

The Québec Education Program

Elementary Cycle Three

Information for Parents

October 2001

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INTRODUCTION

A major curriculum reform is under way in Québec's elementary and secondary schools. This reform is the result of lengthy, careful reflection and of a series of public consultations held over a number of years, such as the Estates General on Education, which ended in 1996.

The schools have a threefold mission: to provide instruction, to socialize and to provide qualifications. The Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ) supports this mission, and encourages schools to be more responsive to each student's potential and personal aspirations. With this approach, the MEQ aims to meet the educational needs of today's young people to help them face the challenges of tomorrow, where, given the growing number of problems confronting our knowledge-based society, it is difficult to see what lies ahead. With the reform, Québec is following the example of the United States, Belgium, Switzerland and many other countries that have also made major changes to their education systems. These reforms, like the one under way in Québec, are based on studies that have given us greater insight into how human beings learn and how learning can be lifelong and useful to us, both as individuals and as members of society.

First introduced in the 2000-2001 school year, the **Québec Education Program** is gradually being phased in at the second and third cycles of elementary school, that is, up to grade six. The purpose of this brochure is to help you better understand the changes that will gradually occur in your school for the greater benefit of your child.

Please note:

Beginning in the 2002-2003 school year, the Québec Education Program for Cycle Three will be applied progressively. Teachers may, however, start making changes to their teaching practices immediately if they so desire.

PART ONE

THE ORIENTATIONS OF THE QUÉBEC EDUCATION PROGRAM

In the following pages, you will read about the broad outlines of the **Québec Education Program**. Québec's schools are evolving in order to better educate your child. The changes taking place are based on a desire to help students achieve success according to their potential and to involve parents in helping their child to aim as high as possible.

A FAR-REACHING PROGRAM THAT BUILDS ON THE PAST

Your child is in **Cycle Three**, that is, in either fifth or sixth grade. Students begin this final cycle of elementary school more or less aware of the fact that they will soon be leaving childhood behind them. School is for them a place where they belong and where they are now considered the “big fish.” They know they can contribute actively to maintaining a good atmosphere in the school. They also know that they have a measure of control over their own learning and are responsible for the attitudes and behaviours they adopt. They are already looking ahead to secondary school. They know their strengths and limitations in many areas of their lives. Friends have an influence on their choices, and their relationships with adults, including their parents, sometimes give rise to conflicts. They know what they like and are able to make value judgments about people and events. In short, they have entered preadolescence.

And yet, throughout this third cycle, your child will continue to count on the school and on you for support. It is important to be there, offering your wholehearted encouragement and promoting your child’s intellectual, emotional and social development.

It should be kept in mind that the curriculum reform in no way calls into question the main learning objectives pursued by Québec schools until now. On the contrary, it strongly reaffirms them. The emphasis will continue to be on reading, writing and math because these subjects are the basis for all other learning. In addition, students will be encouraged to pursue their personal development and to explore other major fields of learning such as the arts, science and social sciences.¹ The Québec Education Program aims farther, however, seeking above all to equip students to use what they learn to better organize their thinking and develop the intellectual skills required in a knowledge-based society.

The school provides students with many opportunities to reflect on contemporary culture, that is, on the beliefs, values and knowledge that guide our society. It is just as important, however, that students learn how men and women of earlier days wondered about many of the same things they do, how these men and women went about looking for answers, what life was like in their time and what they accomplished. Each subject holds a share of your child’s cultural heritage and this heritage helps to give perspective and meaning to what he or she learns. By way of example, consider the history of number systems, the people behind scientific discoveries, the origins of the Olympic games, the reasons for certain customs, or the associations we make between artists and their works.

1. Please see the list of subjects at the beginning of Part Two.

A COMPETENCY-BASED PROGRAM

Clearly, your child will be learning new things in school. But simply acquiring knowledge isn't enough to ensure that students are able to make connections between what they learn in class and how they use it in everyday life. That's why it's important to encourage them to pay attention, not only to what they learn but also to how they learn it, and to how they use this new learning. The goal is to have students become both **knowledgeable** and **competent**.

