

EDUCATION PROGRAM

for Students With a Profound Intellectual Impairment

Quebec Education Program



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For further information, please contact:

General information

Direction des communications

Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

1035, rue De La Chevrotière, 28^e étage

Québec (Québec) G1R 5A5

Telephone: 418 643-7095

Toll free: 1 866 747-6626

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Direction générale des services de soutien aux élèves, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

Denise Gosselin, director general

Direction de l'adaptation scolaire, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

Anne Robitaille, director

Lyne Gingras, coordinator, students with an intellectual impairment

Writers

Angèle Brisson, Service régional de soutien et d'expertise en déficience intellectuelle, Estrie

Élise Bujold, Direction de l'adaptation scolaire, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

Jacques Lemay, Service régional de soutien et d'expertise en déficience intellectuelle, Capitale-Nationale et Chaudière-Appalaches

Working committee

Johanne Fournier, Education consultant, Commission scolaire de Montréal

Caroline Germain, Service régional de soutien et d'expertise en déficience intellectuelle, Montérégie

Andrée Gosselin, Psychologist, Commission scolaire de Montréal

France Royer, Service régional de soutien et d'expertise en déficience intellectuelle, Bas Saint Laurent et Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine

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Rodrigue Bourque

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Dominique Drolet, secretary, Direction de l'adaptation scolaire

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MS Communication

Message from the Minister



To all teachers working with students with a profound intellectual impairment

It is a great pleasure for me to present the Education Program for Students With a Profound Intellectual Impairment. The publication of this document is an event that makes me particularly proud, since it is the first program designed by educators for a very special group of students.

This program aims to ensure the greatest possible social participation by students in their life environment. It promotes better coordination between the actions of teachers and the actions of colleagues in the health and social services system. It also recognizes and highlights the educational mission of staff working with students with a profound intellectual impairment in schools throughout Québec.

It is important to note that a trial version of the program was published in 2004, and the content was then improved following experimental application by schools and consultations with experts and MELS partners. The program presented here is a reliable point of reference for the educational needs of students with a profound intellectual impairment. It should be considered as the basic framework that sets out the aims and orientations that should structure your educational choices and those of the school community as a whole.

I invite you to study this program carefully in order to become familiar with its contents in time for its implementation, scheduled for September 2011.

I thank you for your professional commitment toward all Québec students with a profound intellectual impairment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Line Beauchamp". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Line Beauchamp

Foreword

Ensuring the integral and optimal development of every student with a profound intellectual impairment is a challenge that requires the constant adaptation of educational practices. For this purpose, the Education Program for Students With a Profound Intellectual Impairment provides the basic reference framework for all pedagogical choices. It calls on teachers to work together as a team to help students develop competencies relating to knowledge, communication, motor development, socialization, affectivity and community life. It sets out an educational project that targets the development of students throughout their schooling, from the start of preschool at age 4 to the transition to adult life at age 21.

Chapter One sets out the general program orientations and describes the characteristics and needs of students with a profound intellectual impairment. It reviews the various aspects that must be taken into account when establishing services for these students, and examines the link between education and social participation. Last, it proposes a range of educational strategies for use with students with a profound intellectual impairment and suggestions for the evaluation of learning.

Chapter Two presents the competencies that must be developed, and the evaluation criteria and essential knowledge for each competency.

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Chapter 1 – A program for students with a profound intellectual impairment



During the 20th century, successive concepts have provided support for interventions with individuals with an intellectual impairment. In the early 1960s, following the tabling of the Parent Report and the creation of the Ministère de l'Éducation, access to education and compulsory school attendance became key values for Québec society, along with the idea that all children, even so-called "exceptional"¹ students, were entitled to benefit from education.

Beginning in the 1970s, there was growing recognition for the rights of individuals with an intellectual impairment. Québec's *Charter of human rights and freedoms*, passed in 1975, specified that "Every person has a right to full and equal recognition and exercise of his human rights and freedoms, without distinction, exclusion or preference based on race, colour, . . . a handicap or the use of any means to palliate a handicap."² In Québec's school system, the education provided for students with an intellectual impairment developed on the basis of this approach, and the Ministère de l'Éducation ensured that its legislative texts, policies and administrative rules provided support for the organization and implementation of services for this group of students.

The first program for students with an intellectual impairment was published by the Ministère de l'Éducation in the second half of the 20th century. The program was approved by the Catholic Committee of the Council of Public Instruction, and its aims were to help students live in harmony with others and play an active and useful role in the labour market, and to initiate them into the rights and duties ordained by their civic, national and humanitarian roles.³ In 1996 and 1997, the Ministère de l'Éducation published programs adapted to the needs of students with moderate or severe intellectual impairments. A preschool education program was also introduced for children aged 4 and 5, while special programs in French, mathematics, social sciences and physical education were available for elementary school students. In addition,

the PACTE⁴ and DEFIS⁵ programs were introduced for secondary school students. The aim of all these programs was to develop the essential competencies required to increase the autonomy and sense of responsibility of students with a medium to severe intellectual impairment. However, there was no official program specifically for students with a profound intellectual impairment.

In 1999, the Policy on Special Education was updated to reflect the changes introduced by the education reform. Its basic orientation was to help students with handicaps or social maladjustments or learning disabilities succeed in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications. In keeping with the Policy, the Ministère proposed a global, developmental approach to meet the educational needs and reflect the abilities of students aged 4 to 21 with a profound intellectual impairment. For this reason, it was decided to define an educational program for these students, rather than a program of studies.

¹ This was the term used by the authors of the report to describe certain children, including those with an intellectual impairment. Gouvernement du Québec, *Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Québec (Parent Report)*, Québec, 1965.

