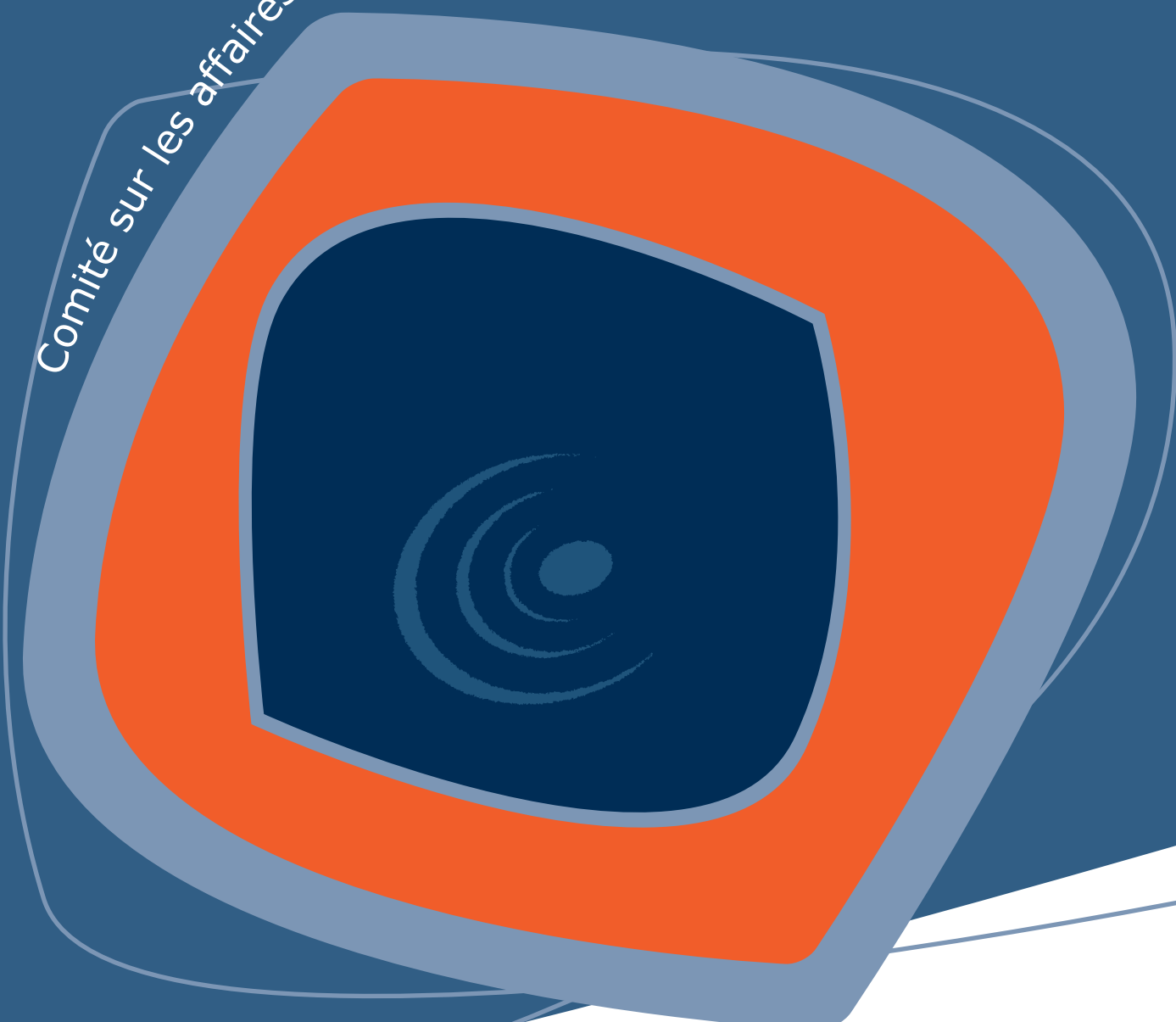


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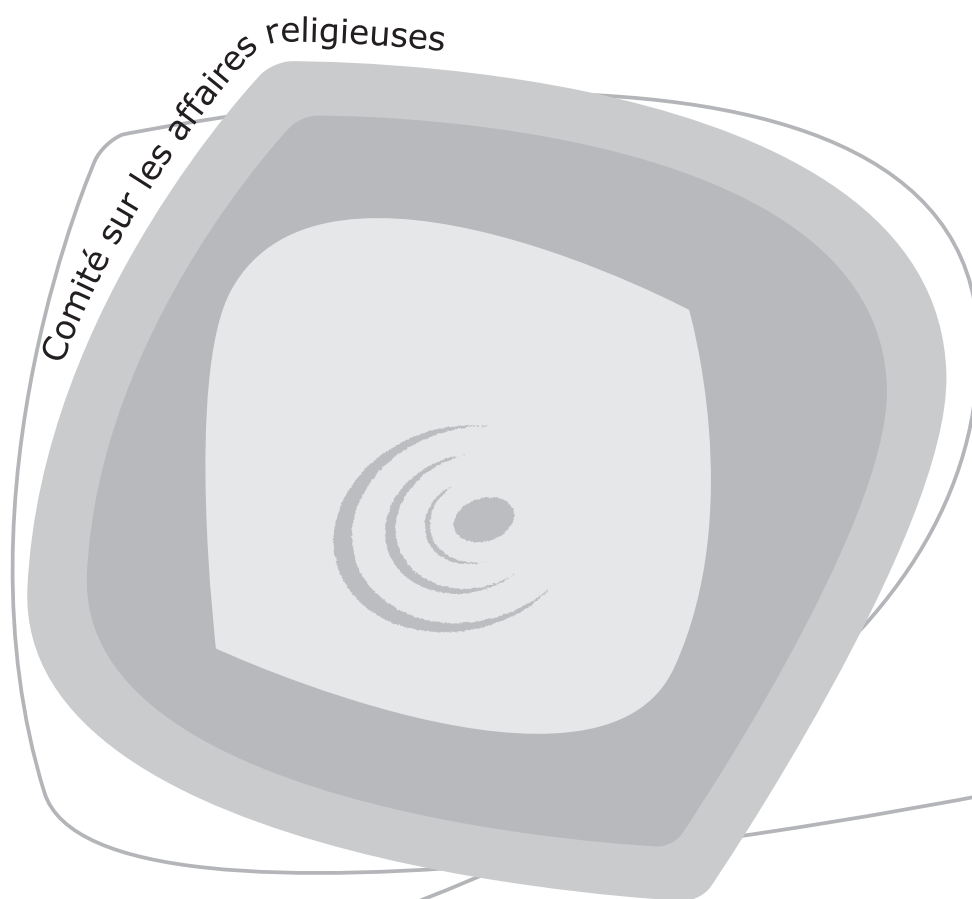


The Spiritual Development of Students

A Challenge for Secular Schools

Brief to the Minister of Education,
Recreation and Sports
February 2007

Québec 



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of the Comité sur les affaires religieuses,
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Foreword

Comments regarding the choice of the expression “spiritual development”

In the English version of this brief, the Comité sur les affaires religieuses has opted for the expression “spiritual development” as a translation of the French *cheminement spirituel*. This decision was made for two reasons. First, the *Education Act* already uses this English expression to render the term *cheminement spirituel*, which is found in the French version of the Act. Moreover, the Comité considers that “spiritual development” quite aptly conveys the meaning of the French term. Like it, “spiritual development” is open with respect to meaning and allows for a broad interpretation of this type of experience—unlike its cognate *développement spirituel*, which connotes structured and predictable growth.

The Comité sur les affaires religieuses firmly believes that spiritual experience must be given a broad meaning, to avoid confusing it with psychological development. The spiritual life does not progress in successive, linear stages. Furthermore, the aim is not to attain some “ultimate stage” but to live fully in the experience of the present, which bears within itself its own potential for growth.* This way of living assumes free and personal involvement on the part of individuals of all ages, as well as the possibility for all to interpret their own spiritual development in their own way, and it is this that accounts for the unpredictable nature of the experience.

* Cf. page 31 of this brief.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1	
CONSIDERATION OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE EDUCATION ACT	5
1.1 The spiritual development of students: a fundamental role of the school	6
1.2 The statement concerning the spiritual development of students: terms to be clarified	7
1.2.1 The purpose of the statement: the self-fulfillment of students	7
1.2.2 The originality of the statement: “spiritual” development	10
1.2.3 The practical significance of the statement	12
1.2.4 Results expected	13
1.3 The secular framework of spiritual development	15
1.3.1 Respect for freedom of conscience and religion	15
1.3.2 The Québec model of school secularity	16
CHAPTER 2	
THE RELEVANCE OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOL	19
2.1 Diversified social perceptions of the “spiritual”	19
2.2 The foundations for a shared understanding	21
2.3 A shared educational ideal: to develop children’s humanity	23
2.4 Necessary learning	24
CHAPTER 3	
FACILITATING STUDENTS’ SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT: BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY	29
3.1 Attention to the real child and adolescent	29
3.2 A responsibility shared by the entire school	31
3.3 Teachers are key players	32
3.4 Spiritual care and guidance and community involvement animators: resources dedicated to students’ spiritual development	35
RECOMMENDATIONS	41
CONCLUSION	43
APPENDIX I	
Overview of the recent history of the relationship between “religion” and “spirituality” in the West	47
APPENDIX II	
The concept of “success” in education documents	49
APPENDIX III	
Acknowledgments	51
APPENDIX IV	
Members of the Comité sur les affaires religieuses	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY	55

INTRODUCTION

When, at the dawn of the 21st century, major amendments were incorporated into the *Education Act* in the context of secularizing the education system,¹ an addition was made to section 36, indicating that the school had to “in particular, facilitate the spiritual development of students so as to promote self-fulfilment.”

Some were surprised by that decision. Why add that statement? What does it mean? What significance should it be given? What should the new role be tied to? Who in school is concerned by it? Are schools being compelled to intervene in areas that do not concern them?

Others, who were not very familiar with the *Education Act*, were unaware of the change or did not realize what was going on, as they were convinced that the sections dealing with the role and mission of the school were general statements, with no great practical impact. So they were not very interested in them.

Still others were concerned by the addition. Distrustful of the intentions behind it, they saw it as an underhanded way to maintain a “confessionalist” tendency in the Act, when the very process was aimed at affirming the secular nature of Québec schools. It is understandable that, in the minds of many people, a connection can be made between “spiritual development” and “confessional religious development.”² But it is clear that such a link is incompatible with the secular nature of an institution that respects the fundamental right to freedom of conscience and religion.

