person, especially for practical training and exams. The 1.5-metre social distancing rule must be respected between individuals, except in programs where it is impossible to do so. In that case, students and teachers must wear personal protective equipment. Distance learning may continue for theoretical content, some practical learning and even some exams.

For all staff and students, physical distancing measures will be based on the situation at any given point, in compliance with public health guidelines. Additionally, the physical layout of educational spaces will have to meet certain safety standards.

In order to be ready for any eventuality, all school service centres and private educational institutions must prepare a contingency plan for the partial or total closure of schools. The plan, which must comply with the protocol established by the Ministère d'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, would enable you to continue your work in the event that the schools close and ensure that students receive all the support necessary for courses to continue.

I am aware that preparation for the return to school this year will require effort on the part of everyone. I know, however, that we will be able to draw on the lessons of the past few months to provide students with a new kind of back-to-school experience, as well as the chance to reunite, innovate and succeed.

I would like to thank you most sincerely. I hope that you are able to take a well-deserved break over the summer and to spend time with the people close to you.

Yours truly,

Jean-François Roberge

Minister of Education and Higher Education