² Commission des droits de la personne du Québec, *Charter of human rights and freedoms*, Québec, 1975, Chapter 1.1, section 10.

³ Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction générale de l'élémentaire et du secondaire, *Programme d'études des classes d'enfants déficients*, Service d'information, Ministère de l'Éducation, 1968.

⁴ Programmes d'études adaptés avec compétences transférables essentielles.

⁵ Démarche éducative favorisant l'intégration sociale.

GENERAL PROGRAM ORIENTATIONS

Social participation: the ultimate goal

Today, we recognize that individuals with an intellectual impairment have the same rights as all other citizens. It is not enough, however, to recognize their rights; it is also important to see to their mental, physical and social well-being, which depends on their being able to function as effectively as possible within their family and community. As a result, the aim of the program is to increase the capacity for social participation of students with a profound intellectual impairment.

According to the disability creation process⁶ model, social participation is the result of an individual's interaction with the environment. It is a "reciprocal exchange between the individual and the collective; it depends, first, on the collective responsibility to allow everyone to participate actively in society and, second, on the individual responsibility to act as a responsible citizen."⁷ The result of the interaction can be placed on a continuum ranging from minimal to maximal participation in the activities that make up school, family and community life.

Social participation can take a variety of forms depending on the interests, abilities and age of the person concerned. For example, it can result from the possibility of communicating with others, establishing interpersonal relations, performing scheduled tasks at school or work, taking part in recreational or community projects, having a family life, consuming goods or services, or playing a role in the decision-making process like any other citizen.

The aim of the Education Program for Students With a Profound Intellectual Impairment is therefore to ensure that every student is able, on leaving school and on the basis of his or her abilities, to participate in an optimal way in the life of society.

School as a facilitator

For students with an intellectual impairment, school is an essential and determining period lying between childhood and adult life. As a life environment, school plays an important role in achieving the aim of social participation. Based on each student's intervention plan, the school ensures that the student uses his or her abilities and develops his or her competencies, and that staff members make the necessary adaptations to ensure the success of every student. The school will only achieve this if

- it adopts values, attitudes and beliefs to guide the educational actions of all staff members
- it organizes services to ensure that they meet the individual educational needs of all students
- it allows the various partners of the education community to play a role in each student's educational project
- it offers each student an individualized path based on his or her abilities and pace of learning
- it applies educational strategies that support and promote competency development
- it presents learning and evaluation situations that take into account each student's chronological age and mental age
- it provides for architectural and technological accommodations to facilitate interactions between students and their physical environment

⁶ An adaptation of the model, called "The disability creation process applied to profound intellectual impairment as a way to reduce obstacles," is presented in Appendix I.

⁷ Conseil de la santé et du bien-être, *La participation comme stratégie de renouvellement du développement social*, Québec, 1997, 3-4 [translation].

The school mission as it relates to students with a profound intellectual impairment

The mission of the school is to offer educational services to all young people, including those with an intellectual impairment, and to equip them to develop their full social and intellectual potential. Its actions with young people must be multidimensional, in order to help them become adults able to participate in the life of the community. The school mission, even adjusted to the needs of students with an intellectual impairment, remains focused, for these as for all students, on three aims: to provide instruction, to socialize, and to provide qualifications.⁸

Providing instruction

If students with an intellectual impairment are to be able to develop their potential and become involved in the life of their family, school or community, they must develop various competencies to the extent of their abilities. The school, although not their only place of learning, must give them an opportunity to acquire essential knowledge and help them apply that knowledge in their everyday lives.

Socializing

Today, individuals with an intellectual impairment are increasingly present in society. This requires us to look at their relations with the community in a new way. The school, acting as the main—and sometimes only—life environment outside the family for students with a profound intellectual impairment, is a community where they learn how to live with others. It must prepare them to play a role in community life, while helping to prevent the risks of exclusion and isolation. It must also give them a chance to acquire the skills and develop the competencies they will need to take their place in the family and in the community. For some students, school is where they will prepare for employment in an adapted workplace.

Providing qualifications

When they leave secondary school, all intellectually impaired students should hold some form of recognition for the progress they have made in developing their competencies, highlighting their strengths and abilities and forming the basis for the further development of their competencies in another setting.

Target values

This program is based on values that guide educational actions, govern the selection of learning content, and make it meaningful. The values complement, rather than replace, the values underlying the school's educational project. Autonomy, quality of life and valuing the student as a learner are the fundamental values of the program.

Autonomy

Autonomy may be defined as a person's ability to make decisions, carry out those decisions, and meet his or her specific needs without being under the power and control of others.⁹ Becoming autonomous is an ultimate goal towards which everyone aspires, and that requires a reduction in dependency on others. Staff members must believe in the ability of students with a profound intellectual impairment to increase their autonomy. This value must become a shared point of reference and guide the selection and planning of learning and evaluation situations to develop the competencies liable to reduce the students' dependency.

⁸ Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *The Schools of Québec: Policy Statement and Plan of Action*, Québec, 1979, 11.

⁹ Adapted from: Sylvie Rocque et al., *De l'autonomie à la réduction des dépendances* (Montréal: Éditions Nouvelles, 1999), 59.

Quality of life

By learning to use knowledge, skills and strategies, students can develop their ability to meet their own needs, make decisions and support their decisions. They can also learn to complete activities or tasks. By helping them achieve some of their potential, the school can increase the quality of their physical, mental and social life.

Valuing the student as a learner

Valuing students with a profound intellectual impairment as learners means instilling in them the feeling that they are able to act and succeed. Through their actions and successes, they begin to value themselves and see themselves valued by others. For this reason, it is important to alter our perception of success and to recognize that it may be achieved differently by a student with an intellectual impairment.

