

Your  
child

IN  
*elementary school*

INFORMATION  
FOR  
PARENTS

## An education reform... a new curriculum

The Québec education system wants to offer your child the best. In the 1960s, our main objective was to make education accessible to all. A new objective has now emerged: **success for the greatest possible number**.

**The education reform** began in the mid-1990s. This huge undertaking aims at helping your son or daughter develop into an educated, qualified individual who is ready to take his or her place in the world of today and tomorrow.

- The reform focuses on the essential: English, French (second language), math, history, the arts, science, and good work methods.
- The reform also suggests ways of accompanying your child on the road to success. These include a broader range of teaching approaches and strategies for dealing with the dropout problem.
- Under the reform, schools have more autonomy and are more open to the world than ever before, and parents play a greater role.
- The reform includes those students who start out with a lesser chance of succeeding, and supports all students until they reach adulthood, if necessary.

The **Québec Education Program** is an important element of the education reform.

The program:

- determines what your child **learns** at school
- suggests **new ways for teachers to do things**, while at the same time allowing them to draw on their experience and creativity
- promotes the development of **competencies** that are based on what your child has learned
- aims at making school **enjoyable** for your child even though **the demands may be greater**.



## Competencies built on knowledge

At school, children develop **competencies**. Of course, in each subject, they acquire **knowledge**, meaning that they learn things that are taught to them. It is also important, however, that they be **competent**, that they be able **to use what they have learned**. Knowing something by heart is good, but knowing how to use what they have learned is even better!

In the classroom, children are placed in situations that stimulate their intelligence and give them opportunities to apply their knowledge in a concrete way: doing projects, participating in workshops, solving problems, etc. This is how they **develop competencies** in each subject.

Certain competencies are **useful in all subjects**. These are called "**cross-curricular competencies**," because they are found in each subject of the curriculum. The cross-curricular competencies are:

- **intellectual**: to use information, to solve problems, to exercise critical judgment, to come up with an idea and apply it
- **methodological**: to organize one's work, to use computer resources
- **personal and social**: to know one's strengths and weaknesses, to cooperate, to be part of a team
- **communication-related**: to write properly, to express oneself clearly in order to be understood, to listen to others.

## A system based on two-year cycles

The elementary level is now divided into **three cycles of two years each**. Why two years? So that students have time to learn, to develop competencies, and **to strive to reach their full potential**. Two years gives them more time **to consolidate what they have learned**.

A two-year period also allows students and teachers **to recognize problems and work toward a solution**. All staff members who work with your children at school **are part of a team**, and this gives them a better overview of students' progress. In some cases, this team might consist of the homeroom teacher and school psychologist or remedial teacher.

As students advance from one cycle to the next, they become **increasingly competent**:

- In Cycle One (grades 1 and 2), they learn to read, write and count, among other things. Already, they are encouraged to use their new competencies in everyday life or to express their own opinions.
- In Cycle Two (grades 3 and 4), new subjects are added: they study geography, history and citizenship education, and science and technology.
- In Cycle Three (grades 5 and 6), they study the subjects introduced in the first two cycles in greater depth. At the end of Cycle Three, students are evaluated on what they have learned in elementary school.

Throughout the three cycles, students take arts education and physical education and health. Parents also choose between moral and religious education for their children.



## School and society

At school, students acquire knowledge and develop competencies. But they will be more motivated if they can make connections between school and their personal life. A school that takes into account issues of concern to young people is a school that provides stimulating experiences and that makes them look forward to coming to class every day.

The issues that concern young Quebeckers fall into five **broad areas of learning**:

- **health and well-being**: how to develop good lifestyle habits (eating, sleeping, managing stress, etc.)
- **personal and career planning**: developing self-knowledge, discovering personal interests, carrying projects through to completion (organization, teamwork, perseverance, etc.)
- **media literacy**: developing critical judgment with respect to television, radio, newspapers, magazines and the Internet (violence, advertising, etc.)
- **environmental awareness and consumer rights and responsibilities**: learning to be an informed consumer and to act responsibly with respect to the environment (pollution, recycling, etc.)
- **citizenship and community life**: learning to play an active role within a group and to show openness to others and respect for diversity

There are no specific courses in these broad areas of learning. Students explore them in each subject they are taught, while participating in a project or activity, and in their relations with classmates or the adults around them.

# Supporting your child by following his or her development

The school can do a lot for your child, but nothing takes the place of a parent's interest and support. Knowing that you care about what he or she is doing at school will encourage your child and motivate him or her to persevere. One way of providing support is by helping your child with homework.

To help you follow your child's progress, the school, the school board and the Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ) have developed different ways of evaluating your child and keeping you informed.

For each subject (English, math, history, etc.) the Québec Education Program sets **expectations**, or benchmarks, with respect to the competencies expected of your child **at the end of each cycle**. Your child's teacher can inform you about these expectations.

**Your child is evaluated** in different ways. Some evaluations are "official" in nature, such as exams, the progress reports that are issued at the end of each two-year cycle, and compulsory exams in designated program areas at the end of elementary school. Other evaluations are informal, but every bit as useful. One example would be when a teacher observes a child working and offers encouragement or helps him or her to overcome a problem. Students also learn **to evaluate themselves** (self-evaluation), which gradually enables them to recognize their strengths and identify areas that need improvement.

The school **keeps you informed** of your child's progress. The **report card**, which you receive four times a year, and the **end-of-cycle progress report**, which is issued at the end of each two-year cycle, are examples of how the school communicates results to you. Your child's portfolio and school agenda and the teacher's comments on assignments are other ways of letting you know how he or she is doing.

## The school team and school resources

The education reform means that now, more than ever before, the school is a place where the principal and the school team take measures to support your child.

At the centre of this team is the homeroom teacher, who works with your child every day. There are also specialists who teach arts education (drama, visual arts, dance and music), English, physical education, and moral or religious education. These individuals are all professionals whose training, experience and expertise equip them to guide students. They know how to turn every school day into a stimulating, enriching experience.

If your child is having problems learning, we encourage you to work with the school team and school board. Specialized, competent professionals, such as remedial teachers and special education technicians, can help you gain a better understanding of your child's problems and suggest solutions. Sometimes this intervention can help the entire family.

As parents, you can also get involved by taking part in the activities of the school and the school's **governing board**. Even if you aren't members of the board, you can attend meetings, ask questions and suggest projects.

The **educational project** and **success plan** are two additional sources of information on the school's objectives and the means it uses to help students succeed.

## For more information

Would you like to know more about:

- each of the subjects in the curriculum?
- the Québec Education Program?
- the education reform?

The MEQ has produced brochures providing information on preschool and each cycle of elementary school. You can request a free copy of the brochure on the cycle that is of interest to you from your school or school board. You may also wish to consult the brochure on the next cycle your child will be promoted to.

You can access these brochures in English and French on the MEQ's **Web site**:

<[www.meq.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca)> (Under "Dossiers," select "Virage du succès — Ensemble," then click on "Publications."). This site also has information documents on the **Québec Education Program** and the education reform.

Finally, the MEQ's Web site has a page specifically for parents, with information on many topics of interest, including parents' committees and governing boards: <[www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/rens/banque/Pages/parents.htm](http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/rens/banque/Pages/parents.htm)>.