



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

NEWS RELEASE

Immediate Distribution

Health and safety guidelines must be clear for the reopening of schools

MONTREAL, APRIL 25, 2020 – The Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA), transmitted its recommendations to the Government of Québec yesterday for eventual school reopenings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chairs of our school boards and their Councils of Commissioners are still legally responsible for the health and safety of more than 100,000 students and thousands of staff members across Québec. QESBA maintains that the health and safety of these individuals must be the guiding principle in making such significant decisions.

The QESBA urges the Government to use recognized national or international guidelines, including clear benchmarking, relating to the current and future situation of the pandemic in order to determine when and under what circumstances Québec schools can be reopened. As an example, the World Health Organization (WHO) recently issued these types of guidelines in a document entitled [Considerations in adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19](#).

“The Government of Québec should use these WHO guidelines to determine when and where schools can be reopened. The decision on when to reopen schools must be made using best practices and the most reliable data possible. Given the absolute imperative to protect the health and safety of students, staff and their families, nothing less will do”, said QESBA President Dan Lamoureux.

In the event that the application of these types of guidelines permit the gradual reopening of schools in some administrative regions this school year, the QESBA recommends that the following measures be taken:

- school attendance be voluntary for students;
- no student in the youth sector should be disadvantaged academically if they remain home or if their school remains closed;
- adaptations must be made for the adult education sector and for vocational training programs;
- clear guidelines be issued regarding physical distancing if necessary, and sanitary measures in schools and centres and for school transportation;
- special attention should be given to vulnerable student or those who are academically at risk based on evaluations already issued.

“The probable timeline of this illness will change the way we do things in the education network for some time to come. We may not be able, even in the medium term, to return to full class sizes in crowded, bustling schools. In order to prepare for this eventuality, we as a system must look at developing quality education programs with more robust distance learning components. Other jurisdictions have already introduced changes in this regard. It is time for us to embrace that change as well,” concluded the President.

QESBA is the voice of English public education in Québec and represents 100,000 students in 340 elementary, high schools, and adult and vocational centres across Québec.

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