Developing competencies implies changing the way teachers work with students. Teaching no longer consists in delivering subject content to students while they passively take it in. Rather, it involves placing students in different situations by having them work on projects, participate in workshops or solve problems or puzzles. These hands-on activities stimulate their intelligence and help them to assimilate and organize all kinds of new facts, skills and knowledge. Little by little, as students grow more aware of their particular strengths, interests and weaknesses, they come to understand why they do well in some subjects and not as well in others. They also gain a better sense of what they need to do in order to improve in those subjects they find less appealing or more difficult.

The Québec Education Program is aimed at the development of two main types of competencies.¹ The first type are generic and, because they cut across all the subjects in the curriculum, they are called **cross-curricular competencies**. They consist of essential knowledges in four categories:

- **intellectual** (e.g. to use information, to solve problems, to exercise critical judgment, to use creativity)
- **methodological** (e.g. to organize one's work, to use available computer resources)
- **personal and social** (e.g. to know oneself, to cooperate with others)
- **communication-related** (e.g. to write without making mistakes, to express oneself effectively, to listen to others)

1. To better understand the interrelationships and interaction between these competencies, please refer to the table in the middle of this brochure.

The other main type are called **subject-specific competencies** because they are developed by gaining the knowledge that is specific to each school subject. By learning math, for example, your child will be able:

- **To solve a situational problem** (e.g. use his or her reading skills to grasp and select useful information, to develop a solution and to check whether or not it works)
- **To reason using mathematical concepts and processes** (e.g. to estimate time and temperature, to calculate length, area and volume, to associate mathematical discoveries with society's needs)
- **To communicate by using mathematical language** (e.g. to interpret a situation using tables, diagrams, numbers or mathematical signs)

As with math, each of the other subjects focuses on three or four competencies that are specific to it; these competencies are outlined in Part Two. As you can see, with this approach, learning is not limited to memorizing subject content in order to give the correct answer on an exam.

Such familiar projects as working on the yearbook for graduating students or cleaning up the banks of a river are ways your child can acquire cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies. By way of example, conducting a written survey to determine the level of interest in the project, promoting the project, establishing a work schedule, and dividing up tasks will help your child better coordinate a number of cross-curricular competencies such as **to use creativity, to communicate appropriately, and to adopt effective work methods**. These projects also call for interviewing techniques, the creation of posters, knowledge about pollution, and editing skills. Thus, your child has an opportunity to develop subject-specific competencies in science (**to propose explanations for or solutions to scientific or technological problems**), the arts (**to produce media works in the visual arts**), and English Language Arts (**to write self-expressive, narrative and information-based texts**).

By keeping informed of what your child is learning at school, you will be better able to help him or her acquire and gradually master different competencies through the many opportunities that come up in everyday life.

A PROGRAM BASED ON EVERYDAY LIFE

In addition to helping children develop competencies, the **Québec Education Program** is designed to help them **make connections between what they learn in class and their everyday lives**.¹ The Program features **five broad areas of learning** that more or less correspond to the big questions that confront young people and are part of their major life issues. These questions extend beyond the school subjects but, in order to answer them, students must have a good grasp of all that they have learned in the various subjects. As children acquire new knowledge, do activities or projects, on their own or with others, and interact with adults and classmates, they construct their own answers to these questions in an effort to give meaning to their present and their future.

The **broad areas of learning** aim to meet the expectations often expressed by society with respect to the education system:

- **health and well-being:** to learn to develop good lifestyle habits
- **personal and career planning:** to learn to know oneself and carry projects through to completion
- **media literacy:** to learn to develop critical judgment and creativity with respect to the media
- **environmental awareness and consumer rights and responsibilities:** to learn the importance of being a smart consumer and to learn to exercise responsible behaviour with respect to the environment
- **citizenship and community life:** to learn to play an active role within a group by showing openness and respect

These are the objectives that guide our schools in everything they do. You can make these goals your own by integrating them into your daily life with your child.

1. To better understand the interrelationships and interaction between these competencies, please refer to the table in the middle of this brochure.

A PROGRAM ORGANIZED IN TWO-YEAR CYCLES

The elementary level is now divided into **three two-year cycles**. The reason for this change is that helping students to develop competencies requires more time than simply teaching them subject content.

Two-year cycles allow schools to better **adapt to students' individual learning rates and styles**. They also allow homeroom teachers and subject specialists to coordinate their efforts more closely. Teachers have a more comprehensive picture of how your child is progressing and can therefore provide more effective support.