These questions and resistance explain why the then Minister of Education made the following request to the Comité sur les affaires religieuses:

I am counting on the Committee’s collaboration to enlighten me about the ways in which Quebeckers’ expectations have changed in relation to various questions pertaining to the place of religion in the schools. I am thinking particularly of how the public schools, which are now nondenominational, might carry out the new mandate conferred on them by section 36 of the [*Education Act*], which states that schools shall “facilitate the spiritual development of students” while respecting freedom of conscience and religion. In the context of the religious

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1. The process was carried out through amendments to education legislation. Through Bill 109 (adopted on June 19, 1997), Bill 118 (adopted on June 14, 2000) and Bill 95 (adopted on June 15, 2005), Québec made the transition from a confessional to a secular school system, in keeping with the neutrality of the State in religious matters.
 2. The reader will find in Appendix I an explanation of the relationship between the concepts of “religion” and “spirituality.”

pluralism that is now a fact of Québec society, this new way of doing things calls for a change in institutional culture, something that a brief from the Committee would clarify.³

In response to that request, the Committee recently published a brief⁴ to take stock of the Québec model of secular schools. The brief especially describes how a set of recent government decisions defines a model of secular schools that is open to the religious phenomenon and encompasses the student's spiritual development.⁵ It emphasizes that, to implement this model of open secularity, schools need a change in institutional culture.

To complete its response to the Minister, the Committee needed to broach the question of students' spiritual development. That is the topic of this brief. Since the Committee began its work, the new challenge facing the school in regard to students' spiritual development has been part of its thinking. Convinced of the importance of the new service, it has been able to voice its concerns many times to the Minister and the communities involved, especially regarding the establishment of the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service (SCGCIS), and the conditions for the practice of the new profession of spiritual care and guidance and community involvement animator.

The Committee also made use of the expertise of a number of specialists in order to enlighten its thinking on these matters. A major milestone in this approach was a seminar held in November 2003 on the theme of spiritual development in education.⁶ The seminar illustrated the importance of spirituality in the culture and world of education. It highlighted the creativity of a number of schools in considering students' spiritual development and demonstrated the need to clarify the concept of spirituality and the schools' responsibility in that regard.

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3. Letter from the Minister of Education to the Comité sur les affaires religieuses, February 28, 2001. [Free translation]
 4. Québec, Comité sur les affaires religieuses, *Secular Schools in Québec. A Necessary Change in Institutional Culture*. Brief to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2007). In March 2003, the Committee had responded to another aspect of the Minister's request when it published its brief entitled *Religious Rites and Symbols in the Schools. The Educational Challenges of Diversity* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec).
 5. The other elements of the Québec model of secular schools are respect for freedom of conscience and religion, the neutrality of the school, the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service, and the Ethics and Religious Culture program.
 6. Québec, Comité sur les affaires religieuses, *Le développement spirituel en éducation. Actes du colloque tenu à Québec, 11 et 12 novembre 2003* (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 2004).

Having gained the experience of that approach, the Committee now proposes to shed light on the question of spiritual development. First, the Committee will explain the meaning of spiritual development, by analyzing it in the context of section 36 of the *Education Act*. Then, it will demonstrate the relevance for schools of dealing with such a reality in a culture where spirituality is fragmented. Lastly, the Committee will define the common responsibility of the school staff and certain education stakeholders in facilitating the spiritual development of students with a view to promoting their self-fulfillment.

CHAPTER 1

CONSIDERATION OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE *EDUCATION ACT*

To clearly grasp what is meant in the *Education Act* by students' spiritual development, it is important to be aware of the entire section, in which it is mentioned. That section is worded as follows:

Object.

36. A school is an educational institution whose object is to provide to the persons entitled thereto under section 1⁷ the educational services provided for by this Act and prescribed by the basic school regulation established by the Government under section 447 and to contribute to the social and cultural development of the community. A school shall, in particular, facilitate the spiritual development of students so as to promote self-fulfilment.

Mission.

In keeping with the principle of equality of opportunity, the mission of a school is to impart knowledge to students, foster their social development and give them qualifications, while enabling them to undertake and achieve success in a course of study.

Educational project.

A school shall pursue its mission within the framework of an educational project implemented by means of a success plan.

36.1 The educational project shall be defined, implemented and periodically evaluated with the participation of the students, the parents, the principal, the teachers and other school staff members, representatives of the community and the school board.

The comments that follow reflect the Committee's educational concern. In making them, the Committee does not claim to propose a legal interpretation of the *Education Act*.

7. Section 1 of the *Education Act* (R.S.Q., c. I-13.3) reads as follows:

Every person is entitled to the preschool education services and elementary and secondary school instructional services provided for by this Act and by the basic school regulation made by the Government under section 447, from the first day of the school calendar in the school year in which he attains the age of admission to the last day of the school calendar in the school year in which he attains 18 years of age, or 21 years of age in the case of a handicapped person . . .

. . .

The age of admission to preschool education is 5 years on or before the date prescribed by the basic school regulation; the age of admission to elementary school education is 6 years on or before the same date.

1.1 The spiritual development of students: a fundamental role of the school

General in scope, section 36 specifies the object, mission and educational project of the school. The first paragraph, entitled “Object,” sets forth three elements of the schools’ role: to provide educational services, to contribute to the social and cultural development of the community, and to facilitate the spiritual development of students so as to promote self-fulfillment. These elements constitute the rationale for the presence of schools in society. They are major educational objectives that provide the broad outlines of what schools can and must do and, at the same time, what they cannot and must not do, since the section refers to legal frameworks that schools must subscribe to in carrying out their role and mission, i.e. all the sections of the Act and the basic school regulation established by the government.

Thus, in providing educational services, the aim of schools is to promote, according to the means and supervision at their disposal, the educational and school success of all the students entrusted in their care, whomever they may be. By collaborating in the social and cultural development of the community, schools serve the community: they make available their human resources and facilities, carry out projects and activities that stimulate culture in the community and establish partnerships with other local authorities in order to help to improve the well-being of people and the community. By promoting students’ self-fulfillment, schools, to the best of their abilities and in keeping with the particular characteristics of their students, work to ensure that each student discovers and fully develops his or her resources and talents, acquires the intellectual, emotional and social competencies required for life in society, and becomes an accomplished human being.

As the ideal to be pursued, these objectives are ambitious and broad-based. They concern the act of education as a whole. Society expects nothing less from schools, and the school staff is urged to act to that end. These educational objectives explain the general role attributed to schools as part of their educational responsibilities. They are, in a way, the foundation for the schools’ mission, which is permeated by them. They must also inspire the educational project, which is the ideal way for each school to actualize its role and account for it.

Designed to imbue all educational action, these objectives have a fundamental, general and permanent nature. It may be worthwhile to illustrate the characteristics of the school's threefold role using an analogy. Take the case of parents. From the day their child is born, the "parent's" role is general and permanent. It consists in all sorts of responsibilities and educational actions, but the perception of the parental function never changes. We do not wonder where a parent's role begins or ends. It can be played with varying intensity or success, vaguely or voluntarily, but it exists regardless of the circumstances.

As regards schools, the students' spiritual development and self-fulfillment, like the provision of educational services and collaboration in the social and cultural development of the community, are responsibilities of the school staff as a whole. These fundamental, general and permanent roles of schools must be shared collectively by all the parties involved. The means used to implement them are numerous, and vary over time and according to the context.

1.2 The statement concerning the spiritual development of students: terms to be clarified

That initial analysis of section 36 has made it possible to situate the statement concerning the spiritual development of students in terms of the school's role. For the meaning to be very clear, the purpose of the statement, its originality, its practical significance and the results expected of the school in that regard must also be explained.

1.2.1 The purpose of the statement: the self-fulfillment of students

It should be noted here that facilitating "the spiritual development of students" is one of the ways in which schools can promote students' self-fulfillment. The words "in particular" in that section suggest, of course, that it is a preferred means, since the Act mentions it specifically, but a means nonetheless, not an end in itself. Hence, it would be fair to say that the school must promote the self-fulfillment of students particularly by facilitating their spiritual development.

The self-fulfillment of students is not placed arbitrarily at the junction of the school's role and mission. That choice implies that the school's mission and all the provisions substantiating it are in keeping with a broad perspective of the overall education of the student. It is a question here of promoting the self-fulfillment of the student as a whole, as a full-fledged individual. School success, passing grades or the acquisition of intellectual or technical competencies are not

involved here; the full development of the student is. Participation in the development of a student's full potential is therefore part and parcel of the school's mission.

However, it is understandable that this interpretation of section 36 of the Act may not suit certain readers. Is it not because of this holistic view of the individual that the "psychologizing" approach was overused in education and teachers were urged to sometimes have more of a helping, rather than an educational, relationship with students, to lead more group activities than engage in teaching strategies? Furthermore, hasn't this holistic view of the individual legitimized the addition of all sorts of courses and activities incidental to basic learning, thereby diverting the school from its primary mission?⁸

During the Estates General on Education, we succeeded in clarifying the mission of the school—to instruct, socialize and qualify—and to determine five areas of essential learning to be pursued in the Québec Education Program.⁹ So how can this seemingly recurring concern for the whole education of students be explained? It is important to clarify the terms used in the statement in the Act by first responding to the following question: What is meant by the self-fulfillment of students?

The self-fulfillment of students means, of course, the fulfillment of people. In its previous brief,¹⁰ the Committee explained its vision of self-fulfillment by situating it in the process of humanization of an individual:

Humanity is a work in progress and not a mere fact, is a set of values to be promoted, acquired and developed, values rooted in the dignity of the person, as recognized in the Charters and disclosed in the great religious and secular philosophies of this world.¹¹

This comprehensive humanist approach reflects the aims of the Québec Education Program, which are: construction of identity, construction of world-view and empowerment. These aims, which underpin the entire curriculum, stem from the view that students are young selves in the process of construction, that is, they are promises to be fulfilled. They underscore the

8. However, the complexity of current social issues and the difficult living situations of many students continue to raise questions about the options chosen in terms of programs of study in school. One need only think of the debate surrounding the disappearance of subjects dealing with sex education, for example.

9. Languages (first and second languages); mathematics, science and technology; the social sciences (including history and citizenship education, geography and knowledge of the contemporary world); personal development (including ethics and religious culture, as well as physical education and health); and the arts (including music, drama, visual arts and dance).

