



Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec  
Quebec English School Boards Association

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOUVERNEMENT OF QUÉBEC  
ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES RELATING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

FROM THE  
QUEBEC ENGLISH SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

**April 2020**

## Background

On March 11, the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) announced that the COVID-19 outbreak constituted a global pandemic. After declaring a health emergency on March 13<sup>th</sup>, the Government of Québec began introducing certain physical distancing and broad voluntary confinement measures shortly thereafter. All non-essential commercial and institutional activities were suspended as of March 24<sup>th</sup> until May 4<sup>th</sup>.

Daycares, schools, universities and colleges were closed as of March 13<sup>th</sup>, initially for a two-week period. The Government subsequently ordered these institutions to remain closed until May 4<sup>th</sup>. Year-end ministerial exams have been cancelled.

Québec universities announced that the physical presence of students on campus would not be required for the remainder of the semester.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education launched the École ouverte/Open School on-line initiative on March 30<sup>th</sup>. Weekly educational packages are being sent out to students and parents by teachers as of last week, but there is no formal distance learning in public sector schools.

Premier Legault announced on April 22<sup>nd</sup> that the Government of Québec will make public a plan for the gradual reopening of schools and the easing of restrictions on commercial and economic activity during the week of April 27<sup>th</sup>.

With the objective of contributing to the Government's decision-making process, the Quebec English School Boards Associations (QESBA) issues the following recommendations to the Government of Québec relating to the educational implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

1. In the event that the Premier intends to gradually reopen public schools this current school year:
  - 1.1 The reopening of schools should be based on health and public safety guidelines developed by the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) for the easing of social restrictions. These guidelines are contained in the W.H.O. document entitled Considerations in adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19 - Interim guidance, 16 April 2020. These considerations are:
    - a) Is transmission of the virus under control?
    - b) Is the health-care system equipped to detect, test, isolate and treat every case, and trace every person who came into contact with a positive case?
    - c) Are outbreaks minimized in special settings like health facilities and nursing homes?
    - d) Are there measures in workplaces and schools to prevent the spread of the virus?
    - e) Are the risks of importing more cases from outside the country being managed?
    - f) Are local communities educated, engaged and empowered to adjust to the "new norm"?

**It is the QESBA's recommendation that all of these W.H.O. health and public safety considerations should be met to determine which school could be safely reopened and when they could be safely reopened.**

**These same considerations should be used in decision-making around maintaining schools open in the event of a second wave of the pandemic during the 2020-2021 school year.**

- 1.2 Attendance for the remainder of this school year should be voluntary for students.
  - 1.3 The current school year should not be prolonged past the scheduled end date of classes.
  - 1.4 Students in the youth sector whose parents may not allow them to return to school this school year or those in schools which may remain closed, should not be penalized or disadvantaged academically.
  - 1.5 Special attention should be given to vulnerable students or those who are academically at risk based on student evaluations already issued.
  - 1.6 The Government has to take into account the complexity of reopening schools for boards whose territory covers multiple administrative regions.
2. For the reopening of schools this year and for the 2020-2021 school year, clear guidelines need to be issued by the Government and applied in the network to limit the risks to personnel, to students and to their families including:
    - a. Physical distancing
    - b. Appropriate infection control measures
    - c. Sanitary measures in schools and centres
    - d. School transportation (for students and drivers)
  3. Youth sector students should generally be advanced to the next grade based on the two evaluations issued. Allow teachers some leeway to advance those students who may be failing on the basis of the two student evaluations using their professional judgement.
  4. The 2020-2021 school year should not begin earlier than the scheduled date.
  5. Any redeployment of education network personnel to the health care network must be voluntary.

6. In the event that some form of physical distancing or other restrictions will need to be maintained in the 2020-2021 school year, the Government of Québec, in cooperation with its education partners, should develop and implement a more robust capacity for distance learning.

### **Conclusion**

This list of issues and considerations is not necessarily exhaustive. However, it does provide the Government of Québec with some key recommendations regarding how our educational sector can cope with the unprecedented situation we are all facing.