Students with an intellectual impairment: definition

According to the American Association on Mental Retardation,¹⁰ a person with mental retardation or an intellectual disability¹¹ is a person whose intellectual and adaptive functioning is significantly subaverage compared with the general population. In addition, the difficulties become manifest during the person's developmental period.

Intellectual functioning refers to the ability to give meaning to the things around us; it also refers to the ability to understand, learn and adapt to new situations. A delay in this aspect of development is generally measured using a standardized test that gives the result as an intellectual quotient or development quotient. The measurement allows the intellectual impairment to be situated on a continuum from light to profound.

Adaptive functioning is the way in which a person adapts to the requirements of the environment and the person's ability to attain a level of autonomy consistent with his or her chronological age and sociocultural context. A delay in adaptive functioning is assessed using standardized tests, giving a score in each domain and an overall score to determine if the person has significant limitations. The measurement of adaptive behaviour is used to establish the person's functioning profile, in other words the person's skills and disabilities in three main categories: conceptual, social and practical.

Students with a profound intellectual impairment: characteristics, abilities and needs

In recent years, experts have come to an agreement on the characteristics of people with an intellectual impairment. These individuals form a heterogeneous group since their abilities and needs vary depending on their intellectual impairment, their chronological age and the specific difficulties they experience.

The abilities of students with a profound intellectual impairment can be developed, provided that staff members in the school environment give priority to an individualized pedagogical approach and use educational strategies that take into account each student's pace of learning and mental processes.

¹⁰ American Association on Mental Retardation, *Mental retardation: Definition, classification, and Systems of Supports*, 2002.

¹¹ Worldwide, several different terms are used. In Québec, the most usual term is "intellectual impairment," and this will be used to designate what the Association called "retardation" in 2002. See: Ordre des psychologues du Québec, *Lignes directrices pour l'évaluation du retard mental*, 2007, 6.

Motor skills: abilities and needs

Psychomotor skills are needed to carry out even the simplest daily tasks. The ability to perceive and act on the environment is an integral part of the learning dynamic for sensorimotor intelligence. It constitutes the basic tool for the development of knowledge. Children perceive and act on objects. These actions are a concrete sign that they have decoded and organized the information they have received.

Students with a profound intellectual impairment are able to point at objects or people, manipulate objects, react to various visual, tactile, auditory, olfactory or kinesthetic stimuli, be mobile, coordinate their actions and imitate motor actions. However, they often have specific disorders of neurological or genetic origin. This may be reflected in significant motor limitations, sensory deficiencies, or a precarious state of physical health that limits their development.

To develop their abilities and accomplish the essential activities needed to maintain life, students with a profound intellectual impairment need individualized, supported learning, an organized environment and support from an adult. When a student has significant motor limitations, sensory deficits or precarious health, these needs increase and therapeutic exercises and care may also be required.

Student needs that must be met in order to maximize the development of his/her physical and sensory ability

Individualized and supported learning

- Training in eating, personal hygiene, mobility, dressing and undressing
- Training in the use of technical aids to reduce the limitations caused by sensory or motor deficits

Therapeutic exercises and care

- Frequent changes in position to help the student breathe and be comfortable and to enable him/her to interact with the environment
- Exercises to strengthen muscles and reduce muscle tension
- Implementation of recommendations made by physical reeducation specialists
- Regular verification of orthotic devices, posture seats, etc., to ensure the student's comfort and well-being

Organization of the environment

- Layout to facilitate the use of technical aids for mobility, posture or sensory perception (visual and auditory)

Support from an adult

- Assistance in meeting primary needs (eating, drinking, washing hands, etc.)
- Assistance in the performance of certain movements
- Assistance in mobility
- Support to help the student express comfort or discomfort

Affectivity: abilities and needs

In the realm of affectivity, students with a profound intellectual impairment have their own needs, emotions and motivations. As a result, it is important to pay particular attention to the emotional and motivational dimension. For a long time, little consideration has been given to the students' feelings, and the topic has not generated much research. Nevertheless, the students can feel most emotions, even if they express them in their own way.

Students with a profound intellectual impairment experience major emotional stress because of their lack of control over their lives and the fact that the people around them often consider that they have failed to live up to expectations. All too often, adults fail to check the emotional and motivational impact of their decisions on the students, who have an emotional and sexual life. They have feelings and desires that they often display inappropriately. The people around them generally react by focusing on controlling the behaviour, without trying to understand the emotion causing it. People tend to forget that emotions do not just happen by accident, but are related to a sensation, a person, a situation or a specific object. Perceptual difficulties and inappropriate attitudes and reactions by family members, as well as interventions solely designed to eliminate inappropriate social behaviour, may slow the students' affective development.¹²

To diversify their areas of interest and learn to recognize, differentiate and express their needs and emotions, the students need an organized environment, individualized learning and sustained support. In this way, they will be able to develop as harmoniously as possible in terms of their affectivity.

Student needs that must be met in order to maximize the development of his/her affective abilities

Individualized and supported learning

- Help the student adopt appropriate strategies to express emotions and desires
- Help the student make connections between emotions and ways to express them
- Help the student diversify his/her areas of interest

Organization of the environment

- Allow the use of technical aids to facilitate the expression of emotions

¹² James R. Corcoran, "Affect Abilities Training: A Competency Based Method for Counselling Persons with Mental Retardation," *Journal of Career Education*, June 1982, 301-311.