10. Québec, Comité sur les affaires religieuses, *Secular Schools in Québec. A Necessary Change in Institutional Culture* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2007).

11. *Ibid.*, 36.

importance of having schools continue to focus their mission on behaviour and humanization, “not only [to] ensure that as many students as possible succeed in school itself, but also [to] *prepare all young people to live successful lives.*”¹² These educational aims “reflect the school’s mission. They provide a common direction for all educational measures and convey the sense that schools do more than give students academic tools; they also enable them to set goals for their lives and prepare them to contribute to society.”¹³

This understanding of the role of education as a humanization process is contained in the basic school regulation, which mentions that the purpose of preschool, elementary and secondary school education services is to “promote,” “allow,” or “further” the “overall development of students.”¹⁴ A “Whereas” in the preamble of the *Act respecting the Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport* is in the same vein, as it indicates that “every child is entitled to take advantage of a system of education conducive to the full development of his personality.”¹⁵

All these statements point to the same conclusion: self-fulfillment is achieved through the development of students as whole persons, in all the dimensions of their being and the various facets of their existence.

The statement in the Act dealing with the self-fulfillment of students is a general one related to the educational role of the school, situated upstream from the school’s mission in order to inspire its action. The statement is brief but sufficient, since the purpose of legislation is not to elaborate on the philosophical foundations of education. As an educational objective, it has major symbolic value: it makes the development of each student, whatever the student’s origin, talents, aptitudes or limits, the rationale for any educational measure. In doing so, it shields the school from the techno-bureaucratic temptation to make a student a consumer and the school an instrument of the market. The statement thus protects the school from a simplistic interpretation of its mission that would make it a simple cog in an economic machine.

12. *Ibid.*, 38 [Our emphasis].

13. Québec, Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Québec Education Program, Secondary School Education, Cycle Two* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2006) 11. The construction of a world-view is related to the school’s educational mission (see p. 12), the construction of identity, to its socialization mission (see pp. 12-13), and the development of empowerment, to its qualification mission (see p. 14).

14. Québec, Ministère de l’Éducation, *Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary school education*, Order in Council 651-2000, s. 2, 2000, 1.

15. *Act respecting the Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport* (R.S.Q., c. M-15). That Whereas echoes the second paragraph of section 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (December 1948): “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

That educational ideal is in keeping with a long education tradition in Québec. In recent years, the focus in characterizing the school's mission has, of course, shifted, but the concern for the development of students as human beings and the realization of their full potential is still present. We can delight in the fact that the government thought it useful to reiterate it.

1.2.2 The originality of the statement: “spiritual” development

The question now arises, why is the self-fulfillment of students promoted “in particular” by facilitating their spiritual development?

It is easy to see that progress in school is involved here. Students are growing and schools are the setting for transitions and learning. The self-fulfillment sought is not a given. Students pursue a path, with all the detours, obstacles and shortcuts it may involve. Facilitating students' progress is what the school staff, particularly teachers who are in direct and sustained contact with students, do on a daily basis.

But why should the school see to the “spiritual” development of students? What does this mean? The term is troubling. In what obscure part of an individual should the school interfere? The individual's mind? Why not go so far as to say the individual's soul? Is this a slippery slope as regards the mission of secular schools? The question is whether the adjective “spiritual” adds to the student's academic progress. If the school fulfills its mission properly, the student will come out of it educated, socialized and qualified. What more can one ask?

The mission of the school is, in fact, to provide instruction, that is, to develop students' intellectual skills, increase their language, rational, technical and artistic competencies for instance, give them access to knowledge and culture, open their minds to the world. The school's mission is also to socialize students, that is, help them find their place among others and interact with their peers, but also with the generations that preceded them and those that will follow in the chain of human existence. To socialize means to help students discover their rights and duties, understand life in society and learn to resolve conflicts. To socialize also means to enable students to assume their freedom in a community, to take on their responsibilities as citizens and contribute to the development of society. Lastly, the school's mission is to provide students with qualifications, that is, to ensure they acquire the technical qualifications and aptitudes needed to join the labour force, and develop the numerous

competencies they require to hold a job or occupation. Such qualifications are observable; they meet specific criteria for a field of activity, and can be acquired and evaluated.¹⁶

These three axes of the school's mission are reflected in educational programs that focus on competencies to be acquired, a competency being defined as "the capacity to act" based on the mobilization and the effective use of a set of resources.

This means the capacity to properly use the means at their disposal including everything that students have learned at school as well as their experiences, skills, attitudes and interests, as well as external resources, such as their classmates, their teachers, experts or various information sources.¹⁷

In this context, relating the students' spiritual development to their self-fulfillment is a simple but explicit reminder that, at the source of any action, is a person endowed with resources, whose self-fulfillment is not limited to professional qualifications and advancement. Moreover, the value of individuals exceeds the sum of their competencies, skills, achievements or performance; it goes beyond the diversity of their experience or the extent of their network of relations. People deserve attention, in and for themselves, because of their preeminent dignity as human beings—be they disabled, mentally impaired, inactive, or even ostensibly of no use to society.

The concept of spiritual life refers to people's value and dignity, as will be explained later on. It is also the intrinsic value of human beings that requires, and provides a foundation for, respect for the principle of equality, mentioned in the same paragraph. The mention of students' spiritual self-fulfillment in the *Education Act* therefore assumes its full importance, as the Fédération des comités de parents also recognized when it stated that "among parents' concerns must be counted expectations that the school will provide a place for spiritual development."¹⁸

16. This is not an exhaustive list of the various meanings of the expression "to provide qualifications." For example, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation recently suggested an interpretation of the word "qualification" that links it directly with ethical training: "to provide qualifications means to develop an ethical competency in students, and to make them capable of facing moral dilemmas and of arguing and basing their choices on a 'rationale'" [Free translation]; see *Pour un aménagement respectueux des libertés et des droits fondamentaux: une école pleinement ouverte à tous les élèves du Québec*, Brief to the Minister of Education (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, February 2005) 21.

17. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Québec Education Program, Secondary School Education, Cycle One* (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 2006) 7.

18. Fédération des comités de parents du Québec, *Pour une déconfessionnalisation réussie de l'école*, comments of the Fédération des comités de parents du Québec on Bill 95 (Québec, 2005) 6. [Free translation]

1.2.3 The practical significance of the statement

Is this quality of being, which is sought in the students' education, merely a pious hope, with no practical consequences, a sweet refrain quickly forgotten? What is the significance of that statement for schools? What is expected of schools in that regard?

It is important to consider the verbs used in the Act when trying to grasp the practical significance of the statement: The school "shall, in particular, facilitate the spiritual development of students so as to promote self-fulfilment."

Anyone familiar with the law knows that the terms "shall" and "can" do not have the same legal significance. Everyone can understand that the duty to act does not carry the same responsibility as the possibility to act. Hence, acting in order to promote the self-fulfillment of students—of each student—is not optional for the school: it is an obligation.

But what has been said about this educational aim constitutes a highly ambitious program for schools. Fortunately, the verb "to promote" has been used in regard to the self-fulfillment of students, not the verbs "ensure" or "achieve."

For the school, promoting the self-fulfillment of students means providing favourable conditions, encouraging, supporting and bolstering the growth of students toward the full realization of their potential. It does not mean doing this for them, or taking control of the process. It does not mean being solely responsible for it, as the family and society as a whole make a substantial and varied contribution. It means agreeing to work with the forces that drive students and to promote students' development in keeping with their growth—a path strewn with unexpected surprises and challenges. That is the issue in education: to help students fulfill themselves as unique individuals and succeed in achieving their full stature as human beings.

Furthermore, as regards students' spiritual development, it was wise not to ask the schools to organize a mandatory program and evaluate students' performance from a spiritual standpoint by assessing whether students are apt to achieve "self-fulfillment" or not! What schools are asked to do in the very sensitive and complex area of spirituality is to "facilitate" the development of students. To facilitate means to ease, to remove obstacles, to help, to enable, which implies, above all, respect for what is facilitated. Facilitating students' spiritual development means giving students the time, space and means required to progress in that

area. It means making the process possible for students in times of doubt or anguish. It means placing students in contact with authors, artists and scholars who, like them and before them, asked the same questions that students raise. Facilitating students' spiritual development means helping both elementary and secondary school students to "make strides" in their development as human beings, when the opportunity arises and according to the circumstances and means available.

1.2.4 Results expected

Let us recap: promoting students' self-fulfillment, in particular by facilitating their spiritual development, is part of the school's role. It is a fundamental educational responsibility that concerns the entire school community, and is driven by the ideal of making each student a full-fledged human being.

When schools are entrusted with this role, the results expected may be difficult to gauge but they are no less real. Schools may be said to have promoted the students' self-fulfillment if the students are for example, productive, motivated, committed, creative, well integrated, open to the world and capable of resolving conflicts peacefully, and if what they learn has meaning for them and they have good self-esteem. These results cannot be gauged quantitatively or expressed mathematically. However, they can be assessed by quality indicators,¹⁹ which are rough estimates but reveal much to those who know what to look for. The schools' role in terms of students' spiritual self-fulfillment is assessed more on the basis of its impact rather than the number, nature or variety of actions taken.

So it is a matter of observing and assessing, more than evaluating or measuring, and of being aware of the limits of the measures taken and their context. The results obtained may not necessarily correspond to those targeted at the outset. In matters of student self-fulfillment, the school staff must know where to direct its influence and what to expect realistically. "Good parents" sometimes have children who have difficulties, despite all efforts to raise them properly. The same is true of school staff in terms of students' self-fulfillment. It must be remembered that schools do not control all the variables affecting students' self-fulfillment and are not solely responsible for it.

19. An indicator is a tool for monitoring the change in a variable. It is designed to add accuracy to an assessment that would otherwise be based solely on feelings or personal impressions. The choice of indicators of students' self-fulfillment is of paramount importance. The main risk involved is attributing value to project elements that are easier to measure, rather than learning to measure elements that are important but are more difficult to measure.

To put things in perspective, we must realize that it is another matter to evaluate the school's mission. A careful reading of the *Education Act* indicates that the mission to provide instruction, to socialize and to provide qualifications calls for specific tasks defined and overseen by the Act itself and the basic school regulation. The tasks can serve to evaluate and assess, with more administrative or quantitative points of reference, whether in carrying out its mission the school complies with the requirements of the Act and the basic school regulation. School success can also be evaluated based on academic results and diplomas obtained.

