

Montreal

The first report cards are in for Quebec students, and the results are worrisome

1 in 4 students failing math, 1 in 5 students failing French, according to group of school administrators

[Antoni Nerestant](#) · CBC News · Posted: Feb 10, 2021 9:37 AM ET | Last Updated: February 10



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A lot has been asked of elementary and high school students in Quebec during the pandemic.

Possibly, too much, if the results from the school year's first report cards are any indication.

The report cards show that many students are struggling, leading to calls for the Quebec government to lower the bar for CEGEP admissions.

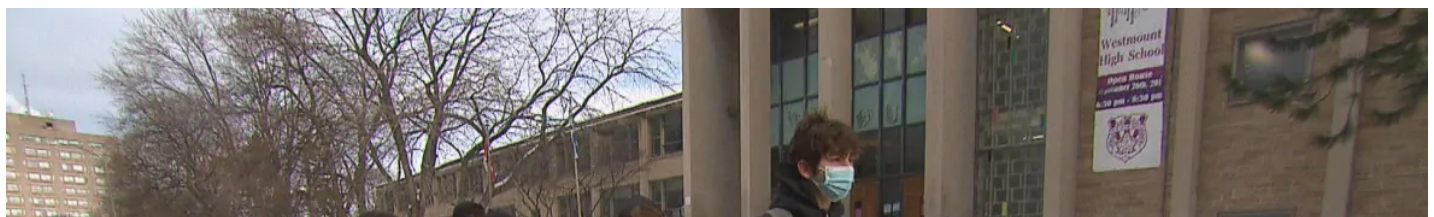
"I think a lot of my friends are having trouble staying on track and focusing on school," said Isaac Yang, who is attending half his classes virtually during his final year at Westmount High School. "Personally my grades did drop a little bit."

Data collected from 100 primary and 40 secondary schools by a province-wide group of school administrators show that 20 per cent of students are failing French, and a quarter of them are failing math.

According to the Fédération Québécoise des Directions d'établissement d'enseignement, the percentage of failing students is usually around 15 per cent.

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The latest report cards are the first of two students will receive during the academic year. Last month, Education Minister Jean-François Roberge announced that grades in the second report card would be given more weight than the first. Roberge also cancelled all ministry exams.



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A group of students at Westmount High School says their grades have suffered during the pandemic. (CBC)

Léo Morrison, another student at Westmount High, is trying to look on the bright side, hoping the challenges from this year will get him ready for the future.

"Maybe this is actually like helping us prepare and kind of showing us early so we understand what the feeling is going to be like in CEGEP," Morrison said. "But then again, it's really stressful."

The cancellation of field trips as well as extracurricular and sporting activities in school have not helped, according to Rachelle Doucet, a guidance counselor at Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School.

"Hopefully that means that CEGEPs will not be as stringent grade-wise when it comes to applications," Doucet said. "Because everyone's grades will have suffered."

Government must accept some responsibility, teacher says

Students have had to deal with constantly evolving public health rules and temporary school closures.

Westmount High School teacher Robert Green has seen the student's academic struggles play out in his classroom, and he says the Quebec government deserves its share of the blame.

For Green, the announcement that ministry exams would be cancelled came too late, and

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In recent months, the province has tried to invest in tutoring help for students, to help them get through this challenging year.

Province says it's not so bad

Roberge says the high school picture is not all that gloomy. He says the pandemic has not had a significant impact on grades and his office released figures to prove it on Tuesday.

The numbers show, for example, a failure rate of 16.8 per cent in French and a 20.7 per cent failure rate in math.

The education minister's office says the data was collected by surveying 214 schools and a total of 84,000 students.

Roberge's office also says that's why the numbers differ significantly from those compiled by Quebec's federation of educational institutions (FDQE).



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The government also says marks in elementary school remain similar to last year.

However, in a news conference Wednesday, the education minister said that while he is reassured by the data, there is "still a lot to do."

"We will have to use the summer to give help to those in need," said Roberge.

"We must not ... fool ourselves into believing everything is fine and that, because the success rates are comparable, we have exactly the same level of attainment as last year."

With files from Josh Grant and La Presse canadienne

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