Intellectual functioning: abilities and needs

Intellectual impairment is defined, in particular, by an intellectual functioning deficit. Functioning deficits are diffuse and displayed to varying degrees depending on the severity of the impact on various developmental domains, including the cognitive domain. The assessment of the cognitive development of students with a profound intellectual impairment generally places their mental age between 0 and 24 months, a period that corresponds mainly to the development of sensorimotor intelligence. Other cognitive characteristics have been reported, in particular concerning attention, memory and regulation.¹³

Sensorimotor intelligence can be defined as practical intelligence linked to action,¹⁴ given that it is through actions that the child gradually builds and structures reality.¹⁵ Children acquire a notion of the permanence of objects and a certain notion of space and time, and establish causal links. They begin to imitate motor actions and to reason. A brief description of the various stages of cognitive development is presented in Appendix I. However, it is important to adapt interpretations with respect to students with a profound intellectual impairment, since the presence of associated deficits¹⁶ in some students limits their ability to interact with the environment.

Students with a profound intellectual impairment may be at one of the six developmental stages of sensorimotor intelligence.¹⁷ At given periods during their development, they may have to learn behaviours from two stages, for example transferring an object from one hand to the other (stage 2 of sensorimotor intelligence, see Appendix II) and placing small objects in a container (stage 5 of sensorimotor intelligence, see Appendix II). Although most students are at the sensorimotor intelligence stage, some, who are older and without associated disorders, may have behaviour that goes beyond that stage, thanks to sustained, varied interventions.

¹³ Carmen Dionne et al., "Le retard du développement intellectuel," in E. Habimana, L. Éthier, D. Petot and M. Tousignant, *Psychopathologie de l'enfant et de l'adolescent* (Boucherville: Gaëtan Morin, 1999), 317-342.

¹⁴ Virginie Laval, *La psychologie du développement: Modèles et méthodes* (Paris: Éditions Armand Colin, 2002), 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Associated deficits may be major motor limitations, sensory impairments or major physical health problems.

¹⁷ The work of Inhelder and Zigler has shown that children with an intellectual impairment go through the same periods or stages of cognitive development as other children. However, they progress more slowly and reach a plateau more quickly. See Marc J. Tassé and Diane Morin, *La déficience intellectuelle* (Boucherville: Gaëtan Morin, 2003), 337.

To maximize the development of their cognitive abilities, students need individualized teaching, an environment organized to match their ability to interact, and support from an adult. In addition, all educational activities must offer a range of opportunities for manipulation, exploration and experimentation. By using these strategies, and through interaction with the environment, they will be able to acquire new learning.

Student needs that must be met in order to maximize the development of his/her cognitive abilities

Individualized and supported learning

- Taking into account each student's intellectual abilities
- Offering learning with useful, functional results
- Offering learning situations that allow the student to use strategies such as exploration, manipulation, experimentation and discrimination, and association exercises

Organization of the environment

- Rich in varied, significant stimulation
- Structured and stable to promote the development of perception and discrimination with regard to relevant stimuli
- Structured in a way that allows the student to make choices and have a certain amount of control over objects
- Allowing the use of technical aids to facilitate interactions with the environment

Support from an adult

- To help the student focus
- To help the student organize games and activities
- To support the motivation needed to complete the task
- Including systematic, immediate feedback during the activity

Communication: abilities and needs

Most students with a profound intellectual impairment have a poorly developed communication function. They need a stimulating social environment to encourage them to communicate. They do not necessarily use speech to communicate, but most use sounds, words, objects, natural gestures or images. They must be encouraged to understand the interactive aspects of communication and to distinguish between the role of originator and the role of receptor.

Using their sensorimotor intelligence, the students are able to produce or imitate sounds, words and gestures. They are also able to understand simple verbal messages and to take turns in a communicative exchange. These abilities are essential in order to be able to communicate effectively with others.

The development of the communication abilities of students with a profound intellectual impairment will be facilitated if the people around take all the opportunities provided by everyday activities to communicate with them and give them the possibility of using effective means of communication.

Student needs that must be met in order to maximize the development of his/her communication abilities

Individualized and supported learning

- Communication method adapted to the physical, sensory and cognitive abilities of the student (for example, use of technical aids such as pictographic, gestural or tactile systems, representations of objects, photos or natural gestures)
- Activities for learning to assimilate means of communication
- Activities plan in which the student plays an active role as originator or receptor

Organization of the environment

- Layout allowing the student to communicate as often as possible
- Layout giving the student easy access to various means of communication
- Layout giving the student reasons to communicate
- Layout allowing the student to use contextual elements to try to understand

Socialization: abilities and needs

The social development and social abilities of individuals with an intellectual impairment have received little attention in the scientific literature, although the question of their social integration is well documented, in particular from the point of view of human rights and the type or organization of services.

The way in which children interact with others is linked to their cognitive development. For students with a profound intellectual impairment, this development involves their sensorimotor intelligence. They are able to enter into a relationship with other people, take part in a game, follow simple rules for a game or group, and show interest in a group activity. To develop new social skills or change inappropriate social behaviour, they need a lot of time, repetition and opportunities to demonstrate the desired behaviour.

Student needs that must be met in order to maximize the development of his/her social skills

Individualized and supported learning

- Activities allowing the student to acquire new social skills
- Practical situations designed to consolidate the social skills acquired
- Opportunities to use the social skills acquired in various everyday activities, with peers or adults
- Interventions to change inappropriate social behaviour

Services matched to student needs

In order to comply with the orientations of this program, schools must offer students with a profound intellectual impairment specialized and varied educational, medical and physical rehabilitation services. The services are different from those generally offered in schools, and relate to education, well-being and care, reflecting the specific needs of the students. They are generally offered jointly by the education and health and social services networks. The framework for the services is defined in an agreement for the complementarity of services between the health and social services network and the education network, *Two Networks, One Objective: The Development of Youth*.¹⁸

The services are complementary and inextricably linked, but are not hierarchical, and students need them throughout their school careers. Parents, teachers, education and health professionals, support staff and school principals are all key players. By joining forces and pooling their competencies to establish an intervention plan, they are able to organize appropriate services for addressing a student's overall needs. However, teachers remain responsible for planning and organizing learning and evaluation situations.