With regard to expected results, the schools' educational project plays a decisive role. Its function is to clarify how each school intends to assume its role and carry out its mission. It is "through its educational project that the school makes visible and concrete the consideration of its responsibilities, including the promotion of spiritual development."²⁰ An educational project is implemented through "a success plan," a comprehensive plan for educational success²¹ that is not only academic but also applies to all aspects of a school's role and mission.

The *Education Act* targets a tangible outcome. In its success plan, which is also an information and reporting tool for parents and the general public,²² the school staff is responsible for using all the resources available to facilitate the acquisition of competencies useful to the students' development and success. As explained in the Québec Education Program:

Québec schools have a mandate ... to provide [young people] with the tools necessary to achieve their social and intellectual potential in both their personal, social and working lives. This means that schools must play a multidimensional role in the lives of young people. Thus, the *Education Act* (section 36) gives

20. Jeanne-Paule Berger, "Rôle de la communauté éducative au regard du développement spirituel des élèves," in Comité sur les affaires religieuses, *Le développement spirituel en éducation. Actes du colloque tenu à Québec, 11 et 12 novembre 2003* (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 2004) 190. [Free translation]

21. This broad interpretation of the concept of "success," which is indicative of attention to the individual and his or her self-fulfillment, is advocated in all the relevant education documents (see Appendix II). Such success is indissociable from the self-fulfillment of students, since it is linked to the students' spiritual development, as shown in this brief. It must be possible to integrate this dimension into the schools' educational projects and success plans.

22. Section 83 of the *Education Act* stipulates:

Each year, the governing board shall inform the parents and the community served by the school of the services provided by the school and report on the level of quality of such services.

The governing board shall make public the educational project and the success plan of the school.

Each year, the governing board shall report on the evaluation of the implementation of the success plan.

A document explaining the educational project and reporting on the evaluation of the implementation of the success plan shall be distributed to the parents and the school staff. The governing board shall see to it that the wording of the document is clear and accessible.

schools a threefold mission: to provide instruction, to socialize and to provide qualifications . . .²³

A careful reading of the *Education Act* and official documents minimizes the risk of a utilitarian interpretation of the school's mission, which would contradict the objectives of the Québec Education Program.

1.3 The secular framework of spiritual development

Schools are not expected to deal with the students' spiritual development and self-fulfillment in an arbitrary fashion. The *Education Act* specifies the secular framework in which it must be handled. The Committee explained this framework in its previous brief.²⁴ Here are a few of its elements.

1.3.1 Respect for freedom of conscience and religion

We have just seen that a school's role and mission are reflected in an educational project for which the entire school community is responsible. An educational project is, in a way, the point of impact of the school's role and mission, its concrete expression. To emphasize its importance and ensure that it is clearly understood, the government defined it in section 37 of the *Education Act*, which is indissociable from section 36:

Aims and objectives.

37. A school's educational project shall set out the specific aims and objectives of the school, and objectives for improving student success. It may include actions to promote those aims and objectives and integrate them into the life of the school.

Needs and priorities.

The aims and objectives of the project objectives shall be designed to ensure that the provincial educational policy defined by law, the basic school regulation and the programs of studies established by the Minister are implemented, adapted and enriched.

Respect for freedom.

The educational project of the school must respect the freedom of conscience and of religion of the students, the parents and the school staff.

23. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Québec Education Program, Secondary School Education, Cycle Two* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2006) 9.

24. Québec: Comité sur affaires religieuses, *Secular Schools in Québec. A Necessary Change in Institutional Culture* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2007).

The last point in section 37 deserves the utmost attention. It sets a clear limit, that of the right to freedom of conscience and religion. If the school respects that right,²⁵ it cannot see its role in promoting the spiritual development of students as one of guiding them toward a particular religious, philosophical or spiritual approach. Furthermore, such an interpretation of its role would run counter to the principle of the neutrality of public schools, which, like the State, must not favour or disfavour one religious option over another.

There is no possible ambiguity here. In secular schools, which are neutral from a religious standpoint, any intervention, particularly one aimed at facilitating the spiritual development of students, must respect the principle of freedom of conscience and religion recognized in the charters of rights. It is a characteristic of this type of school and a professional and ethical obligation for all education stakeholders. The Committee wishes to reiterate the following:

School staff, who now receive their mandates from a State that is neutral in matters of religion, are called upon to show discernment and prudence in expressing their personal opinions. They have a duty to strike, in their professional code of ethics, a new balance between their educational responsibilities and their spiritual allegiances. Because of their position of authority over their students and their educational responsibilities with regard to them, school staff must ensure that they do not unduly influence students in their beliefs, and must not ally themselves with any one religion or philosophy.²⁶

A responsible professional attitude is therefore required in matters of spiritual development. Based on competence and impartiality, this attitude must also demonstrate discernment, moderation and balance. School staff members must bear in mind the self-fulfillment of students and concern for guiding them in a way that respects who they are.

1.3.2 The Québec model of school secularity

We have just stressed the importance of respecting freedom of conscience and of religion, and preserving the school's neutrality as regards the students' self-fulfillment and spiritual development. These three elements are part of the Québec model of school secularity, the coherence of which the Committee demonstrated in its previous brief.²⁷ Freedom of conscience and the neutrality of the State are, in fact, the principles on which the Québec model of school

25. Québec declared it was bound by the *International Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Article 14 states the principle of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Article 30 protects cultural, religious and linguistic rights.

26. Québec, Comité sur les affaires religieuses, *Secular Schools in Québec. A Necessary Change in Institution Culture* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2007) 30.

27. *Ibid.*, 28-49.

secularity is based, while the self-fulfillment of students through spiritual development is one facet of the school's role and one its principal educational objectives.

The Québec model of secular schools comprises two other elements that serve as the means by which it is actualized: the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service, which we will discuss in the last chapter, and the Ethics and Religious Culture Program.

Thus, removing from educational institutions their confessional nature does not mean that spiritual development is erased from educational concerns. The concern for spiritual development has, on the contrary, become explicit, since the students' overall development has been incorporated into the context of Québec's secular schools, which respect freedom of conscience and of religion.

CHAPTER 2

THE RELEVANCE OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOL

In the first chapter, the Committee explained how it sees the foundation for students' spiritual development in school, by placing it in the context of the *Education Act* and clarifying the terms of the statement in section 36 that deals with it. The Committee also referred to the secular framework in which that consideration can take place.

These clarifications having been provided, the Committee can respond directly to the question of the relevance of seeing to spiritual development in school. But first, that question must be situated in contemporary culture, where viewpoints on spirituality are fragmenting. The Committee will then identify what could constitute the basis for a common, shared understanding by education stakeholders. That common understanding provides details about a common educational ideal and the learning stemming from it.

2.1 Diversified social perceptions of the “spiritual”

The world of the “spiritual” or of “spirituality” has invaded the marketplace and the popular imagination. As proof, just look at what is sold in bookstores and on newspaper stands, and count the number of Internet sites dealing with the subject. Perceptions of spirituality are just as numerous as the definitions that abound.

For many people, the term “spiritual” is automatically associated with a religion, a belief in an absolute being and a religious practice as a source of inspiration, a unifying factor in life and a motivation for commitments. Think of the teachings of the mystics of the golden age of Christianity, the Jewish Kabbalah, Zen Buddhism, Islam, Sufism and so on. The concept can also evoke metaphysical research or more esoteric mystical quests.

But many believe that the spiritual can be legitimized outside of any reference to religion, and that people can live purposeful, credible spiritual lives without belonging to a religion. Authors such as Luc Ferry deal with the spiritual experience of human beings and call for a form of “horizontal transcendence,”²⁸ meaning the capacity of human beings to transcend, or reach beyond, themselves. Others are inclined to see the spiritual experience as an openness toward

28. For this concept of transcendence, see Luc Ferry, *Man Made God: The Meaning of Life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

other people: they find meaning in their lives through their commitments and live their lives in a very incarnate manner, directing their efforts toward concrete social and humanitarian issues.

Some, on the other hand, seek to penetrate possible worlds elsewhere—the world of spirits and supraterrrestrials—in the hope of entering into a relationship with beings that might provide them with answers to the questions that preoccupy them. Examples are esoteric meditation and communication with spirits.

Lastly, for others, the spiritual experience is so difficult to conceptualize or define that they deal with it with the help of allegories, thereby showing that the spiritual life cannot be limited to a discourse or conceptual framework. For example, a person who seeks to develop his or her spiritual life can be compared to a salmon swimming upstream against the current in order to return to find its place of origin.²⁹

This brief overview of the various perceptions of the term “spiritual” and what it refers to provide a glimpse of its richness and complexity, but also of its possible ambiguities or shifting meanings. The diversity of interpretations has an impact on the school environment:

... a vague spirituality seems to suit educational environments, but it erodes both its own credibility and that of the religious, reducing that spirituality to a residual issue, relegated to the fringes of educational challenges. Emptied of its content, how can the importance of the spiritual vie with sports, culture and other types of activities or services?³⁰

Some would say the school should be careful, given the numerous meanings attributed to the concept of spirituality in contemporary culture. Why expose children to such a source of confusion? Some fear that a sort of free market in beliefs will sow confusion in children’s minds. Others fear that, given the fragmentation that exists, the spiritual will be reduced to the lowest common denominator among beliefs, which would deprive it of its capacity to challenge people and sustain their inner growth. Others wonder if the school staff is truly capable of respecting the principle of freedom of conscience and of religion that is supposed to characterize the school’s educational project.³¹

29. Jean Bédard, “Le commencement de tous les chemins,” in Comité sur les affaires religieuses, *Le développement spirituel en éducation. Actes du colloque tenu à Québec, 11 et 12 novembre 2003* (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 2004) 9. [Free translation]

30. Solange Lefebvre, *Gestion de la diversité religieuse dans l'espace scolaire: nouvelles pratiques. Rapport provisoire présenté au Secrétariat aux affaires religieuses* (Montréal: Gouvernement du Québec, 2006), 109.

31. Québec, Comité sur les affaires religieuses, *Secular Schools in Québec. A Necessary Change in Institutional Culture* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2007) 37.

These fears must be taken seriously. The risk of confusion or trivialization related to spiritual diversity is as real as the challenge of respecting students' freedom of conscience and of religion. However, it must be pointed out that young people are already exposed to a profusion of perceptions of the spiritual in the current culture. The Committee therefore believes that the school has a role to play in helping students find their way through this diversity and the confusion it generates. The school can play this role by shaping students' minds, developing their analytical abilities and contributing to their general knowledge. Facilitating students' spiritual development means, in this context, not cutting off their access to their own inner richness, on the pretext of protecting them from exposure to a possible source of confusion.

