

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

April 8, 2020

Dear parents:

As you know, given the risks associated with COVID-19, we had to take the difficult but necessary decision to close all educational institutions until May 1. Rest assured that we are working tirelessly with our partners to minimize the inconveniences experienced by students.

These are unprecedented circumstances for the Québec school system. I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with the most recent information and to ask for your support in maintaining a link between the school and your child.

Please find information in this letter about the measures we have implemented so far to encourage your child to continue to learn. I ask for your collaboration to make sure that your child can get the most benefit out of it.

Weekly kit with educational options

Beginning this week, you will receive a weekly kit with educational options developed by the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur and personalized by your child's teacher or a member of their school-team. This kit will be adapted to your child's specific needs and made available at the beginning of each week.

The activities suggested in this weekly kit are optional, **but it is strongly recommended** that all students consolidate their learning to ensure that they do not fall behind because of an extended period of inactivity. We are counting on you to make sure that your child carries out the weekly activities whenever possible. The kit as well as the activities proposed by the school should be the preferred educational tool used to foster your child's continued learning.

A weekly follow-up will be carried out with your child by their teacher or a member of their school team. A similar follow-up with the most vulnerable students will be carried out by professionals and technical support staff, who will also maintain regular contact with the parents.

Open School: A new online platform for learning at home

As you know, the Ministère has recently published the *Open School* online platform not only to support families during this crisis, but also to foster students' continued learning, satisfy their curiosity and enhance their knowledge. Each week, new educational content will be added. This includes content specifically for students with disabilities, or learning challenges; this content is being developed and will be published on the platform shortly. You can access the platform at www.ecoleouverte.ca/en.

Please note that the *Open School* platform is a complementary tool that is optional and distinct from the weekly kit with educational options that you will receive separately.

Educational partnership with Télé-Québec

I am very proud to announce that we have entered into an agreement with Télé-Québec to use their airwaves to broadcast an educational program for students at all levels (available in French only). This new educational program, which enables parents to keep their children engaged while schools are closed, is expected to launch on April 13. Please find enclosed further information about this promising initiative.

Collection of personal effects and school materials

In light of the most recent information regarding the epidemiological evolution of the virus, the Direction de la santé publique has recommended that all efforts to collect materials from Québec schools and institutions of higher education be suspended. I have issued instructions to the school system to this effect. As a result, all educational institutions are closed to the public until further notice.

I realize that this is a difficult situation. It is unfortunate that unused educational materials and personal effects must remain in our schools, when they could have been useful for some students. However, during the current circumstances, the health and safety of Quebecers must be considered before anything else.

This situation is evolving and it is possible that the collection of personal effects and school materials could resume at a later date. However, for the time being, we must find alternative solutions to meet the most critical needs, while still complying with the recommendations issued by the Direction de la santé publique. You will be kept informed of any updates.

Food assistance service

To ensure that students are not deprived of the usual food assistance they receive at school, we have established a partnership with the Breakfast Club of Canada. Through this effort, the funding dedicated to the distribution of breakfast meals in schools can be re-directed to support those most vulnerable and affected by the crisis. For this purpose, the Breakfast Club will use its expertise and its partner network to organize the delivery of supplies through 31 regional Moisson Québec organizations.

You will be notified of the availability of this food assistance service and of the resources available in your neighbourhood. Further support is also available, should you need it. Please feel free to use this service.

Conclusion

On a more personal note, I thank you for your understanding and your ongoing involvement in your child's education during the current circumstances. Parents like you are playing a major role in their children's success, and your support is especially important during this difficult situation we are currently in.

In closing, I encourage you to thank the school staff members when you have an opportunity. During sometimes difficult conditions, they have joined forces to ensure the personalized follow-up with your child. They are the guardian angels of the education system.

Keep taking good care of yourself and your children by following the guidelines issued by the Québec government and the Direction de la santé publique. Together, we will overcome this crisis. Everything is going to be okay.

Sincerely,

Jean-François Roberge
Minister of Education and Higher Education

Encl.