Thus, students starting out in Cycle Three will have two years to complete the learning outlined for this cycle. For each competency, the Québec Education Program clearly states benchmarks for what may be expected of your child by the end of the cycle (these benchmarks are called “end-of-cycle outcomes”). The teacher will be careful to identify any difficulties your child is having and the school, with your approval, will develop support measures to help your child. Parents can support their children throughout the cycle by helping them to overcome problems, bolstering their motivation, helping them to recognize their achievements and encouraging them to persevere.

Today's classroom is a meeting place where students, who are all different and unique, form a small community. Each member of this community is important and has something to contribute. The children learn to get along and to help each other. Together, they ask questions and look for answers. In a school that is attentive to each and every individual, all students make progress according to their abilities and are motivated to do their very best.

A PROGRAM THAT LETS YOU FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ONGOING EVALUATION

Evaluation is a means to an end, not an end in itself. In other words, the goal of evaluation is to help students to learn better. This, in a nutshell, is how the Québec Education Program defines evaluation, a much-debated aspect of the curriculum reform.

Schools use various communication tools to let you know how your child is doing so that you can offer support and encouragement. Some of these tools, like report cards and progress reports, have official status. Other less formal communication tools are equally important. These “unofficial” tools are more detailed and are produced on a more frequent basis. They provide you with useful information about your child’s achievements, difficulties and challenges and allow you to work more closely with the school on a day-to-day basis. Here are some examples:

- the teacher’s written comments about your child’s work
- your child’s journal
- the school agenda
- various evaluation instruments used in class: observation checklists completed by the teacher; learning verification checklists completed by your child; self-evaluation forms; peer evaluation forms; quizzes
- your child’s portfolio (a portfolio is a collection of the main pieces of work done by your child in a given subject, such as Visual Arts, that show his or her progress)

In addition to giving you a more rounded picture of your child than can be provided by marks alone, this type of information is a valuable guide that will help you to regularly monitor your child’s progress in acquiring knowledge and developing competencies. Evaluation is a means of preventing or reducing difficulties, whether they relate to content or method. Since no two students learn at the same pace or in the same way, evaluation is intended to show them how to make regular adjustments to their learning in order to attain the outcomes stated in the Québec Education Program. Here, your support is of vital importance to your child’s understanding and motivation.

It should be stressed that the objective of success for all will under no circumstances result in a lowering of the standards established for the acquisition of competencies. Essentially, evaluation provides students with an opportunity to recognize the progress they are making and to resolve to continue their learning efforts.

Evaluation also plays another role which consists in making a more formal and official judgment as to the degree to which your child has acquired knowledge and developed competencies. This judgment takes the following forms:

- report cards issued during the cycle
- the end-of-cycle progress report
- compulsory examinations in designated program areas at the end of Cycle Three

The report card indicates whether your child is making progress, the kind of progress being made and how far along he or she has come in relation to the benchmarks set out in the Québec Education Program.

The end-of-cycle progress report presents the teachers' judgment of the extent to which your child has acquired the subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies at the end of the second year of Cycle Three.

Provincial examinations in designated program areas will be compulsory for all students finishing Cycle Three, i.e. in sixth grade, as of June 2005. These examinations will be prepared by the MEQ and are intended to assess the extent to which students across Québec have acquired the expected knowledge and competencies stated in the Québec Education Program.

Regardless of the form it takes and of whether it is official or informal, the evaluation of learning is based on justice, equality, equity, openness, rigour and coherence and relies to a very considerable extent on the professional judgment of teachers.

A PROGRAM THAT RELIES ON THE SCHOOL TEAM'S PROFESSIONALISM

The Québec Education Program relies on the expertise of teachers to help your child succeed and go on to the first cycle of secondary school. You can count on the support of competent, specialized people who will help your child find the necessary motivation to learn and to progress.

While students have the primary responsibility for their own learning, it is nonetheless the professional role of teachers to observe and encourage students and provide remedial help as needed or enrichment that will allow them to keep learning and to become aware of how they learn.

In fact, the school team as a whole (i.e. teaching, administrative and school daycare staff), under the leadership of the school principal, is called upon to develop educational measures that will start students off on the road to success so that, young as they are, they can begin to develop goals in life and set about attaining them.

You can trust the school team not only to offer your child meaningful learning situations but also to ensure his or her continued learning progress.