If the diversity of social perceptions prompts schools to take their educational role seriously with regard to spirituality, an understanding of that reality, and the misunderstandings often plaguing it, will also show why it is relevant to consider it in school. Hence, the spiritual must be translated into simple terms if an attempt is to be made to lay the foundations for a shared understanding.

2.2 The foundations for a shared understanding

Agreeing on a concrete description of students' spiritual development appears urgent and necessary in order to shed light on the educational action required and to lay the foundations for a shared understanding. It is not a matter here of presenting a philosophical, theological or psychological treatise on the human spiritual experience, but of providing a few explanations that might prove useful to the educational community, by making a few observations and trying to determine which abilities we refer to when we speak of promoting students' spiritual development.

It is commonly observed that people are endowed with consciousness³² (consciousness of being, of others and of the world) and that they are capable, to varying degrees, of reflection and foresight. Human beings reflect about themselves and their lives; they feel, experiment, and seek, more or less clearly, meaning in their lives and in life. They can assess whether their choices and actions are appropriate and can reach beyond themselves. They can plan for the future and take charge of their fate.

32. Consciousness implies more than reason or a critical analysis of reality. It is neither given nor acquired once and for all. All the dimensions of a person (senses, intelligence, emotions, etc.) contribute to it. "Far from being a band of light, consciousness is an activity that allows me to go beyond the accustomed meaning that presides over my everyday conduct and evanescent reasons" [Free translation], in Fernand Dumont, *Récit d'une émigration. Mémoires* (Montréal: Boréal, 1997), 154.

The ability to become aware of what constitutes life, to reflect, to anticipate the future and to find meaning challenges all of our being: it calls upon our senses; intelligence; emotions; aesthetic, ethical and social sensibility; and so on. Of course, this occurs within us, in our psyche, the depths of our being, or, as some would say, our soul. The fundamental and inescapable nature of that reality must be acknowledged. It is a specific attribute that qualifies and defines us as human beings.

This personal, comprehensive ability is evident in many ways, as a number of common expressions attest to: for example, we speak of “a generosity of spirit,” of “losing one’s soul,” “giving oneself body and soul,” of “a soul at rest,” “the soul of an artist” and so on without attributing any religious connotation to these expressions. These examples indicate that people’s inner lives can be revealed through their actions and are sometimes apparent. Hence, students’ spiritual development refers above all to the growing consciousness of their innermost being and their future as human beings, in relation to others and the world.

At the risk of overlooking many nuances and distinctions in the vast array of expressions of the religious in societies and cultures, we should mention that this relationship with oneself, with others and with the world can also lead to the divine and beyond, when people see themselves, in a faith, as having a soul that is, as it were, “the spiritual nature of man considered in relation to God.”³³ Hence, there are myriad “spiritualities” or “paths to spiritual growth” proposed by the various religions of the world.

One will agree that this vision of things is wholly compatible with the school’s institutional neutrality and respect for freedom of conscience and of religion as guaranteed by the charters. In this sense, it can be understood that secular schools have an educational role to play in fostering the spiritual development of students, which can also be considered wholly human behaviour.

33. *The Houghton Mifflin Canadian Dictionary of the English Language*, William Morris ed. (Markham, Ontario: Houghton Mifflin Canada Limited, 1982), 1234.

2.3 A shared educational ideal: to develop children's humanity

Fostering students' spiritual development means activating in them the predisposition to delve into their inner selves in order to discover what makes them live as full-fledged human beings. The Committee believes that this task basically consists in helping develop students' "humanity," that is, what ensures their dignity and value. It is only through a voluntary commitment that students can undertake this process, since human beings always retain the freedom to turn away from that toward which their humanity calls them.

To recall what the Committee has said elsewhere, it is not so much a matter of knowing what dignity is as of "acknowledging" it in others and in ourselves, since human dignity is based on the fact that we exist, not on our usefulness, accomplishments, skills, riches or talents. Kant said that "whatever is above all price, and therefore admits of no equivalent, has a dignity [it] does not have mere relative worth . . . but an intrinsic worth."³⁴ It is because of human dignity that it is important to shape individuals, to give them inner strength, to prepare them to traverse the passages of life with lucidity, courage and humour, and to enhance their freedom, for democracy implies freedom, i.e. the capacity to "resist the dissuasive power of violence based on fear, the 'retributive' power of money based on servitude, the seductive power of rhetoric founded on ignorance."³⁵

Hence, spiritual development is related to the most basic concerns of individuals driven by a desire for completeness and, most often, by a need for change.³⁶ Raising children to have humanity means helping them achieve their full stature as human beings, supporting them in their desire for completeness, that is, fostering their full dignity, elevating them to a higher plane, ensuring that they grow, and nurturing all the dimensions of their being, educating them, shaping them and even ennobling them by giving them "a character of moral greatness." All these verbs, drawn from the dictionary, are only synonyms of the word "raise,"³⁷ each one heavy with meaning for the act of educating a child. This is what is meant by the self-fulfillment and spiritual development of students.

34. Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Lewis White Beck trans. (Indianapolis: Merrill Educational Publishing, 1969) 60.

35. Jean Bédard, "Le commencement de tous les chemins," in Comité sur les affaires religieuses, *Le développement spirituel en éducation. Actes du colloque tenu à Québec, 11 et 12 novembre 2003* (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 2004) 7. [Free translation]

36. A whole spirituality-related vocabulary clearly reflects the component of "dynamic change": movement, path, approach, experience, inner transformation, metamorphosis, pursuit of "meaning," quest for identity, process, passage.

37. *The Houghton Mifflin Canadian Dictionary of the English Language* (Markham, Ontario: Houghton Mifflin Canada Limited, 1982) 1078.

Therefore, facilitating students' spiritual development means nurturing their desire to seek new challenges and helping to make them aware of the unsuspected dimensions of human beings, that is, the body, the heart, the spirit, reason and passion. It means encouraging them to open themselves up to, as the term "value" implies, what has a price, what "is worth doing" in the life of any human being. It also means helping to make them aware of the depth of human beings, of what gives them priceless value. It means enabling them to gradually come to grips with the freedom that constitutes human nature, a freedom that produces both exaltation and anguish. Lastly, it means helping them assume the responsibilities that stem from the sharing of our common humanity, regardless of whether or not it is considered from a religious perspective.

2.4 Necessary learning

To succeed in developing students' humanity, it is necessary to develop in them certain aptitudes. A human being is constructed, for the most part, through learning related to freedom, introspection, the courage to be, the meaning of identity and otherness, responsibility, in short, aptitudes consistent with the aims of the Québec Education Program: construction of identity, construction of world-view and empowerment. The Committee does not claim to provide an exhaustive list of the aspects of the spiritual experience; that would be contrary to the richness of its expression. The goal is to point out the required aptitudes, in order to shed light on the understanding of spiritual development and provide points of reference for members of the school team.

The aptitude for freedom

Freedom is a fundamental drive in human beings that is actualized in several ways. To be free means, among other things, to think for oneself, to make choices consistent with one's world-view and values, to take charge of one's life and to assume one's own identity. To be free also means to be able to create something new on the basis of what one knows, to dare to try out new behaviour, to open oneself to new influences and to take advantage of one's life. Freedom also implies the ability to situate one's actions in relation to those of others in the social, legal and cultural environment.

Freedom is not acquired in a linear manner, but is often achieved by trial and error, or by reflecting from time to time on the meaning of life. It cannot be taught, but it is learned. The school team can help develop that aptitude, particularly by confirming students' value as unique

beings and by supporting them in meeting life's challenges, but also by questioning them if they confine themselves to an egocentric or narcissistic affirmation of their freedom.

The aptitude for introspection

In a world where the quest for efficiency has growing influence, where young and old are pressured from all sides and prompted to live connected to the outside world, young people need to be directed toward their inner world, the intimate space where they can be alone with themselves, where they can reflect and be silent.

Fostering students' introspection means giving them time to pause and teaching them to stop and reflect on themselves, their questions and answers, their fears and fervent hopes, their doubts and convictions.

The aptitude for introspection implies the development of discernment in order to better understand oneself and construct one's world-view. This ability enables students to contemplate anew their own story and to connect its threads to others and the world.

The courage to be

The courage to be is the aptitude to persevere despite the difficulties and doubts that one may have. For students, it can mean not giving up in the face of lost friendships, failure in school, betrayal, solitude or broken dreams, all those small "deaths" that make people realize the finiteness of the human condition. Having such courage builds resilience and enables students to believe in their own ability to lead successful lives. The courage to be sets in motion all of one's personal resources. These personal resources are not the same for all students—each must develop them according to his or her potential and aptitudes.

Such inner strength can only be built by the students themselves; no one can do it for them. However, a significant presence, even if only occasional, can have a motivating influence. Helping students develop the courage to be means motivating them to have confidence in their own resources and to dare to commit themselves despite the risk of failure or disappointment. It may even mean helping students to rediscover deep within them a love of life, so as to enable them to find their way again and bounce back.

Identity construction and the meaning of otherness

One of the peculiarities of human life is the building of individual identity through the constant search for balance between the relationship with oneself and openness to others. It is through multiple affiliations and contacts that this construction occurs. The building of personal identity, marked by otherness, is at the very heart of spiritual development.

The ability to “decentre” in order to enter the realm of others is a quality that takes time to develop. At the start of life in school, students are still strongly influenced by a desire to be the centre of the universe. Becoming human means learning gradually to make room for others, to take one’s place among others and even, at times, to offer one’s place to others.

Fostering a sense of otherness means helping students become open to others outside of any competitive logic, and engaging in true communication. It means helping students to cope with the limits, harshness and self-withdrawal to which such encounters expose them. A formative experience, this openness toward others is, in a way, the touchstone of spiritual development. It prompts us to “[be] no longer side by side but with one another.”³⁸

That openness leads to dialogue and deliberation, to trusting others with lucidity and discernment. Students gradually learn to see themselves as a subject within a community of subjects and to interact with the members of that community in elaborating blueprints for society, as well as in seeking meaning.

The aptitude for taking responsibility

Through a variety of activities and situations, students can realize that, in life, “we live not only with others, but also for others. . . . the ‘for’ [extending] beyond the ‘with.’”³⁹ “Being for others” means being available to respond to their requests and needs, hence, developing a social conscience. It means being capable of ethical indignation and also being sensitive, compassionate and benevolent in their regard.

