

Passe partout



SUPPORT FOR PARENTING SKILLS

A NEW DIRECTION FOR SUCCESS



ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK

PASSE-PARTOUT SUPPORT FOR PARENTING SKILLS



ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS

Direction générale de la formation des jeunes
Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec

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In the *Ministerial Plan of Action for the Reform of the Education System*, the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ) stated it would maintain its support for the Passe-Partout program.¹ It thereby acknowledged the importance of parents as responsible partners in fostering their children's educational success. At the same time, it asked schools to provide support for parenting skills and to prepare children for entry into kindergarten.

As a result, it became important to rethink the program's organizational framework and clarify the rules that apply to the program's implementation and that ensure its effectiveness in the school boards that use it.

This document provides school administrators and educators with an operational framework that, while defining strict rules, gives project leaders the organizational latitude they require for meeting the specific needs of their respective communities. The framework presents the MEQ's requirements and suggests potential adaptations for making Passe-Partout as effective as possible, thereby combining rigour and flexibility.

1. GOUVERNEMENT DU QUÉBEC. *A New Direction for Success. Ministerial Plan of Action for the Reform of the Education System* (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997), 6.

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INTRODUCTION

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Contemporary society is undergoing major changes, and the reform of the education system is part of this change. Today, parents have higher expectations of the education system than ever before, because schools are the best guarantee for the future. If children are to feel at ease when they enter school, integrate well, develop freely and emerge as winners, it is important to clarify and strengthen ties between schools and families.

As a child's primary educators, parents are essential allies in contributing to the success of the school's educational mission. Parents are the link throughout the key stages of their child's learning progress. They provide support for all learning, past, present and future, school-related or not, and they give the child the emotional support needed. The school must therefore show openness to families and work with them to build a relationship of trust to ensure the best possible collaboration between home and school, now and in the future.²

Studies conducted in the 1970s pointed to the difficulties with social adaptation and academic failure experienced by children from disadvantaged communities. In 1978, the Passe-Partout service was implemented to offer equal opportunities for success to all children.

For more than twenty years, thousands of mothers and fathers have benefited from this service and have been supported in their role as educator-parents.

Today, this program continues to be a valid measure, but the orientations of the education reform call for certain adaptations, as the Passe-Partout program must comply with the reform's objectives.

For this reason, the program's organization must be reviewed. School administrators and educators will thus be better able to meet the MEQ's requirements and ensure that this program produces results.

Part One of this document describes the context of the implementation and the maintenance of the Passe-Partout program within the scope of the MEQ's new orientations. Part Two presents the basic operational rules that will enable the program to be used with the flexibility required to adapt it to different communities. Part Three defines the educator's profile. Lastly, Part Four proposes the rules and recommendations that will facilitate the program's implementation.

Schools are the best guarantee for the future, and parents' expectations are high. It is therefore important to redefine the ties between schools and families in order to provide children with every chance of coming out on top.

In the Québec Education Program, the MEQ reaffirms that an alliance between families and schools is essential to ensure the success of the school's educational mission.

The Passe-Partout service was implemented in the 1970s to foster educational success among children in disadvantaged communities.

Today, this service continues to support parents in their role as educators.

The program must be adapted to the MEQ's new orientations.

This document contains four parts, which cover:

- the context requiring clarification of organization
- the definition of organizational rules
- the educator's profile
- the program's implementation

1. GOUVERNEMENT DU QUÉBEC, *Québec Education Program. Preschool Education, Elementary Education. Approved Version* (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001), Chapter 4.

Nevertheless, at the core of these organizational concerns, we must remember that when strengthening the ties between schools and families, the main beneficiary of this program is the child. Four-year-olds must be given every opportunity to succeed at school, regardless of their social background. Passe-Partout's mission is twofold: to guide parents as they actively participate in the success of their children and to help children integrate harmoniously into the school environment.