A PROGRAM THAT STRENGTHENS TIES BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND THE FAMILY

As a parent, you too have a pivotal role to play in this collective undertaking. Your child must understand that school is important and that what he or she learns in school is useful. Your role, then, is to make sure that conditions at home are conducive to helping your child do well in school. This means:

- nurturing your child's love of learning
- recognizing your child's strengths and weaknesses
- helping your child through the difficult times
- making sure that your child does his or her homework
- placing neither too little nor too much importance on evaluation
- trying to understand what the school expects and letting the school know what you expect

By keeping informed about what the school governing board¹ and the parent participation organization² are doing, and by being closely involved in school decisions on pedagogical matters, you are showing your child that you are interested in every aspect of his or her life. Above all, however, it is essential that you work with your child's school so that the development of competencies will become an exciting, stimulating adventure and so that your child will enjoy school now and for years to come!

1. Every school has a governing board. It is responsible for adopting the school's educational project, overseeing its implementation and evaluating it.

2. Parents attending the annual meeting for parents may decide whether or not to form a parent participation organization. The purpose of this organization is to encourage the collaboration of parents in developing, implementing and periodically evaluating the school's educational project and their participation in fostering their child's academic success.

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PART TWO

THE SCHOOL SUBJECTS

Part Two describes how each of the subjects taught in Elementary Cycle Three will help your child develop competencies. The subjects are listed in the following table.

Each subject calls on you to find appropriate ways of supporting your child's academic progress and overall development. Your support is all the more important because what your child learns in school can be reinforced by what he or she learns outside school and vice versa.

Table 2

ELEMENTARY CYCLE THREE SUBJECTS
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- English Language Arts
- French as a Second Language
- French Immersion
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- Geography, History and Citizenship Education
- Arts Education

- Physical Education and Health
- Moral Education
- Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction
- Protestant Moral and Religious Education

Students take two of the following subjects: Drama, Visual Arts, Dance, Music

Parents choose one of these three subjects for their child.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

The new English Language Arts program for the elementary level is the work of dedicated master teachers who are very aware of the concern of parents that their children be well prepared for the demands of a rapidly changing society. The focus of English Language Arts is on creating strong, fluent and versatile readers and writers for life, as well as individuals who exercise critical judgment in their use of media and technology, who work cooperatively with others, who are confident about expressing their ideas, values and knowledge and who are aware of their rich literary and cultural heritage. By the end of Cycle Three, your child will be more than ready for secondary school, since he or she will:

- be an experienced reader who reads a variety of written texts, including novels, stories, newspapers and magazines, and has developed both personal reading tastes and the necessary skills to adjust to less familiar reading material
- be an experienced writer who writes about those subjects and experiences that are important in his or her life and that fulfill a need to communicate with friends and family. In addition, your child will be able to produce a range of different types of texts, including stories, simple research reports (with teacher guidance), notes on different topics and posters
- be comfortable expressing personal views and ideas, able to formulate questions about what he or she reads, listens to and views, interested in sharing personal insights about what he or she does well and, with guidance, able to decide future learning goals
- be aware that the texts he or she reads and writes have certain features, such as a narrator and a storyline, charts, illustrations, indexes, table of contents and images that convey messages, meanings and information to others
- be confident about taking risks as a learner—about exploring new learning situations—as a means of calling upon his or her knowledge, creativity and language skills
- be aware of some of the basic features of the media and be using computers, i.e. the Internet, to send messages and locate information
- be aware of some of the features of written, spoken and media texts, such as basic punctuation, spelling rules and patterns, organizational structures, ways to use feedback, simple revision and editing strategies and the use of combinations of images and words to inform and persuade
- be a collaborative participant in group activities in the classroom and understand how to work with and support others, in order to accomplish a shared task or goal

FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

In learning French, your child will realize that knowing a second language makes it possible to discover another culture and broaden his or her horizons. By being exposed to a rich linguistic environment that includes reading children's literature and viewing or listening to media productions that are appealing to young francophones in the same age group, he or she will have the opportunity to explore certain aspects of the French culture originating here and elsewhere. Your child will also develop an open mind by discovering the French-speaking world through cultural explorations geared to his or her level of development or through the pursuit of social, scientific, sports or other personal interests.

By the end of Cycle Three, your child will be able to participate actively in exchanges, role-playing and group discussions in class. With the occasional help of peers or an adult, he or she will also be able to read a simple illustrated book or a text geared to his or her level of development and to search for information in pre-selected French-language Internet sites.