38. Asher D. Biemann ed., *The Martin Buber Reader* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) 201.

39. Yvone Gebara, *Fragile liberté* (Montréal: Médiaspaul, 2005) 27. [Free translation]

In order to take responsibility in concrete situations of daily life, students must first understand that justice goes beyond the desire to have one's share at any cost. They also need to be supported in their enthusiasm and encouraged to respond to the causes that appeal to them and to make commitments within their capabilities. Their social conscience is strengthened as it awakens and as commitments are made, and their spiritual life is nourished by it.

Fostering in students the development of sense of responsibility means giving them power over themselves and their environment, and providing them with the means to actualize their freedom. All that requires effort, to make the transition from a world that revolves around oneself to a world that challenges the self.

CHAPTER 3

FACILITATING STUDENTS' SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT: BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Since everyone is concerned by students' self-fulfillment, everyone in the educational community is called upon to facilitate their spiritual development. Chapter 3 outlines this collective responsibility as well as the particular contribution that teachers and spiritual care and guidance and community involvement animators can make.

3.1 Attention to the real child and adolescent

Consideration of students' spiritual development consists in being attentive to an important aspect in people's lives during the early stages of their journey through life. It is by focusing on students as they really are during learning situations that secular schools can facilitate their spiritual development. Paying attention to students' spiritual life means taking their current existence seriously and fully acknowledging their value at a given point in time. The child and the adolescent are at the centre of this relationship. To provide adequate support one must first consider young people as the main architects of their spiritual life.

It is therefore important not to seek to "develop" in them or impose on them what would be considered a mature, adult spiritual life, but rather to respond to their needs. Care must be taken not to project onto young people "adult" spiritual needs that educators, animators, parents and others customarily face. In any school activity related to spiritual development, it is essential to acknowledge the "otherness" of children⁴⁰ with respect to adolescents, who are also at a distance from adult experience. The question must be asked: "How can they be given sufficient consideration to not simply take into account their limits or a certain ideal they may evoke, but to welcome them as unique partners in the unfinished dialogue of existence?"⁴¹

Facilitating the spiritual development of young people therefore involves welcoming them into their own spiritual experience as children or adolescents, boys or girls, of a given generation, with the cultural traits that characterize them. It involves acknowledging that they are entitled to an authentic, personal spiritual life, in keeping with their age and rate of growth. Their spiritual life may be expressed in various ways, since the spiritual experience of young people is constantly changing and occurs through a range of relationships. Facilitating the spiritual

40. On that subject, see Alain Renault, *La libération des enfants. Contribution philosophique à une histoire de l'enfance* (Paris: Hachette, especially the third part, "Entre droit et éthique: l'enfant contemporain," 2002) 365ff.

41. Éleine Champagne, *Reconnaître la spiritualité des tout-petits* (Montréal and Brussels: Novalis et Lumen Vitae, 2005), 35.

development of young people means recognizing the importance of developing their humanity and the meaning they give to this experience.

In this regard, it should be noted that children under six years of age, like elementary school students, have a spiritual life whose expression is marked by different stages in their development—be it psychological, emotional, cognitive or social.⁴² For example, they may have an inkling of infinity. Youngsters also have special access to spiritual life through their experience of what is beautiful. They experience the world through all their senses. They taste and savour what is beautiful and good in the world. For them, spiritual life is especially a “way to experience their body.”⁴³ In addition, although the need for unification and coherence takes precedence for adults, the need for exploration and the methodical organization of the experience of the world plays a paramount role in early childhood.

The Committee therefore does not believe that spiritual life concerns only adults.⁴⁴ Rather, it feels that the varied spiritual paths taken by both adults and young people have major existential, intuitive, emotional and relational facets that are not sufficiently considered in an approach focused on adult “rationality.” Those paths call for the expression of creativity and the imaginary, the ability to marvel at the unprecedented that arises from experience in an always novel manner. The *Ministerial Framework* devoted to the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service is in agreement with this.⁴⁵

Lastly, let it be said that one’s spiritual life does not proceed in successive, linear stages. The aim of the process is not to reach “the next level,” but indeed to fully experience in the present the dynamic nature of life, which carries with it a potential for growth. Hence, it is more accurate to speak of a spiritual path than of spiritual development.

42. An increasing body of research and publications, particularly in English, takes very seriously the spiritual life of children and the ways to promote its growth; see Andrew Wright in Peter Schreiner, Esther Banev and Simon Oxley eds., *Holistic Education Resource Book: Learning and Teaching in an Ecumenical Context* (Munster and New York: Waxmann, 2005)

43. Xavier Lacroix, *Le corps de chair* (Paris: Cerf, 2001) 271.

44. See, for example, Jean-Claude Breton, *La vie spirituelle en questions* (Montréal: Bellarmin, 2006) 83: “In comparison, one can think of aptitudes in other areas of life, such as art, music or sports. Hence, there are children who show early openness to the divine and surprising aptitudes for considering spiritual questions. Despite that, I find it an exaggeration to speak of a spiritual life.” [Free translation]

45. Québec, Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, SAR-DASSC, *Developing the Inner Life and Changing the World. The Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service. A Complementary Educational Service. Ministerial Framework* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2006) 32-33.

These characteristics of students' spiritual development must be kept in mind so as to be able to clarify what responsibility the school staff has in that regard.

3.2 A responsibility shared by the entire school

The school staff cannot ignore the fundamental questions that students raise as a result of their life experiences. Students don't leave their lives behind when they come to school; everyday, they must learn to progress within their own lives, intertwined with the lives of others. The questions they raise testify, in their own way, to young people's need and search for mentors who can help them along their path. Note that the Québec Education Program also stresses this attention to circumstances in education: "It is important for all members of the school community to be on the lookout for opportunities to support students in their process of reflection, which contributes to the formation and expression of their world-view."⁴⁶

The school team is usually attentive to new educational strategies that can help young people use their knowledge, skills and behaviours. The realities of daily life are determinants of their learning about life⁴⁷ and their point of entry into society, where challenges confront them in constantly new ways. It is, above all, on the basis of these daily realities that spiritual support will be experienced, rather than through the addition of structured activities.

Principals, teachers, secretaries, janitors, professionals and partners of all kinds are invited to help young people along their path, since all education stakeholders can, in their own way, provide meaningful points of reference in the students' relationships: "It is up to the adults who guide and support [children] to foster the emergence of their inner strength, to teach them to recognize what preoccupies them"⁴⁸ so that they can eventually name and share it. Assisting and guiding these students in various ways, including in their spiritual development, means accepting the humble responsibility of standing tall, at the heart of one's own humanity, and of serving as a "support" for children, in the same way that a stake serves to support the growth of young plants.

46. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Québec Education Program, Secondary School Education, Cycle One* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2006) 6.

47. The Québec Education Program's broad areas of learning are a good reflection of the need for these education determinants.

48. PROTESInfo, *La spiritualité des tout-petits mise en évidence par une chercheuse québécoise: le petit enfant touche au mystère de Dieu*, Nicole Métral's interview with Éleine Champagne, Agence de presse protestante, November 29, 2005. On-line at: <<http://www.protestinfo.ch/Articles.asp?Index=3334>>. [Free translation]

Support can take the form of very simple, seemingly routine or unimportant actions: words of encouragement and acknowledgment, congratulations, an invitation to “do better,” a personalized explanation, or, in some cases, a reprimand. These are all signs to students that someone is interested in them, that they have value, that they can aim higher, that they are entitled to exist. Support can also mean listening to them, to their hesitations, aspirations and attempts, and standing by them in their quests. It might also mean helping them to discover world-views or sources of motivation that have driven human beings throughout history.

The various stakeholders in the school community can therefore facilitate the students’ path to a spiritual life every day through concrete actions, a fact which should be further recognized, supported and promoted. The school staff is encouraged to develop a greater awareness of what it already does and what must be done in terms of students’ spiritual development through educational measures, in order to actualize that development more explicitly. In short, the staff already does much to facilitate the spiritual development of students by expanding their intelligence of the present moment and their sense of educational opportunities open to them.

The magnitude of the task and the arduous conditions of its accomplishment must certainly not be underestimated. Members of the school staff may go through difficult times or experience grief. They themselves follow a spiritual path and face crises in their own lives. But open-mindedness and open-heartedness, a firm intention to provide support and attention to one’s own inner life are already significant steps in the right direction. Just by the way they act, stable adults bring stability to the environment.

In this educational dynamic, two groups of stakeholders have a particular, but not mutually exclusive, role to play. Teachers, because of their proximity to students, contribute to the students’ spiritual development through their educational duties, their attention to what students are experiencing and expressing, and the quality of their work with them, while animators are a school resource dedicated to students’ spiritual development. The professional activity of animators is devoted explicitly to providing spiritual support to students and, to that end, they organize and plan various types of activities, particularly in community and humanitarian areas.

3.3 Teachers are key players

The responsibility of teachers is in line with that of the school team as a whole. Through the quality of their attention to young people and their intervention, they promote students' spiritual development and the development of their humanity. What differs is the frequency of their contact. By working closely with students on a daily basis, teachers are in a privileged position to "contribute to the intellectual and overall personal development of each student entrusted to [their] care."⁴⁹

Supporting students in their spiritual development does not add another "subject" to an already substantial school curriculum. The role does not require any extra preparation time on the part of teachers, other than finding a "way" of being attentive to students, within the various activities that give concrete expression to the school's educational project, in order to enable students to delve deeper into the meaning they give to events and to life itself. In short, if teachers have their students' human as well as educational development at heart, they will succeed in facilitating their students' spiritual development.

There is no doubt that the approaches of preschool, elementary and secondary school teachers each call for particular methods and strategies that take into account their students' age, the context of the relationship between teacher and students, and the subject taught. But beyond these special features, there is only one aim—to help students understand their inner growth process.

In preschool, the activities offered provide the children with an opportunity to develop their autonomy, express themselves and learn to cooperate with others creatively and harmoniously. Conversation can be used by teachers to observe the children's experiences and the richness of their inner world. Educational activities and outings help stimulate the children's curiosity and understanding of the world they live in, which in turn sets their creativity in motion and encourages their initial attempts to develop personal responses to questions that arise.

49. *Education Act*, s. 22.