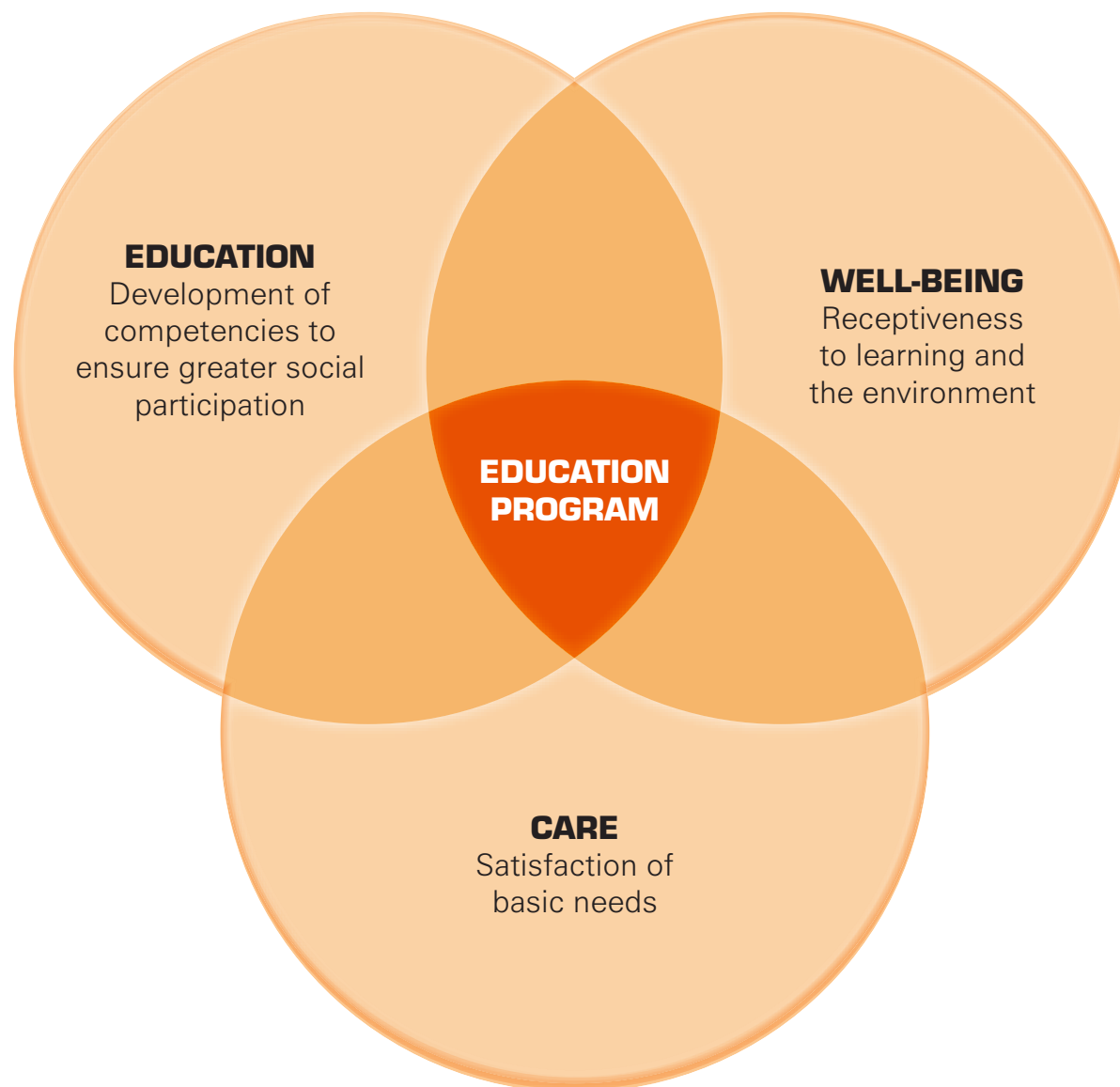
Services connected with well-being help make students more receptive to learning and to their environment, by placing them in the best possible conditions. Students with a profound intellectual impairment have numerous health and well-being problems. Many have significant motor limitations, sensory deficits and precarious physical or mental health. Schools must be aware of all these problems and staff members must be able to provide an environment that is conducive to the students' good health. For this reason, the students must be encouraged to take all possible opportunities to engage in movement, as long as their comfort and safety is assured. This is a collective responsibility that relies on concerted action not only by school staff members but also by the students, their parents and health professionals.

The goal of care-related services is to meet the students' basic needs with respect to hygiene, eating and dressing, and to apply any necessary medical care protocols. Providing care contributes to the students' well-being and fosters the development of competencies. Care is provided by complementary services staff, in collaboration with the parents and other partners. The intervention priorities depend on the nature, frequency and intensity of the needs of each student. It is important for all the players in the education community to remain attentive to any changes observed in a student, in order to adjust his or her intervention plan.

¹⁸ Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation and Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, *Two Networks, One Objective: The Development of Youth, Agreement for the Complementarity of Services Between the Health and Social Services Network and the Education Network* (Québec, 2003).