With the help of the teacher and his or her peers, your child will be able to write, to revise and to improve short meaningful texts. In order to produce these texts, he or she will use a variety of resources such as a bank of words and expressions, self-correction grid, open-ended model or dictionaries. Your child will share his or her writings with classmates, schoolmates and family members. Your child may also make use of computer technology and E-mail to interact with other schoolchildren.

Finally, your child will be able to speak French in the school setting, which will prepare him or her to use French outside the school.

FRENCH IMMERSION

In the immersion program, your child will learn the French language through other subjects in the curriculum also taught in French, such as mathematics and science. By offering a rich linguistic and cultural environment, the immersion program provides your child with the conditions that will allow him or her to become fluent in French and able to communicate with native speakers. Also, in learning French through other subjects, your child will develop a broader view of the language and its culture.

By the end of Cycle Three, your child will be able to communicate more fluently with peers and to express his or her personal or social needs. He or she will be able to read children's literature in a more autonomous way and make a selection based on personal interests.

Your child will be able to read and understand a wider range of texts, including short novels for children and informative texts related to the other subjects taught in the immersion program; he or she will also be able to make connections between the different texts and to talk about them.

Finally, your child will gain an insight into the French language and culture, and be able to initiate conversations with peers and other members of the school community about a number of subjects that reflect his or her interests.

MATHEMATICS

By the end of Cycle Three, your child be able to count up to 1 000 000. He or she will be able to do mental or written calculations in a given situation, using the four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) on natural numbers or decimals. For example, students will be able to divide 1 024 by 20, or to distribute \$60.15 among three people in equal amounts. Given simple situations and a number of objects, students will be able to add and subtract fractions or multiply fractions by natural numbers. This might include adding $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$, subtracting $\frac{1}{2}$ from $\frac{3}{4}$ or multiplying $4 \times \frac{1}{2}$. Your child will be able to estimate the weight of a bicycle and measure the capacity of a water pitcher. Students will be able to calculate the arithmetic mean (e.g. the arithmetic mean of 30 and 50 is 40) and interpret diagrams representing such things as the percentage of time devoted to various sports in a week.

Students will use a calculator or a computer to do their calculations. They will be able to use their learnings in mathematics to solve situational problems in their daily lives, both at home and at school. For example, they might calculate how much money each student has to raise in order to participate in a certain activity.

Through mathematics, your child will improve his or her capacity to reason. Students will learn to develop and use arguments to support their ideas and justify their actions. They will increase their understanding of numbers and operations by learning about percentages, to take one example (e.g. 25% of 300 is 75). Your child will explore new units of measure such as the square metre, the litre and the kilogram. He or she will be able to make connections between mathematical discoveries and the new needs of society.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

In Cycle Three, your child will continue to develop the competencies of the Science and Technology Program by examining more complex questions and problems that cannot be grasped immediately by the senses. For example, “Why is electrical wire made of copper?”, “Do plants breathe?” or “How do you build a car that doesn’t run on electrical energy?”

Throughout this cycle, your child will become increasingly able to use knowledge and strategies to come up with explanations to questions and solutions to problems. Students will become familiar with the procedures and tools of science and technology, such as reading plans or designing and fabricating environments (e.g. an incubator or an aquarium). Students will use critical thinking when attempting to answer questions such as “Should we use fossil fuels?”

As in the previous cycles, your child will gradually start using specific terms such as “deciduous trees” in place of general descriptions such as “trees that lose their leaves in the fall.” Students will also use mathematical language when taking measurements or analyzing data. Students will become more comfortable using software to improve the quality of their presentations and to promote the sharing of ideas with their peers, even outside the school.

Your child will also gain awareness of such ethical issues as the practice of human cloning and the use of biological weapons, to name just two examples. He or she will continue to discover the people behind science and technology, men and women from the past and the present, in occupations that call for dedication and attention to detail (microbiologists, prospectors, building technicians, etc.).

The study of science and technology will lead your child to reflect on the place these fields occupy in various aspects of everyday life, and will encourage your child to develop his or her creativity and critical thinking.

GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The study of Geography, History and Citizenship Education is integrated into the Québec Education Program under *Social Sciences*.