In elementary school, because teachers are almost constantly with the same group of children they are able to develop special knowledge of their students and to be particularly attentive to what they do and do not say. The continuous attention that the teacher gives each student in the class strengthens the students' awareness of their own personal value. The teacher will therefore have many opportunities to help the children make connections, think about their experience, use their creativity and open up to others through daily life situations, and thus to foster their spiritual development. Philosophy for children workshops can also help children learn to express their thoughts in a group.

In secondary school, teachers can underscore certain aspects of a subject that are likely to open up avenues for thought, by inviting students to refine their critical judgment and sense of responsibility. Once such training has been assured, teachers can also be on the lookout for circumstances that open up discussions. During these opportunities, by listening to and talking with students about subjects that they are examining or that affect them, teachers play the role of mentors.

To fulfill its educational mission, Québec schools must thus provide students with conditions conducive to discovery in all areas of their lives. "Its educational activities create an environment in which students become familiar with their culture, pursue understanding of the world and the meaning of life and develop new ways of adapting to society."⁵⁰

The various subjects of the Québec Education Program are also meaningful and conducive to facilitating students' spiritual development. By acquiring the learning targeted, students will have the opportunity to acquire aptitudes and skills they can eventually transfer to other areas of their lives. For example, in the natural sciences, students are asked to consider questions related to finiteness. By confronting their questions with observable reality, students develop their ability to perceive reality, with all its richness, its limitations, and even its mysteries.

All subjects therefore contribute to the spiritual development of young people, not so much because they tackle questions of a spiritual nature, but because each helps to foster complete, free and responsible beings who are able to use the tools they have acquired as levers into their inner world and achieve their full potential.

50. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Québec Education Program, Preschool Education, Elementary Education* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec: 2006) 2.

3.4 Spiritual care and guidance and community involvement animators: resources dedicated to the students' spiritual development

In this last section, the Committee will try to define the original professional expertise of animators. It will situate the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service among all the school's complementary services. It will show how its role helps to meet the school's common responsibility for students' spiritual development. Lastly, it will pinpoint some of the areas of intervention of animators.

Original professional expertise

Spiritual care and guidance and community involvement animators make an original contribution to students' spiritual development. In fact, it seems that the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service (SCGCIS) has no equivalent in other countries. Hence, it is easy to see why it was important to clarify the meaning of the SCGCIS and its contribution to public schools' educational mission.

In 2006, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport published an official document⁵¹ specifying the objectives of the SCGCIS, its administrative organization and the professional qualifications required for its implementation. The document demonstrates the serious nature of the SCGCIS and its relevance with respect to students' self-fulfillment.

The Committee considers the document enlightening, nuanced and comprehensive. It wishes to draw the public's attention to the SCGCIS's originality. Consideration of students' spiritual development from a secular standpoint⁵² called for the creation of such an innovative position.

51. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Developing the Inner Life and Changing the World. The Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service. A Complementary Educational Service. Ministerial Framework* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2006).

52. *Ibid.*, 5, 9 and 10. Page 27 contains specific guidelines for organizing religious and interfaith activities in the secular school.

A service integrated into complementary services

Since its creation in 2001 and 2002, the SCGCIS has been integrated into the twelve complementary services⁵³ of Québec schools. As in the case of each service, the SCGCIS contributes to each of the four complementary services programs.⁵⁴ SCGCIS animators constitute a professional resource qualified in dealing with spiritual matters in the secular school framework. For instance, animators see that effective attention is paid to students' spiritual development through measures taken to implement the four complementary services programs.⁵⁵

Until recently, the approach to complementary services was said to be more “curative” in that these services sought to resolve serious problems facing young people. The new orientation now targets “[a]n approach that is educational rather than clinical . . . The primary concern is to promote the students' development rather than to correct or reeducate them.”⁵⁶ The SCGCIS is explicitly oriented from that standpoint, i.e. to support and assist students at the heart of their development.

The primary concern of SCGCIS animators is to give students an opportunity to have meaningful and enriching experiences that enable them to gain a better understanding of themselves and others. This is done sometimes through activities in which the animator is directly involved with the students, sometimes through action in cooperation with school staff in activities or projects in which the animator acts as a motivator or collaborator.⁵⁷ Integrated into a specific legal and ethical framework, namely, that of open secularity, the animator's actions are

53. Section 5 of the basic school regulation lists the twelve services that must be included in the four complementary services programs.

54. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success* (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 2002). The four programs are as follows:

1. Program of support services designed to provide students with conditions that are conducive to learning.
2. Program of student life services designed to contribute to the development of students' autonomy and sense of responsibility, their moral and spiritual dimension, their interpersonal relationships and their feeling of belonging to the school and the community.
3. Program of assistance services designed to help students throughout their studies, with their academic and career choices and with any difficulties they encounter.
4. Program of promotion and prevention services designed to provide students with an environment conducive to the development of a healthy lifestyle and of skills that are beneficial to their health and well-being.

55. For examples of the contribution of SCGCIS activities to the four complementary services programs, see Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Developing the Inner Life and Changing the World. The Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service. A Complementary Educational Service. Ministerial Framework* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2006) 16-18.

56. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002) 22.

57. The Ministerial Framework of the SCGCIS illustrates the variety of contributions (activities and intervention) that the animator can offer the school staff: Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Developing the Inner Life and Changing the World. The Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service. A Complementary Educational Service. Ministerial Framework* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2006) 26-28.

aimed at mobilizing students' inner strengths. Through these different types of activities, the goal remains the same, i.e. to support students in their path toward growth and knowledge of themselves and others, in keeping with the mission of the school and the aims of the Québec Education Program.

A service that supports the entire school team

The support that the animator provides to the entire school team can take various forms. One advantage of the service is that it lends itself readily to the organization of integrated, horizontal projects, since its objectives deal with both the personal and the social dimension of individuals. For example, animators may participate in elementary cycle committees in order to help to determine the best approaches to use based on the students' situation. Animators may also work on multidisciplinary teams laying the groundwork for actions designed to enrich the school environment, in order to ensure that these actions provide students with opportunities to develop their vision of life and the meaning they attribute to it.

The SCGCIS is an ideal way for the school team to implement its mission of facilitating students' spiritual development. With professional expertise in spiritual matters, animators help everyone meet their responsibility in that regard. They raise, encourage and support this shared responsibility, since the scope of their action can but reflect the involvement of the school. They make their colleagues aware of their responsibility regarding spiritual matters, and equip and support them in carrying out this responsibility.

Their role is comparable to the role of other specialists in the school. Asking the entire teaching staff to ensure the quality of French in no way diminishes the need to have someone on staff with specific qualifications to teach French. The presence of a specialist in physical education and health does not dispense others in the school from promoting health and well-being. In the same way, the school's shared responsibility for students' spiritual development does not eliminate the need for a qualified professional in that area. Rather, the responsibility underscores the educational relevance of the animator's role. Far from cancelling each other out, common responsibilities and a specific responsibility call on each other's strengths.

Note that a report on the SCGCIS highlighted its positive reception in the school environment:

The SCGCIS is generally highly regarded and well received. . . . The relevance of the service has been shown repeatedly since its implementation. . . . The service is said to meet the essential needs of students. It is felt that it complements the students' development and provides positive support to school life (the school environment). It makes it possible to explore aspects of life that other services

cannot truly address. . . . Another, frequently mentioned characteristic is the relevance of the service to the educational reform. . . . Animators are credible and professional.⁵⁸

To maintain the SCGCIS's positive reputation, certain conditions must be applied. It is essential that animators receive solid initial and in-service training and that they possess sound listening, dialogue and collaboration skills. Furthermore, the tasks they are assigned must be consistent with the service's objectives and fall within their professional mandate, and their working conditions must be realistic. Compliance with these conditions will enable SCGCIS professionals to provide the school team with effective support.

A few areas of intervention

As we have just seen, the spiritual care and guidance and community involvement animators collaborate with the school staff in many different areas. The *Ministerial Framework* provides more detailed information on their pedagogical approaches and examples of activities they may organize. As the framework clearly indicates, compliance with the school's mission is the decisive criterion in evaluating the relevance of the activities proposed. The Committee now wishes to draw attention to certain aspects of the animators' task that could become particularly important in the coming years.

Support for school-community interface

Some of the actions of the SCGCIS are aimed at opening students up to local and international communities. That openness to activities beyond the school walls, which is part of the SCGCIS's mission to socialize, leads animators to forge links with outside partners, as other education stakeholders do for their own purposes. A network of local or international resources is thereby established, which is devoted to the educational development of young people and can appeal to students or education stakeholders, as the case may be. At the interface between these resources and the school, animators not only bring the two closer together, but they also evaluate, with other members of the school staff if necessary, the educational relevance of the resources, depending on the age and profile of the students targeted.

58. Comité directeur conjoint MEQ-CS, sur les plans stratégiques et la reddition de comptes, *Rapport final sans la 3^e partie du sous-comité sur la mise en œuvre du Service d'animation spirituelle et d'engagement communautaire* (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 2004) 13, 2.2.1. [Free translation]

This openness to the local community, through which the school contributes to “the [community’s] social and cultural development,”⁵⁹ assumes a particular form and colour according to the region involved. In elementary schools, partners are local for the most part, and in secondary schools, more regional or international resources are added. These may include seniors’ associations, social clubs, municipal recreation and other services, health and social service centres, organizations that assist young people or the disadvantaged, environmental protection groups, human rights organizations, international development organizations and so on.

*Support for an enlightened management of religious diversity*⁶⁰

Animators of spiritual life are, along with teachers of ethics and religious culture, resource persons on whom the school staff can count when it requires expertise in matters of religious diversity, philosophical diversity and so on. The students’ spiritual life takes a variety of paths and is expressed in a number of ways, including relations with the community. The professional expertise of animators can facilitate an enlightened management of that diversity.

The management of diversity can be carried out both by working directly with students and by supporting the school staff. In elementary and secondary schools, animators can be consulted by teachers, administrators and other members of the school staff for help in resolving problems regarding the expression of students’ religious options. In secondary schools, some animators have organized social involvement activities that enable students of different convictions to work together to build a fair and equitable society.

A contribution to intervention in a crisis situation

Like the other complementary services, the SCGCIS helps maintain a healthy atmosphere in the school by playing a preventive role with students. But it can also make a significant contribution in a crisis situation, in collaboration with the school administration and psychoeducational, psychological, special education, and health and social services. The animators’ work may take place before a crisis, as they help those involved take action or engage in activities that lead to solutions. It can also take place during a crisis, when animators lend their support and expertise, particularly in cases where students don’t know which way to turn. Lastly, it can open a door

59. Section 36 of the *Education Act*. In its last brief, the Committee clarified the legal framework for collaboration between the public school and its community. See Québec, Comité sur les affaires religieuses, *Secular Schools in Québec. A Necessary Change in Institutional Culture* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2007) 30-32.

