

# Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy – Suspension of Loss of Credit Decisions

The purpose of this release is to inform you of amendments to the policy direction related to attendance in light of the COVID-19 situation. These amendments include:

- A temporary suspension of Section 5.4, *Loss of Credit for Grades 10 to 12* as currently outlined in the *Student Attendance and Engagement Policy*;
- Direction with respect to attendance incentives that may be in place; and
- A reminder about encouraging students to follow public health directives that may affect their attendance

During the 2020-21 school year many students who may have otherwise been able to attend school while experiencing minor symptoms will now be required to stay home due to public health directives. This will mean that absence rates will increase across the province. Students and families are encouraged to adhere to the public health advice and not to attend school when they are feeling unwell or experiencing any of the symptoms identified for COVID-19. If students appear ill at school, they will be asked to return home. This is an important step in keeping our schools healthy.

## Loss of Credit

Section 5.4 of the *Student Attendance and Engagement Policy* states that a teacher may recommend loss of credit when a high school student has missed 20 percent of class time due to any absences, and strong efforts have been made to improve the student's attendance, but no improvement has been demonstrated.

The situation related to Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is rapidly evolving. It is anticipated that students may be required to remain out of school for an extended period of time due to illness or on the recommendation of a health care professional.

The suspension of loss of credit at grades 10 to 12 is a step that our system can take to support schools in having a continued focus on school operations and to reduce the administrative burden related to potential higher than normal volumes of absences. It will also help alleviate student concern around missing classes due to circumstances that may be beyond their control.

The suspension of this policy directive will be in effect until at least the end of the school year (June 2021) and will apply to all students, regardless of the reasons for absence.

## **Incentives**

Regional centres for education (RCEs) and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) will suspend any incentive programs that may be in place related to student attendance, such as exam exemptions.

RCEs/CSAP should communicate this direction to schools, teachers, students, and families.

## **Adhering to Public Health Directives**

Students and families should be encouraged to continue to follow public health directives during the school year. This may result in more frequent student absences from school for illness or medical reasons, as students and families choose to stay home when presenting symptoms that could be associated with COVID-19.

Schools and RCEs/CSAP will work with families to ensure that students' ongoing learning and well-being continues to be supported if they are absent due to medical reasons or while following public health directives.

Thank you for your continued cooperation in this matter.

Signed by

Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development