In the course of reorganization, we must not lose sight of Passe-Partout's twofold mission:

- guide parents in supporting their children's success
- help children integrate harmoniously into school

PART ONE

ORIENTATIONS OF THE MEQ





1 ORIENTATIONS OF THE MEQ

1.1 Observations

The Passe-Partout program has proven its worth. A study conducted in 1993 established that 73% of children whose parents took part in the program in 1979 obtained a Secondary School Diploma. This percentage is higher than that obtained for all other groups analyzed, including the control group comprised of children from very advantaged communities.³

Nevertheless, Passe-Partout does not always receive the recognition it is due and is even being eliminated in certain regions. It has also been observed that a growing number of services with objectives similar to those of Passe-Partout have been implemented in communities demonstrating the need. Out of concern for the success of the greatest number of students possible, the MEQ feels that there is still a need for the Passe-Partout program and is renewing the program delivery.

It has been observed that the Passe-Partout program has proven its worth. The results are convincing.

The MEQ is renewing the Passe-Partout program to ensure an adequate response to the needs of early childhood education.

1.2 Courses of Action

Revision of the Passe-Partout program delivery requires the government to take tangible action. The MEQ therefore plans to:

- review the basic principles for this model of intervention and clarify the rules of organization that will maintain the flexibility required to ensure effective adaptation to the community
- adapt learning content to the pedagogical approaches advocated in the *Québec Education Program*
- join with its social partners "to ensure greater convergence between actions and complementarity of services for youth"⁴
- ensure that the Passe-Partout program complies with the criteria for an early intervention program and make provision for its evaluation
- ensure adequate funding

The MEQ plans to:

- clarify the intervention formula within a flexible framework
- adapt learning content
- join with its social partners
- evaluate the program
- ensure adequate funding

3.G. LEGAULT. *Services éducatifs donnés aux enfants de quatre ans de milieux économiquement faibles. Effet sur la diplomation*, (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, 1993).

4.GOUVERNEMENT DU QUÉBEC. *Agissons en complices. Pour une stratégie de soutien du développement des enfants et des jeunes* (Québec: Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, 1998), 15 (translation).

1.3 Definition of the Program and Target Population

Passe-Partout is a governmental family intervention program, created to foster educational success among children in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. This program is intended for families in these communities who have a child who will be 4 years of age by September 30 of the current year. The program allows another person, or the most meaningful person to a child, to take the parent's place.

The groups are heterogeneous in nature, since the program is offered to all families in the school community or the targeted community. There are many similarities among the groups, but also diversity in terms of income, values and family situations, which contributes to enriching discussions. Individuals and families are not labelled, and the creation of demeaning ghettos is avoided. Passe-Partout thereby adheres to the principles of equality and respect.

The program may also be offered in other, more advantaged communities where needs in this respect have been recognized or articulated.

1.4 Goals

Passe-Partout is designed to provide targeted parents with the tools they need to help their child adopt attitudes and practices that will enable the child to develop, grow and succeed at school.

In this respect, Passe-Partout aims to:

- enable the parent, as mother or father, to acknowledge that they are the primary person responsible for their child's education
- support parents in establishing a meaningful relationship with their child
- assist parents in creating and providing support and guidance for their child
- enable parents to foster their child's psychomotor, affective, social, language and cognitive development

This program is intended primarily for families in disadvantaged communities.

The community is considered to be disadvantaged, not the families or individuals.

Passe-Partout may also be offered in other communities.

As far as parents are concerned, Passe-Partout targets the following goals:

- lead parents to assume their responsibility
- develop a good relationship between parents and their child
- provide adequate support and guidance for the child
- foster the overall development of the child

- support parents in conveying to their child positive values with respect to school

As well, Passe-Partout aims to intervene with children in the following manner:

- prepare them to be better academic learners
- enable them to become better acquainted with each other so that they feel more confident when they enter kindergarten
- facilitate their adaptation to school the following year, by familiarizing them with the school premises
- screen them for certain problems that can be resolved before the school year begins, such as visual, auditory or language problems. The program is therefore part of a preventive approach.

1.5 Parenting Skills and Children's Competencies

Passe-Partout should enable parents to develop the following skills:

- demonstrate one's love to one's child: accept the child with his/her preferences, strengths and weaknesses, perceive and meet his/her needs, listen to him/her and express one's love through words and actions
- communicate with one's child: listen to him/her, express oneself clearly using respectful language and show patience
- assert oneself with one's child by acting firmly, showing warmth; be consistent and steadfast; show personal discipline and a sense of organization and be capable of controlling one's emotions
- guide one's child in his/her development, in particular by being present, by teaching the child to assert himself/herself, to control his/her emotions and to love himself/herself
- question oneself in one's parental role, by recognizing one's limits and needs, by reflecting on one's way of taking action. The parent must also acknowledge and assume his/her parental responsibilities and show an open mind.

