

A Message from ISA Director, Dr. Lisa Starr

A message from ISA, your Internships & Student Affairs Office



September 14th, 2020

Hello,

I want to congratulate you on the start of this very unique academic year. The ISA remains committed to ensuring that McGill Teacher Candidates have the best field experiences possible in these challenging times. Understandably, public and independent schools are on the front lines negotiating their usual academic priorities as well as new guidelines for health and safety. Schools have now been in session for a few weeks and they continue to problem solve the unique challenges, like physical and social distancing, work exemptions and the evolving pandemic situation created by COVID-19. These efforts are being done to keep student learning and student wellness at the forefront of their mission. Now, more than ever, empathy, creativity and adaptability are the skills and attitudes that foreground how schools and institutions must forge ahead. The ISA fully supports those efforts and strongly encourages McGill Teacher Candidates to do the same. Though each of you is developing as a teacher, we consider you a professional and a role model for the young people with whom you will be working.

We have been working closely with schools and the Ministry of Education to ensure we are respecting their expectations for the health and well-being of students, staff and McGill Teacher Candidates as they enter into their fall field placements. Those of you taking on a fall field experience should apprise yourself of the [Quebec Back-to-school Plan for Fall 2020 \(COVID-19\)](#). We have approached the placement process with deep respect for the challenges being undertaken by school staff. We are making decisions in light of the weighty responsibility teachers have taken on in their commitment to student learning.

Taking into consideration these challenges, we have made some changes to the fall field placements. Please read the following carefully.

Field Placement Scheduling

As a result of school closures in March, the second-year field placement for our B.Ed. Teacher Candidates was moved to Fall. Many of those students will be returning to the same school for their third field experience. This continuation presents a unique learning opportunity for McGill Teacher Candidates because they are already familiar with the students, planned learning and school procedures. In some situations, schools are not able to accommodate the continuation, so the ISA is securing placements at a different school for their FE3 as has been the practice in the past. MATL Teacher Candidates were minimally affected by the spring school closure and have been able to continue with their second Internship unimpeded. Please keep in mind, that these are very trying times for schools and teachers. The added stress they are experiencing requires our support and empathy.

Distance Supervision

The ISA respects the efforts of schools to limit the presence of non-school staff in their buildings as they strive to maintain social and physical distancing measures. As a result, we have exceptionally allowed for remote field supervision. In most cases, this will require you to either

- a. [livestream a video of you teaching directly to your supervisor using WebEx](#)

- b. [record a teaching episode then upload it privately to YouTube for your supervisor to view.](#)

Please discuss which option is preferable to you, your supervisor and your cooperating teacher. To protect the confidentiality of the young people with whom you will be teaching, we have created [Mandatory Consent Forms](#) that both you and your cooperating teacher need to complete. In situations where schools have requested that you obtain parental consent, we have included a specific consent form for parents in the section Distant Supervision Resources. You will send these to your field supervisor along with the learning plan for your teaching episode. If you are not able to include the students you are teaching and your interactions with them during your teaching episode, please focus the camera on you only for the Field Supervisor to base their assessment.

Attendance during Field Placements

If you are showing flu-like symptoms, please call 1-877-644-4545 immediately and isolate yourself from others. Based on your symptoms and travel history, a health care professional will advise you on the best course of action.

- Call 1-877-644-4545 for instructions. Based on the instructions received from Info-Santé, the individual may be required to self-isolate for a certain period and/or get tested.
- McGill students and employees should also consult the COVID-19 self-declaration form and procedures.
- Complete the [Confirmation of Illness for Field Placements](#) form. Send to your Placement Coordinator.
- Follow all school and school board protocols as required.

If you are required to quarantine, additional time may be added to your current or future placements to ensure that you have obtained the number of student teaching hours required by the Ministry of Education in order to be recommended for the Brevet. If you have quarantined as a result of a positive test for COVID-19, schools may require you to present a negative test before re-entering the school. It is possible that a prolonged absence may result in a field placement having to be retaken at a later date.

The ISA office returned to limited on-campus activity on Tuesday September 8, 2020. Placement Coordinators are available for online or in-person appointments (scheduled 48 hours in advance). The best way to get in touch with your placement coordinator continues to be via email at placements.education@mcgill.ca .

I know these are trying times for all of us. Many of you, in addition to being McGill Teacher Candidates, are parents, siblings, and friends negotiating this new reality we are in. I encourage you to make decisions that are in the best interest of yourselves, the people you care about and the wider public that include minimizing unnecessary social contact, and wearing a mask as outlined by current health regulations. Now is the time to make smart decisions and choices that will help to reduce the spread of COVID-19 while acting with empathy and compassion.

Wishing you success.

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