By the end of Cycle Three, your child will be able to establish the geographic and historical contexts of societies from the past and to make connections between the characteristics of a society and the organization of its territory, taking into account the territory's assets and limitations (available resources, climate, etc.). Students will be capable of observing societies and territories in the same time period and in two different periods in order to identify differences or changes.

By the end of Cycle Three, your child will recognize the influence that people (Jean Talon, the Loyalists, etc.) and events (arrival of the Filles du Roy, the Conquest, etc.) can have on the organization of territories and societies and on the changes they have undergone. Your child will also be adept at identifying examples of how the past still influences modern life in Québec.

ARTS EDUCATION

(Drama, Visual Arts, Dance and Music)

Arts Education includes four subjects: Drama, Visual Arts, Dance and Music. Two out of these four subjects are compulsory in elementary school. Your child's timetable will include the same two arts subjects each year in order to ensure that he or she reaches the expected level of competency at the end of elementary school. Your child will develop competencies in the arts by learning the language, rules and tools specific to the two subjects that his or her school has chosen to offer.

In Cycle Three, students will continue to develop their competencies in the arts by building on what they have learned in the previous cycles. They will be increasingly able to understand their creative process. Their productions—whether a painting, a dialogue, a dance or a musical piece—will be more elaborate and better structured. In their media works in visual arts—the cover page of the school newspaper, for example—they will take into account not only the message or meaning they want to convey, but also the audience for whom the message is intended. The repertoire for their performances in drama, dance and music will be more diverse and will include more complex and longer works. These will require greater control of the elements needed for interpretation, in particular those pertaining to expression and the rules for group performance. In their appreciation of artistic works, students will be aware of the sociocultural context of the works of art, media images and cultural objects examined and will demonstrate a greater mastery of the subject-specific vocabulary.

Having gotten to know themselves better and developed knowledge and skills in each of the artistic subjects in their timetable, students will be able to reflect their cognitive, emotional and social interests in their own productions and in their appreciations of the works of others.

In studying the arts through two subjects in Arts Education, your child will develop his or her sensitivity and enjoy discovering, learning, creating and communicating using different artistic languages. Having contact with different artists, visiting museums, attending shows and participating in cultural activities of a diverse nature, either with friends or family members, will help your child strengthen his or her personal identity, develop an openness toward others, and gradually learn to make intelligent choices so as to take full advantage of the invaluable benefits of the arts and culture.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH

By the end of Cycle Three, students will have integrated the principles of balance and coordination more thoroughly, giving them greater control over their movements and actions. This will enable your child to act in a safer manner when practising various sports (skiing, snowboarding, in-line skating) or performing everyday physical activities (climbing stairs, carrying objects, riding a bicycle).

Students will have learned to plan cooperation strategies with their peers and to apply and adapt them as needed, while taking into account their own strengths and limitations. They will also use different verbal and visual modes of communication, increasing the range of possibilities of interaction with their peers. They will have developed processes and ways of conducting themselves that reflect ethical behaviour (ethical rules, honesty, fairness, desire to surpass oneself, etc.).

Students will be able to make connections between their lifestyle habits and the effects on their health, such as how regular physical activity reduces stress. They will also have developed their critical judgment of information circulating about health, which will enable them to make enlightened choices. Students will have acquired or consolidated certain lifestyle habits that enable them to lead active lives.

The Physical Education and Health Program will help your child to develop in this area of learning outside the school setting and to engage in various kinds of physical activity autonomously and safely (e.g. walking).

NOTE: Parents choose one of the following three subjects for their child: Moral Education, Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction, or Protestant Moral and Religious Education.

MORAL EDUCATION

In moral education at the elementary level, your child engages in personal reflection and discussion with others to understand what life is about and to discover the reasons why people choose to act in certain ways, influenced not only by their values, but also by prohibitions, rules, rights and responsibilities. Students learn to solve moral problems that occur in everyday life. Faced with a moral issue, they try to understand the exact nature of the problem and its consequences and to find solutions that are in the best interests of a group of people. In engaging in dialogue with others to understand their world or solve problems, students learn to respect themselves, to respect others and to work with others to find answers to moral questions.