- convey positive values with respect to school

As far as children are concerned, Passe-Partout targets the following goals:

- preparation for school learning
- sociorelational development
- their adaptation to the school environment
- early screening

The skills expected of parents are:

- demonstrate one's love to one's child
- communicate with one's child
- assert oneself with one's child
- guide one's child in his/her development
- question oneself in one's parental role

For children, Passe-Partout should initiate the development of competencies required by the learning specific to preschool education,⁵ namely:

- develop children's senses and gross and fine motor skills through active play and physical exercise
- ensure that children learn to see themselves as unique individuals with their own preferences, interests and needs, lead them to acquire self-confidence, become more receptive to relating to others, develop their desire to learn and take part in learning activities
- lead them to accommodate their needs with those of others, to identify with their cultural environment, to take interest in others and become open to new things, in order to discover the satisfactions and constraints of community life and develop social skills
- lead them to discover the pleasure of developing language, of playing with words, of reading and creating stories and communicating with others
- develop children's curiosity, the desire to learn, discover, observe, experiment, anticipate, share their knowledge with others, develop the attitudes and skills that will lay the groundwork for future learning
- lead children to acquire work methods and means of completing activities

Children need to develop the following competencies:

- perform sensorimotor actions effectively in different contexts
- affirm their personalities
- interact harmoniously with others
- communicate using the resources of language
- construct their understanding of the world
- complete an activity or a project

PART TWO

ORGANIZATIONAL RULES





2 ORGANIZATIONAL RULES

2.1 Meetings

2.1.1 Types

First of all, meetings are held with parents to discuss specific themes. Separate meetings for mothers or for fathers may also be organized. In addition, meetings including a segment with children can be planned.

Bear in mind, however, that Passe-Partout is a family intervention program and that it targets parents and children. For this reason, meetings between parents and children are also recommended. On occasion, the meeting could involve only one parent and his/her child.

Meetings for children without their parents must also be incorporated into annual planning. However, parents could be invited to participate in these meetings as assistants or co-educators.

The different types of meetings:

- meetings for parents
- meetings for parents and children
- meetings for children

2.1.2 Factors to Be Considered

The organization of activities must take into account four factors that determine the quality and effectiveness of the meetings.

A minimum of 8 meetings with parents and a minimum of 16 meetings with children ensure the frequency and continuity required for the program to bring about a change in attitudes, habits and practices.

The meetings must take place in the school, in appropriate premises. A large, bright room should be used for parents' meetings. It should contain enough chairs and one or more large tables so that everyone feels comfortable. A kindergarten or similar classroom should be used with the children because the goal is to familiarize them with the classroom. It must contain adapted furnishings, be large, bright, clean, welcoming and safe. Facilities (sink, toilets, lockers, etc.) should be easily accessible.

Daytime or evening meetings can be scheduled, depending on the participants' availability. Some of the children's meetings should be scheduled during school hours so that they gain a realistic view of the school.

Each meeting should last for at least two hours, which represents the time required to set up and carry out meaningful activities.

Factors to be considered in the organization of meetings:

- number
- setting
- time
- duration

2.2 Themes

The themes are chosen according to the needs of parents and children. The meetings are part of a sociopedagogical approach designed to help parents become acquainted with and better understand the developmental aspects of a 4-year-old so they can better meet their children's needs. Moreover, through the use of these themes, the children develop competencies that will help them with their academic learning. Other themes may be used, depending on the needs of the community.

The Passe-Partout program primarily covers the following themes:

- the child's overall development
- parent-child communication
- discipline, and support and guidance
- the changes involved in the education reform
- the transition to kindergarten

2.3 Overall Assessment

An overall assessment must be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the organization in place, to evaluate the effects of the intervention on parents and children and to make any necessary adjustments.

Various forms of assessment may be used, such as statistical compilations, unofficial evaluations (comments, questions, discussions, reflections, etc.), or written reports addressed to school board officials.