60. In its brief *Religious Rites and Symbols in the Schools. The Educational Challenges of Diversity* (Québec: Comité sur les affaires religieuses, 2003), the Committee proposed principles for managing religious diversity.

after a crisis by providing students with a setting in which they can apply what they have learned in a constructive way and thus ensure that the intervention bears fruit. The SCGCIS can therefore help provide a place where students in difficulty can consolidate what they have learned.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the fact that, pursuant to section 36 of the *Education Act*, schools must “in particular, facilitate the spiritual development of students so as to promote self-fulfilment;”

Given the importance of clarifying the objective and scope of the schools’ role, and situating it within the context of secular schools that respect freedom of conscience and religion;

Given the relevance of recognizing that Québec schools assume this role in keeping with their orientations and aims;

Given the responsibility shared by the entire school team for students’ spiritual development and, as part of that, the responsibility of teachers and spiritual care and guidance and community involvement animators;

Given the need to consider the students’ requirements and their dynamic strengths in facilitating this spiritual development;

Given the urgency of challenging and supporting school communities in cases where the facilitation of students’ spiritual development is questioned, ignored or resisted;

the Comité sur les affaires religieuses recommends that the Minister:

- support, through the Ministère’s resources, the members of the school team, particularly teachers, in exercising their responsibility for the students’ spiritual development, according to the orientations of this brief:
 - by seeing that each person understands the importance of the attention to be given to students and of the quality of the actions to take
 - by ensuring, in collaboration with the university faculties concerned, that this dimension will be taken into consideration when providing initial and in-service training to various categories of school staff
 - by making education stakeholders aware of the importance of including that concern in the educational project and success plan of each school
- reaffirm the importance of providing, through specialized staff, a Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service for all elementary and secondary school students:
 - by ensuring that new profession is practised under realistic conditions
 - by making school administrations aware of the importance of giving animators tasks consistent with the objectives of the service
 - by ensuring that the necessary conditions are put in place for the initial and in-service training of the people who see to that responsibility

CONCLUSION

The *Education Act* stipulates that schools “shall, in particular, facilitate the spiritual development of students so as to promote self-fulfilment,” while respecting “the freedom of conscience and of religion of the students, the parents and the school staff.” That dual obligation poses a major educational challenge for Québec’s secular schools, and it is not surprising that a number of people have expressed concerns, questions and resistance in regard to it. These additions to sections 36 and 37 of the *Education Act* are, in fact, key elements of the major change that Québec schools face in terms of their relationship with religious or spiritual matters, a change that gave birth to a new Québec model of school secularity, which the Committee discussed in its previous brief. However, to clearly demonstrate the coherence and relevance of that model, it was also necessary to show why and how schools can facilitate students’ spiritual development. That is what the Committee has tried to do in this brief.

The need to secularize public schools in order to respect each person’s human rights did not mean that the schools no longer had to deal with the students’ spiritual development. Support for this development is a major educational challenge. Including it in the *Education Act* was a signal that education consists of much more than preparing individuals to play a role in an economic system focused on production and consumption.

To educate is, first and foremost, to train human beings. It is helping students develop their humanity, since humanity is a work in progress from both an individual and a collective standpoint. But developing human beings have not only bodies but also minds, and they are endowed with a unique inner life that enables them to imagine the world, to think about their relationship with others, to situate themselves in terms of time, and to question the rationale for things, their own lives and the universe. In short, human beings need meaning for their minds as much as they need food for their bodies. Spiritual development is mentioned in the *Education Act* so that schools do not overlook that inner dimension of human beings, which is the foundation of their dignity.

A careful reading of the sections dealing with students’ spiritual development shows that that perspective is included coherently in the entire *Education Act* and other education-related documents. The *Education Act* provides a structure for that process of student self-fulfillment, one of the major objectives of school, along with the provision of educational services and the

contribution to the social and cultural development of the community. The Québec Education Program and the basic school regulation make students' overall development the objective of educational services. That focus on the student as an individual is also reflected in a broad understanding of the concept of success, which goes beyond mere academic success and refocuses the educational system on a response to students' needs with a view to their self-fulfillment.

In terms of civil society, for which the school is responsible for training its future members, the diversity of social perceptions of the spiritual is a powerful incentive for considering students' spiritual development in schools. Schools cannot absolve themselves of their responsibilities in regard to the spiritual on the pretext that it is a complex reality perceived in a variety of ways. If they did, they would cut themselves off from a fundamental dimension of society. Schools deal with the spiritual because they are part of the culture and students are destined to experience it, whether we like it or not.

But how should schools deal with it? First, by paying attention to children and adolescents as they really are. The students' development must be considered for what it is, not from the standpoint of an adult experience or the perception one may have of adult spiritual life. We are, of course, on delicate ground here, that of identity and world-view, in which respect, tact, a discreet presence, and a watchful and confident eye are of the utmost importance.

Such a responsibility concerns the entire school as a community of attentive and clear-sighted adults whose students need to develop their inner lives and their potential. That collective responsibility requires of each and every stakeholder quality attention and educational intervention. Through the frequency of their contact with students, teachers play a key role in that regard. But that role cannot take the place of the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service, which is dedicated to that reality. The staff of the SCGCIS, which is trained in these matters, seeks to facilitate students' spiritual development, especially through structured activities. Animators are particularly concerned with the spiritual and they support the school staff in that regard. Given animators' pivotal role in exercising that essential responsibility, the school and the Ministère must support these professionals by ensuring that they have the appropriate conditions and resources to properly carry out their task.

Collective responsibility for students' spiritual development is at the heart of the change in institutional culture called for by the new secular school model. Spiritual development is not an alien element to be artificially grafted onto an entity that already has its own logic. Dictated for the purpose of students' self-fulfillment, it is in keeping with that educational logic. Although many actions in schools obviously help to facilitate students' spiritual development, the principal challenge consists in sharing that concern with the entire school team. One way to meet that challenge is to encourage schools to include it in their educational project and success plan, and raise the awareness and training of the school staff as a whole.

Much remains to be done and said on the subject of facilitating students' spiritual development in secular schools that are also open to the religious. Education stakeholders are invited to meet this educational challenge, which is linked to a fundamental role of the school. The adults of tomorrow will only be grateful to them for having helped them develop their potential and their humanity.

**Overview of the recent history of the relationship
between “religion” and “spirituality” in the West**

Each word has its history. The meaning of a word can change often over the years, just as its pronunciation and spelling can. There may also be many different meanings for the word at a given time, in a given region or society. This is true of the words “religion” and “spirituality” in the West, words with a long history that sheds lights on of its various current interpretations.

A century ago, for Christians in the West, the word “religion” meant a set of dogmas and religious practices, while for Roman Catholics especially the word “spirituality” referred to a subset of religion, one that related to the development of a more personal relationship with God and that frequently led to social or community commitment. A half a century later, we find that the two words are often used synonymously, and refer to a belief in a power superior to human beings, a desire to enter into contact more directly with that power and a personal and public moral code fostered by religious and spiritual practices.

Over the past quarter century, a more striking transformation has taken place, a reversal over the previous century. The concept of “spirituality” has broadened to include, in part, the concept of “religion.” From that standpoint, “religion” now designates rituals practised in an institutionalized context by groups of people whose commitment reflects systematized beliefs and values. “Spirituality” refers to a search for much less institutionalized meaning, a search in which each individual chooses his or her own elements of a world-view or embraces an already constructed view that encompasses a set of values the individual seeks to convey in practices as consistently as possible. Although for many, the two concepts partly overlap, a growing number of people in the West define themselves as “spiritual” but not “religious.”

This brief overview indicates that these changes in the meaning of the words “religion” and “spirituality” over more than a century in the West are explained in large part by the growing importance lent to the subject because societies are becoming increasingly secularized and multi-religious.

The concept of “success” in education documents

- ❖ The Québec Youth Summit, held in February 2000, made the success of all students one of the primary challenges of education. Success plans were promoted at the Summit as the way to ensure that 100% of young people become qualified.

Made public on September 18, 2000, the *Statement in Support of Efforts to Promote Education and Educational Success*, in which the principal education partners played a role, associates the concept of success and to that of development or self-fulfillment of individuals. The partners affirm in the statement that “[e]ducation . . . plays a crucial role in the development of individuals and of Québec society as a whole.”

- ❖ The *Act to amend the Act respecting the Conseil supérieur de l’éducation and the Education Act* (Bill 124), assented to on December 18, 2002, integrated into the *Education Act* the obligation for schools to actualize the educational project through a success plan. It also confirmed that broad understanding of the concept of “success,” particularly by not limiting it solely to academic success.
- ❖ Since 1990, the basic school regulation has indicated that the purpose of preschool, elementary school and secondary school education services is to encourage the “overall development of students.” In June 2000, an addition was made to the first paragraph dealing with preschool education. It makes it clear that the overall development of students is achieved by helping them “to acquire the attitudes and competencies that will facilitate their success as students and as individuals.” [Our emphasis]
- ❖ The *Québec Education Program* indicates that “[t]he renewal of the educational system is based on a renewed understanding of the concept of success and how it should be evaluated. The concept of *success for the greatest possible number* must be replaced by that of *success for all*. . . .” (See *Québec Education Program, Secondary School Education, Cycle Two*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2005, 16).

That “success for all” impels the school to seek “individualized educational success,” which “depends on the challenges each student tries to meet.” The school staff must judge the student’s success on the basis of his or her individual challenges.

- ❖ In the publication *Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success* (Québec: Ministère de l’Éducation, 2002), the Direction de l’adaptation scolaire et des services complémentaires stated on page 22:

The concept of educational success is broader than that of academic success. Hence complementary educational services have become an integral part of the school’s mission to impart knowledge to students, foster their social development and give them qualifications. The school’s educational project should take the quality of complementary services into consideration as well as the quality of instruction. The school should provide a stimulating, rich, secure environment that optimizes the effects of quality instruction.

- ❖ In the wake of these publications, the ministerial framework for the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service reminded schools of their responsibility for seeing to students’ “genuine and complete success” (p. 9) and their “educational success” (pp. 15 and 17).

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