By the end of Cycle Three, your child will understand what makes people different. These differences might be related to culture, opinions, preferences, beliefs or race. Students will better understand how differences are enriching yet can sometimes cause tension and conflict. They will have reflected on rights in order to better understand why they exist, where they come from and when it is acceptable to question these rights. Students will have learned to recognize, understand and question the ways of acting and thinking adopted by a majority of people (norms). They will have explored what values are needed to maintain a good quality of life with people who are different. They will have learned to become aware of and to share their own beliefs and values, while being considerate of others when they share theirs. Students will have had the opportunity to work with others to find solutions to moral issues of concern to all of them.

Moral Education will help your child learn about himself or herself and better understand group life with people who are different. Students will be able to recognize moral issues that arise from these differences and to resolve them, while taking both themselves and others into account. Increasingly, students will be capable of making decisions that take into consideration not only themselves but also the people around them, and therefore of thinking before acting. They will be able to make choices and to explain the reasons for their choices, whether based on values they feel are important, rules, prohibitions, norms or rights present in their environment, or a way of seeing human beings.

NOTE: Parents choose one of the following three subjects for their child: Moral Education, Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction, or Protestant Moral and Religious Education.

CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS AND MORAL INSTRUCTION

Catholic Moral and Religious Instruction offers children a unique opportunity to explore answers to questions they have about themselves, about others and about life. To guide them in their search for meaning, students will be introduced to Bible stories (e.g. the parable of the prodigal son, the Good Samaritan) as well as stories that relate the experience of Catholic figures both from the past (e.g. Martin de Tours, Louis Pasteur, Jeanne Mance) and the present (e.g. Bishop Romero, someone that they know). By the end of Cycle Three, students will be able to choose, from each of the three types of stories studied, the story that best answers a question that is important to them. This question might have to do with freedom, welcoming differences, the value of life, the truthfulness of the Bible or the existence of God.

Students will be able to tell their favourite stories in their own words, to say what happens to the characters and explain the universal message conveyed. This message will help them begin to find answers to their questions. Students will be able to situate these stories in the historical, social and geographic contexts in which they took place. Stories related to the life of a person, a community or a group belonging to a different religion or to no religion in particular will be used to enrich the learning and reflection process (e.g. Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther, Sun Youth).

Learning about these new stories will help children to know themselves better and to develop an attitude of openness to others and to diversity. Faced with a more complex situation involving a moral issue, children will be better able to reflect on the values that could help them grasp the meaning and make an enlightened decision. They will be able to identify and describe the problem, to list several possible solutions, to choose the solution that seems the most appropriate and to justify their choice by presenting two of the reasons most important to them.

Catholic Moral and Religious Instruction will enable your child to draw upon the living Catholic tradition in his or her search to find answers to questions about life and the world in which we live.

NOTE: Parents choose one of the following three subjects for their child: Moral Education, Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction, or Protestant Moral and Religious Education.

PROTESTANT MORAL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

By choosing the Protestant Moral and Religious Education program for your child, you are giving him or her the chance to learn about the Protestant tradition, to become familiar with Biblical stories and figures, and to discover their influence in history and on culture. Students will identify behaviours and attitudes conducive to self-respect and respect for others as well as to a spirit of openness to religious and cultural diversity.

By the end of Cycle Three, your child will be able to relate the facts of certain events in the Bible (e.g. the departure from the land of Egypt, the passion of Jesus) and explain their influence on history and culture. They will recognize the relationship between these events and some of the ways in which people behave, think and express themselves. Students will recognize the influence of the Bible and the Protestant tradition on culture, such as freedom of conscience and the search for truth. They will be able to describe some manifestations of monotheistic religious traditions: their customs and rituals, places of worship, religious services, etc. Students will be encouraged to show their respect for and openness to religious and cultural diversity by adopting appropriate behaviours. Finally, students will identify the complex moral issues present in a real situation from everyday life. Based on their experiences and religious and cultural heritage, they will be able to formulate several possible solutions, to anticipate the possible consequences, to take a position and to justify their course of action.

The Protestant Moral and Religious Education Program deals with religious and ethical questions using an approach that aims to develop children's critical judgment and uphold individual conscience and liberty. The primary source of inspiration is the Bible. In addition to Christianity, a significant part of the program looks at other religions in a spirit of openness to diversity. Since children have the primary responsibility for their learning, the program encourages them to construct their own world vision, drawing on the two principal ethical values of Protestantism: responsibility and conviction.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about the education reform, visit the MEQ Web site (www.meq.gouv.qc.ca) or contact your school, school board or the MEQ regional office closest to you.