Different aspects must be assessed:

- the frequency of meetings
- the participation rate
- the effectiveness and coherence of the activities
- the satisfaction level of parents and children
- the relevance of the themes covered
- the effectiveness of the methodology and the quality of group facilitation, etc.

The themes are common to parents and children.

Overall organizational assessment

This assessment may take various forms.

The observation and assessment of children requires special attention because this type of information is addressed to parents and school principals. The Québec Education Program must be referred to when designing the observational tools since it provides guidelines.⁶ This does not involve a report card as defined in the Basic school regulation. The information recorded must serve as a guide and a memory aid. Within the program's preventive approach, this information will make it possible to refer parents to community resources and if need be, to implement the services required at the outset of kindergarten. It is important to protect 4-year-old children from early marginalization.

The observation and assessment of children requires special attention.

6. *Québec Education Program*, p. 52.

PART THREE

PROFILE OF PASSE-PARTOUT EDUCATORS





3 PROFILE OF PASSE-PARTOUT EDUCATORS

3.1 Portrait

Since the needs are diverse, the work of Passe-Partout educators may significantly vary among school boards. Furthermore, in order to attain the goals of the Passe-Partout program, educators working with parents must possess a broad range of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

3.1.1 Knowledge

The educator must:

- be familiar with human psychology, child and adult development and parent-child relationships
- be familiar with the environment and the community of the families encountered
- know the school system, its structures and values
- be familiar with all the community resources likely to broaden the scope of the intervention and know how to put them to use
- know the various techniques for group facilitation, training, group management and helping relations
- be familiar with the Preschool Education program

3.1.2 Skills and Attitudes

Passe-Partout educators must be able to:

- work in a team
- take "culture shock" into consideration
- maintain positive attitudes toward parents
- design, plan and offer content and activities appropriate to the targeted goals
- encourage, gain the trust of and value the participants by focusing on the skills they have already acquired
- spark discussion, foster solidarity among participants and allow a great deal of room for experience-sharing
- encourage reflection and personal and group questioning

Educators must possess a broad range of knowledge, skills and attitudes to successfully complete their work.

The Passe-Partout educator must possess knowledge of:

- psychology
- the target populations
- the school system
- community resources
- group facilitation and helping relation techniques
- the program

Passe-Partout educators must possess skills and attitudes related to:

- teamwork
- cultural diversity
- positive attitudes
- making appropriate activity choices
- the development of relationships of trust
- the development of interpersonal relations
- the development of awareness

- foster independent learning and self-development
- facilitate communication and collaboration between parents and children by showing and fostering receptiveness, listening, respect and openness

3.2 Tasks

The tasks of Passe-Partout educators encompass professional activities defined as follows: research and development, information and training, group facilitation and management, consultation and guidance, support and supervision, organization and promotion, and collaboration. Usually, educators report to the school board's educational services.

The educators must be hired on an ongoing and stable basis to be effective. This promotes the attainment of program goals and the preservation of program values.

To guarantee the quality of the full-time educator's work, the number of groups to be met must be taken into consideration. In the course of a school year, an educator who is seconded for meetings with children will work with approximately 130 families. However, if an educator is alone in leading meetings for parents and for children, he or she will be working with about 80 families.

To ensure group dynamics and allow everyone to express themselves, the parents' groups and the childrens' groups must be composed of at least 9 families, but no more than 17.

It is important that the weekly schedule for educators allow for the time required to plan, organize, prepare and evaluate activities. In some cases, allowance for travel time between groups must be made when planning tasks.

- the development of autonomy
- the development of respect and openness

The tasks of educators encompass several areas of activity.

Educators must be hired on an ongoing, stable basis.

The workload of educators is defined by the number of families or groups to be met.

There is a minimum and maximum number of families per group.

Other aspects of the workload to be considered are the schedule, planning, organization, meeting preparation, activity evaluation and travel time.

3.3 Qualification

Passe-Partout supports parenting skills, and is intended for children and parents. It therefore requires that program educators have higher education in fields that include helping strategies for children and adults. These professionals who work with families, must hold a bachelor's degree or the equivalent in one of the following areas: group facilitation, psychology, education, social work, or a related field deemed relevant by the school board.