FIGURE 1

Complementary nature of services



Adopting best practices

Effective educational strategies

Teachers must give priority to individualized teaching periods and repetitive training activities to meet the student's needs. An empirical survey of staff members with extensive teaching experience with students with a profound intellectual impairment has shown that a number of principles and strategies can be used to optimize student development.¹⁹ The key elements in the survey concern educational strategies, and are presented here in Table 1 in relation to current knowledge about competency development.

¹⁹ Jacques Lemay, *Principes fondamentaux de l'action éducative auprès des élèves présentant une déficience intellectuelle profonde et multi-handicapés*, Service régional de soutien et d'expertise en déficience intellectuelle (Québec, 2001).

TABLE 1 – Overview of educational strategies to be used with students with a profound intellectual impairment

Use meaningful learning contexts • Suggest tasks that have useful, functional outcomes • Take student interests into account • Use daily routines • Give the student clues to promote the application of prior knowledge • Inform the student of the expected results	Consolidate learning • Offer opportunities to put learning into practice • Reduce support to encourage the student to take greater responsibility for his/her learning • Use similar clues from one situation to the next • Use similar situations
Adjust task complexity • Separate essential information from secondary information • Highlight clues relevant to the task • Organize the task sequentially • Help the student make connections between the steps in the task • Reduce physical obstacles to task completion • Reduce the length or duration of the task	Emphasize visual aspects • Amplify relevant clues • Highlight important information • Arrange the classroom to make it easier for the student to gather information during activities • Use positions that facilitate visual contact with the student
Attract and retain attention • Use motivating, attractive materials • Eliminate some or all nonrelevant stimuli • Use signal words and gestures • Position the student in a way that promotes visual contact with the teacher	Facilitate the transfer of learning • Vary the elements of the learning context • Vary and increase the opportunities for putting knowledge into practice at school • Provide demonstrations • Guide the student physically • Guide the student verbally • Gradually reduce guidance • State or restate the objective of the activity • Organize the activity or encourage the student to plan it • Reinforce any success experienced by the student • Remain attentive to and respond to student requests
Support motivation • Highlight progress and results • Praise the student for effort shown • Provide constant encouragement by giving the student feedback or rewards	

Use meaningful learning contexts

Learning contexts are meaningful when the activities they involve match a real-life context and can be reused by students inside or outside the classroom. Students with a profound intellectual impairment generally have little motivation, or highly specific motivation.²⁰ This makes it even more important to provide meaningful learning contexts to support their motivation, because their cognitive ability does not allow them to use metacognitive strategies effectively to deploy what they have previously learned. Meaningful contexts make it easier to recall prior knowledge.

For these reasons, teaching staff must select contexts that both match the student's interests and target useful and functional results. The use of activities from everyday life offers numerous opportunities to make learning meaningful. Teachers can also place the student in a variety of similar learning situations to help him or her make meaningful connections between what he or she already knows and what is required in the new situation. Teachers can also provide an image of the final result and illustrate the steps in the process to maintain the student's interest and facilitate the use of prior knowledge.

Adjust task complexity

Adjusting the complexity of a task to the conditions at the time, to the circumstances or to the student's characteristics, helps the student achieve the goal set. The adjustment brings the focus of the learning within the student's reach.

Students with a profound intellectual impairment have difficulty processing information. Studies²¹ have shown that they identify clues with more difficulty and less precision than other children, that they take more time to encode information, and that they do this less accurately. As a result, a complex situation with information of varying relevance or a sequence in several steps may compromise learning. Besides the limitations on information processing, some students have motor difficulties, which increase the complexity of some tasks for them.

For all these reasons, it is important for teachers to separate essential information from secondary information and highlight the clues for the task. They can also organize the task by presenting the steps sequentially and highlighting the links between the steps. If required, they can reduce the scope of the task and any physical obstacles. However, adjusting the complexity of a task does not mean changing it to the point where the student will not be able to function in an everyday application context.

Attract and retain attention

Attention is a cognitive mechanism that allows people to process and manage information. When their attention is retained, students can concentrate on a task and complete it in a reasonable time despite other distractions.

Students with a profound intellectual impairment have attention difficulties. The cognitive effort required for sustained attention, even in the presence of meaningful information, is a challenge. It is hard for them to focus their attention or bring it back spontaneously to the learning object when they are distracted by the environment or an inner sensation.

For these reasons, teachers must select meaningful, appealing materials. They can also eliminate undesirable stimuli, use signal words such as "Attention!," "Look!" or "Ready?," change their tone of voice, speak faster or slower, and add intensity to their verbal message through their expressions and gestures. They must ensure that the student's position allows him or her to establish and maintain visual contact with the learning object, the material or the teacher. Without support from the teacher, the student may focus his or her attention on other stimuli and lose interest in the task.

²⁰ Carmen Dionne et al., "Le retard du développement intellectuel," in E. Habimana, L. Éthier, D. Petot and M. Tousignant, *Psychopathologie de l'enfant et de l'adolescent* (Boucherville: Gaëtan Morin, 1999), 333.

²¹ Norman Bray et al., *Mental Retardation and Cognitive Competencies*, Cognitive Development Laboratory (University of Alabama, 2003).

Support motivation

Motivation can be defined as a person's interest in a given action. It is intrinsic when the task or activity is a source of pleasure or satisfaction. It is extrinsic when it is triggered by factors exterior to the student, such as social reinforcement, feedback or rewards. Motivation is built through the student's experiences, successes and failures. For students with a profound intellectual impairment, motivation in connection with learning is mainly extrinsic. It leads to the student's commitment, involvement and perseverance in completing a task. It depends to a large extent on the teacher's ability to recognize the slightest progress made by the student and to demonstrate his or her appreciation.

