

Ottawa, August 5, 2020

IMPORTANT UPDATE - SCHOOL REOPENING

Dear parents and guardians,

It is my pleasure to connect with you for the first time as Director of Education for the *Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario* (CEPEO). It goes without saying that the current context is uncommon, but I want to assure you that our entire team remains determined to make the 2020-2021 school year a success.

First of all, I would like to take a moment to express the solidarity of the whole CEPEO family with the Lebanese community, affected by yesterday's terrible accident in Beirut. Our thoughts are with you and you can count on our support during these trying times.

As you know, the Ontario government clarified its plan to reopen schools last week. Education Minister Stephen Lecce has written a letter to parents of students across the province. You can read it by [clicking on this link](#).

Since mid-June, we have been working on preparing for the start of the new school year for all our students and our learners, in accordance with the instructions of government and public health authorities.

As the health and safety of our students and staff remains our priority, school teams will implement a series of measures aimed at reducing the risk of the virus spreading (for example, a regular hand washing schedule, wearing a mask, physical distancing and setting up student cohorts). You can read about these measures in the [Guide to Reopening Ontario Schools](#).

Elementary schools (including grades 7-8)

In its plan, the government provides for a full-time return for kindergarten to grade 8 students. We would like to point out that this also applies to all of our grade 7 and 8 students, whether they be located in an elementary or a secondary school.

Secondary schools (grades 9 - 12)

In its announcement last week, the Ministry of Education indicated that CEPEO was on a list of 24 school boards whose students in Grades 9 to 12 would attend school 50% of the time on a determined schedule. This school attendance model provides for cohorts limited to around 15 students per class and requires the adoption of a rotating schedule for each group of students.

We would like to inform you that the CEPEO has submitted a request for an exemption from this model of 50% school attendance for the following nine schools:

- école élémentaire et secondaire publique L'Équinoxe
- école élémentaire et secondaire publique Maurice-Lapointe
- école secondaire publique Académie de la Seigneurie
- école secondaire publique Barrhaven

- école secondaire publique L'Alternative
- école secondaire publique L'Héritage
- école secondaire publique Le Sommet
- école secondaire publique Mille-Îles
- école secondaire publique Marc-Garneau

If the Ministry of Education approves the request, students from these nine schools will return to school full time, five days a week. This request is justified by the fact that these schools have a number of students which allows the implementation of planned prevention measures or are located in low-risk communities according to criteria established by public health authorities. Should the government refuse these exemptions, we will promptly notify the parents of the concerned schools. In the meantime, planning is done on the assumption that exemption requests will be approved.

Four of our secondary schools (Gisèle-Lalonde, De La Salle, Louis-Riel and Omer-Deslauriers) cannot be the subject of an exemption request. This means that the students of these four schools will attend school 50% of the time until further notice (equivalent to 5 days at school over 10 school days). More details on the schedule and the lessons will be sent to you shortly for this purpose.

Systemic classes for students with special needs

In accordance with ministerial directives, the CEPEO will offer regular education, five days a week, to all students with special needs enrolled in a systemic class, at all levels, taking into account the maximum number prescribed by the Ontario Education ministry.

Choice of school attendance mode

Over the next few days, you will also receive a communication asking you to officially share with us your choice of school attendance mode, face-to-face or virtual, for the next school year via the parents' portal. Your participation is essential in order to help us ensure that your children's education is planned.

You can choose to keep your child at home. In this circumstance, your child will be able to follow the Virtual School Learning Program. Details on this program will be communicated to you shortly.

If you want to change the way your child attends school during the year, (for example, from virtual mode to face-to-face mode), you can do so as follows:

At the elementary level (M - 8th grade), you will need to allow a few weeks for the change to take place since it will be necessary to facilitate the integration of a new student into a cohort in a cautious and measured manner in order to minimize the risks of the virus spreading. In the meantime, they must continue according to the mode of attendance initially chosen.

At the secondary level (9 - 12th), the change in school attendance mode can be done after the students have completed half a semester. Each semester of the school year will be divided into two. The student must therefore have completed half a semester before being able to change the mode of attendance. The precise start and end dates of the half-semester will be communicated to you shortly.

Survey of students on their appreciation of learning at home from March to June

We inform you that a personalized survey will be sent, on Thursday, August 6, 2020, to students in grades 4 to 12, to your child's email address. The purpose of this survey is to gauge their appreciation for home learning, distance education and the services received from March to June 2020. We would appreciate you encouraging them to participate.

School transportation

We encourage students to come to school on foot, by bicycle or by parent-provided transportation if possible. Other students eligible for school transportation can take the bus. Here are some special features specific to this year:

- Wearing a mask will be mandatory for drivers and for students in grades 4 to 12.
- Wearing a mask will optional but encouraged for kindergarten to grade 3 students.
- Each student will have to sit in the seat assigned to them.

The Ottawa School Transportation Consortium (CSTO) and the Eastern School Transportation Consortium (CSTE) will announce further details shortly. They will communicate via email with each family to confirm the status of the students and to communicate the usual details related to stops and pick-up and drop-off schedules..

To report any change in your child's status, please contact [CSTO](#) or [CSTE](#).

We are aware that some questions remain unanswered. We will respond to them as soon as we can. Until then, all CEPEO staff continue to prepare for the return to school. Everyone is eager to reconnect with the students!

We invite you to regularly consult our [Back to School portal](#), which is updated regularly to assist you in this preparation.

I thank you for your cooperation and wish you a happy August.

Sylvie C. R. Tremblay
Director of Education