3.4 Support for Initial Training and Professional Development

Given the expansion of the program delivery to early childhood education and the importance of ensuring the coherence and the continuity of initiatives in this area, staff require not only initial training, but also ongoing professional development activities. The MEQ, in collaboration with different agencies, will ensure that staff is offered support in this area.⁷

To counter feelings of isolation and uncertainty, there are tangible opportunities for enrichment and dialogue. To this end, the annual Passe-Partout symposium provides an opportunity to meet, share experience, reflect on practice and obtain customized professional development. People from a variety of professional fields (kindergarten teachers, child-care educators, school administrative staff, CLSC and community staff) also attend this symposium.

Moreover, the Passe-Partout work group (Groupe de travail Passe-Partout) is a committee mandated to assess and support the program, as well as verify its impact on participating parents and children.

To enhance the program's operation, groups of facilitators from various school boards have created and experimented with work tools and a range of diverse activities. School boards may obtain documentation on these tools and activities.

Passe-Partout educators must hold a bachelor's degree or equivalent qualification in a field related to their responsibilities.

The MEQ will ensure that those responsible for group facilitation are offered support.

Opportunities to meet and obtain tangible assistance are offered to educators:

- annual symposium
- Groupe de travail Passe-Partout (GTPP)
- documentation

7. Ministerial Plan of Action for the Reform of the Education System, p. 7.

PART FOUR

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION





4 PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

To assist school boards in launching the Passe-Partout program and to ensure that it runs smoothly, this section of the guide defines a number of elements that should be taken into consideration.

4.1 Recruitment

It is recommended that school boards hold kindergarten and Passe-Partout registration at the same time, and to send out a reminder in the month of August. This method allows Passe-Partout educators to obtain a complete list of the potential clientele. The parents can then be informed of the program and invited to attend an initial meeting.

A range of methods may be used to encourage the participation of parents:

- invitations and information folders mailed to the families on the list
- advertising in regional media
- communiqués sent to early childhood education centres, daycare centres, schools, nursery schools, and to CLSC's
- postings in various sites that parents likely frequent, etc.

4.2 Schedule

The schedule must be consistent, regular and adaptable to promote ties between families and educators at the meetings.

Ensuring proper scheduling of meetings requires that:

- the meetings be scheduled from September through June
- Passe-Partout be viewed as a school service and be integrated into the school's activity schedule
- the schedule be subject to parents' consent

Four-year-old children should be registered in the Passe-Partout program and kindergarten at the same time.

An effective schedule must have specific features.

Factors that must be taken into consideration:

- annual schedule
- the integration of Passe-Partout into the school's activity schedule
- parental acceptance of the schedule

4.3 The First Meeting

The first meeting is important, because it sets the tone for subsequent meetings. At this meeting, parents will have either a positive or negative impression of Passe-Partout. At the same time, they will realize that they are required to make a firm commitment to participating. Therefore, this meeting must be carefully prepared.

During the first meeting, documents, activities or other methods can be used to spark interest in the program and encourage parents to participate. It is important to have parents speak as soon as possible so that they can hear their own voices in the group and feel that they will have to actively participate in the meetings. They should also be provided with additional information.

The first parents' meeting may include the following elements:

- greeting parents and introduction of Passe-Partout educators
- definition of the service, its goals, and how meetings work
- presentation of material organization and the year's schedule
- listing of the meeting themes
- formation of groups
- recording of needs expressed by parents, etc.

The first meeting must be held in September so that the school board can obtain the basic subsidy allocated for preschool education for 4-year-olds in the school board budgetary rules.

The first meeting sets the tone for subsequent meetings.

The goals of the first meeting are to:

- spark the interest and foster the participation of parents
- inform parents

Proposed plan for the initial meeting:

- welcome
- information
- organization
- targeted themes
- formation of groups

4.4 Principles and Techniques of Group Facilitation

4.4.1 Theoretical Principles

In pursuing the program goals, the initiatives must be based on certain theoretical principles.