Success is the best reinforcement, and the student needs to have his or her success and progress confirmed. Teachers must help the student build motivation by recognizing the slightest progress made and demonstrating their appreciation. Feedback provides an opportunity to confirm that the student has given a correct response, and to encourage and offer congratulations as an integral part of teaching. The more the student sees his or her success confirmed and the more signs of encouragement that are offered, the more willing he or she will be to participate in the tasks set and to see them through to completion. Verbal encouragement, a wink or a smile are all ways to build up and support student motivation. They become even more meaningful when they are accompanied by an explanation.

Consolidate learning

Learning must be mastered and retrievable to be reused easily. It must therefore be consolidated. Students with a profound intellectual impairment have difficulty storing information.²² Repeating a skill is therefore essential if it is to be consolidated and maintained. At each repetition, the students must be asked to exercise conscious control over what they are doing to learn.

For these reasons, teachers must offer students a number of opportunities to practice using various specific skills, for example, by repeating the steps for operating a microwave oven or moving around in a wheelchair, or repeating each step for using a communication notebook. Thanks to repeated practice, skills can be mastered and become automatic, supporting the development of competencies.

Teachers must also use stimuli with stable forms and meanings, taking care always to form letters and show the forms in the same way and to use the same word each time to designate the same thing. Photos, pictograms and images can also be used to remind students what they have previously done or learned. In addition, teachers can alternate between similar contexts and new contexts with elements common to a familiar learning context. Students must be given many different opportunities to use their knowledge.

²² Norman Bray et al., *Mental Retardation and Cognitive Competencies*, Cognitive Development Laboratory (University of Alabama, 2003).

Emphasize visual aspects

In a learning situation, sensory receptors play a key role, since most knowledge is acquired through our senses. Sensory receptors can be visual, auditory, olfactory, kinesthetic or tactile. They allow students to establish an initial contact with the elements of the learning situation and use them to give meaning to the situation and assess its interest. The greater the intellectual deficit, the more likely students are to rely on various sensory receptors as a source of information about the world around them. Smelling objects, putting them in their mouth, touching them, looking at them and hitting them are all ways to explore and enter into a relationship with their environment.

Although it is best if all the senses are used, some are solicited more than others at school. Students with a profound intellectual impairment generally tend to use the visual circuit to establish a relationship with their environment.²³

For these reasons, teachers must amplify or highlight the relevant clues to an object or situation, using contrast between the image and background or an enlargement. They can also exaggerate movements and facial expressions during demonstrations, or organize the classroom so that students can see the visual information showing what has to be done. For example, displaying pictographic instructions or placing them in the students' line of vision are concrete actions that can be used to promote this strategy. The importance given to the visual circuit should not, however, lead teachers to ignore the other sensory receptors as part of the learning process.

Facilitate the transfer of learning

The transfer of learning refers to the ability to use a skill acquired in one situation in another situation. After verifying whether learning has been consolidated, teachers must encourage the students to use it in other contexts.

The transfer of learning must be distinguished from the simple application of knowledge, since it relies on the ability to adjust or adapt to a new situation. Studies have shown the need to use heteroregulatory educational strategies for young children in learning situations.²⁴ These include: avoiding distractions, specifying goals, giving children the concrete means required to complete the task, adjusting the difficulty of the task to match a child's success (offering more support after a failure and reducing support following a success), giving the child an increasing level of responsibility for completing the task, and encouraging the child to make an effort and succeed.

Students whose intelligence is at the sensorimotor level make adjustments by acting on objects with support from an adult or fellow student.²⁵ The help provided by the teacher must be interactive and may be in the form of direct guidance,²⁶ joint attention,²⁷ verbal or gestual requests, turn-taking or responses to requests for assistance from the student. With help from the teacher, students are encouraged to reflect while they act and to adjust to the situation. As they become more skillful and show more initiative in completing the task, the teacher's role as a guide becomes less prominent. However, even if the student succeeds, the teacher must still provide occasional support.

²³ However, for students with both a visual impairment and an intellectual impairment, the other senses must be given priority.

²⁴ Nathalie Nader-Grosbois, *Régulation, autorégulation, dysrégulation* (Mardaga, Belgium, 2007), 103.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Direct guidance* involves helping a student physically to complete a task.

²⁷ *Joint attention* involves the child pointing out objects to the persons around him or her to attract their attention and checking to see whether they look in the same direction. In most cases, the persons react by showing that they have understood. They are jointly paying attention to the same thing.

Evaluation

The basic orientation of the policy on special education, *Adapting Our Schools to the Needs of All Students*, is stated as follows:

“To help students with handicaps or social maladjustments or learning disabilities succeed in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications, by accepting that educational success has different meanings depending on the abilities and needs of different students, and by adopting methods that favour their success and provide recognition for it.”²⁸

This is the starting point for the evaluation of the learning of students with a profound intellectual impairment. Evaluation is defined by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport in the Policy on the Evaluation of Learning as follows: “Evaluation is the process whereby a judgment is made on a student’s learning on the basis of information gathered, analyzed and interpreted, for the purpose of making pedagogical and administrative decisions.”²⁹ This definition also applies to the evaluation of students with a profound intellectual impairment. Teachers gather information during everyday activities, games and other structured activities and use it, first, to adapt their pedagogical approach to promote the development of the program competencies and, second, to make a judgment concerning the degree to which each competency has been developed.

Purposes of evaluation

According to the Policy on the Evaluation of Learning,³⁰ the two primary purposes of evaluation are support for learning and recognition of competencies.

Support for learning

For the purpose of providing support for learning, evaluation allows teachers to verify, during the learning process, what point the students have reached in relation to the prescribed learning, and whether their pedagogical intervention is having the desired effect. Evaluation also allows them to adjust their pedagogical approach to match the characteristics of each student.