Sociopedagogical strategies are recommended for families from disadvantaged communities. They stress group processes, determined by the specific needs that parents themselves express. This is based on a humanist approach that allows educators to access the life experience of parents and recognize the obstacles they encounter in exercising their parenting skills. The relationship between group facilitators and parents is collaborative, informed by respect and listening, and is conducive to complicity.

The activities carried out with children are based on a constructivist or developmental model, in accordance with the MEQ's Preschool Education program.⁸

The play approach is always used with children. Through play, the child becomes acquainted with the school environment and develops a liking for school. Learning through play activity is the basis of preschool intervention. Every meeting revolves around the delight shared by educators and children.

4.4.2 Group Facilitation Techniques

Based on the key principles of developing and supporting parenting skills, educators use noninstructional methods. They advocate an andragogical approach in order to create a climate of trust. Lectures and presentations are not used because they evoke passivity and feelings of incompetence among participants.

To attain the program's goals, the following methods should be adopted throughout the meetings:

- establish and maintain a relationship of trust

The underlying principles of Passe-Partout are:

- the humanist approach

- the constructivist approach

- the play approach

Educators advocate an andragogical approach in order to create a climate of trust.

Attitudes are linked to the program's philosophy.

- demonstrate flexibility
- adopt intensive intervention
- avoid labels, stereotypes and negative biases
- foster the active participation of parents

Consistent with the principles stated above, educators use different techniques to make the most of their know-how and enthusiasm.

Suggested techniques for parents include discussion among the entire group or within subgroups, problem-solving groups, role play, brainstorming, co-facilitation, group outings, etc.

Additional techniques for children include rhymes (and acting out rhymes), crafts, group and observation games, story-reading and story-telling, motor-skills, etc.

4.4.3 Motivational Tools

In the Passe-Partout program, as in any process of change or learning, motivation is to families what wind is to the windmill: the impetus that pushes people to action. At every meeting, the educator will have to demonstrate imagination and creativity in order to interest participants in the proposed activities. With parents, symbolic objects may be used, such as photographs, quizzes, association games, drawings, etc. With children, a mailbox, a name board, a poster illustrating activities, and so forth, may also be used.

Various group facilitation techniques may be used with parents and with children.

Motivation is the driving force of the program. Tools to create and rekindle motivation are suggested for parents and children.

CONCLUSION

What distinguishes the Passe-Partout program from other early childhood initiatives is that it targets a specific niche: parents and the school.

Promoting the educational success of the greatest possible number of students undoubtedly requires the establishment of solid collaboration among the many people called on to participate in this undertaking. The plan of action for the reform stresses collaboration between the school and the family. The Minister has thus made provision for an assistance plan for early childhood education, and the maintenance of the Passe-Partout program is part of this plan.

Nevertheless, recent MEQ decisions concerning the maintenance and the funding of the program require a review of this family intervention project. For this reason, clear, but flexible organizational rules have been established, ensuring an adequate framework for the program and enabling the administrative and professional staff concerned to adapt these rules to the diversity of the communities.

The rules, which govern meetings, clarify the themes to be undertaken and recommend an overall assessment, are important. They will bring unity to the Passe-Partout program without imposing homogeneity. They will help school boards implement the program and maintain its effectiveness, as well as provide significant support to those responsible for it.

The review of the program required that the profile of Passe-Partout educators be redefined. Their portrait has been defined, their tasks and qualifications have been clarified and the necessity for ongoing professional development has been affirmed.

The recommendations contained in Part Four of this document can only serve to facilitate the implementation of the program, save time and energy, and foster a positive beginning.

Lastly, Passe-Partout could serve as the bridge between home and school that parents and children must cross together to better integrate into the school community. This bridge should subsequently allow greater collaboration between families and schools throughout the children's education. Should it effectively fulfill its role, the Support for Parenting Skills: Organizational Framework will lay the groundwork for bridging the distance between families and the school community.

To promote the educational success of the greatest possible number of students, the MEQ is maintaining the Passe-Partout program.

Recent MEQ decisions require a framework for the program to ensure greater effectiveness.

The organizational rules will bring unity to the program without imposing homogeneity. They will also help school boards and those responsible for the Passe-Partout program.

The profile of educators is also redefined.

Recommendations on the implementation of the service should save time and energy.

Passe-Partout can be viewed as a bridge between home and school.

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