Recognition of competencies

For the purpose of providing recognition of competencies, evaluation allows teachers to report on the degree of competency development. At predetermined times during a student’s progress through school, the teacher prepares the student’s record of learning based on the relevant information gathered and interpreted in light of the evaluation criteria for the educational program and the scales of competency levels.

Evaluation process

The evaluation process has five stages: planning, information gathering and interpretation, the making of a judgment, decision/action, and communication.³¹

Although the evaluation process has five well-defined stages, this does not mean that it is rigid and linear. It is possible to complete two or more stages sequentially, and then to return to a specific stage to complete it before moving through the other stages to the end. The evaluation process is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

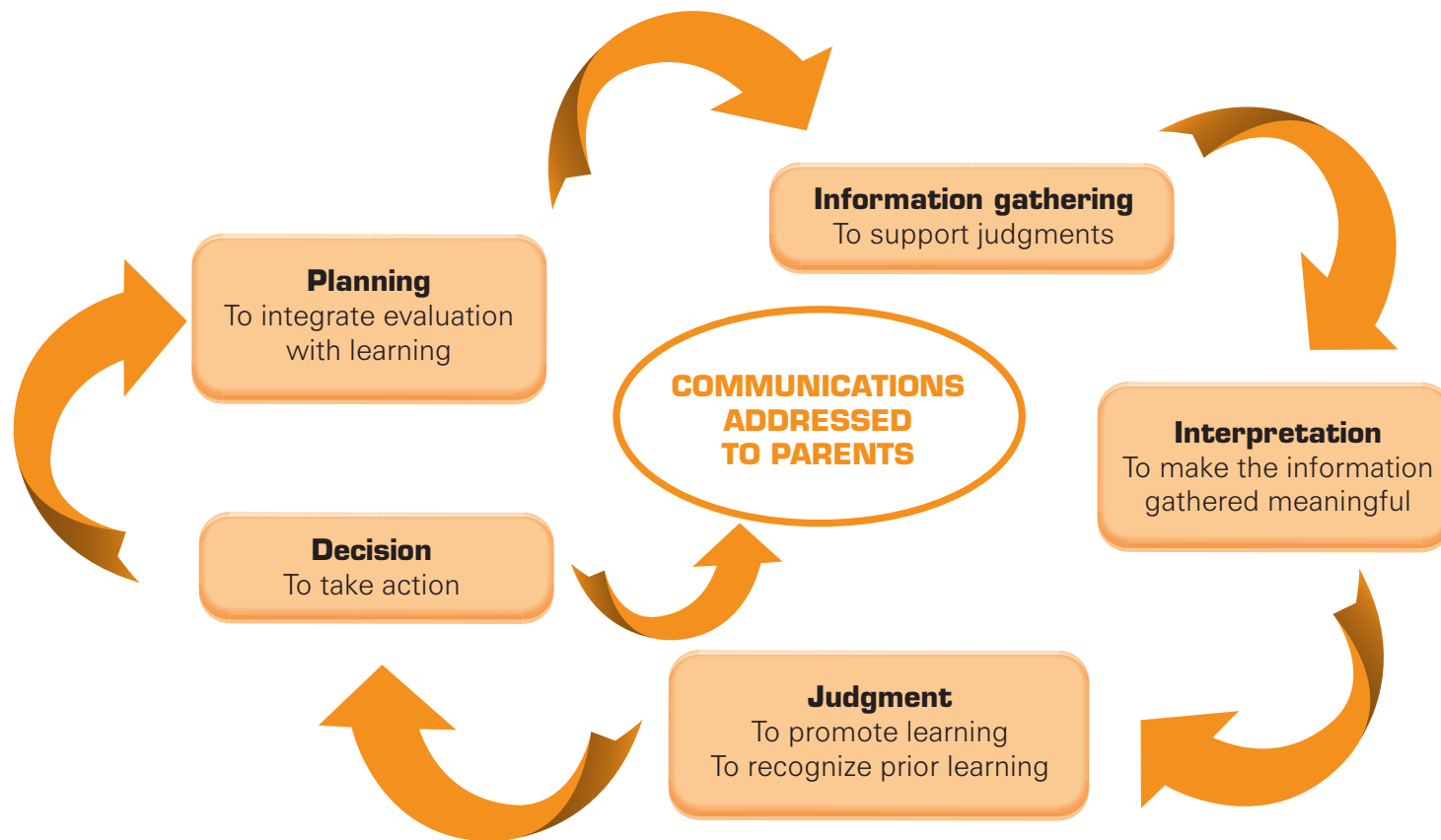
²⁸ Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Adapting Our Schools to the Needs of All Students, Policy on Special Education* (Québec, 1999), 15.

²⁹ Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning* (Québec, 2003), 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28-29.

FIGURE 2
Evaluation process



Evaluation tools

The framework for the evaluation of learning recognizes “three types of tools: information gathering tools, record keeping tools and interpretation tools.”³²

Information gathering tools

a) Observation checklist

The observation checklist helps the teacher identify specific aspects of an action, production or process based on a list of observable elements and a fixed way of recording the observations made. It also helps the teacher keep track of information on the student’s behaviour in various situations.

b) Verification list

The verification list is a memory aid. It is a list of elements to check whenever a student performs an action or series of actions, or a list of qualities or characteristics relating to the aspect being evaluated. It enables the teacher to keep track of the presence or absence of an element, but does not enable the teacher to comment on the quality or frequency of the element observed.

Information recording tools

a) Teacher’s logbook

The teacher’s logbook is a document in which, each day, the teacher records information and observations about one or more students, the activities done, and the context in which these activities were done. The teacher records all the information he or she deems relevant. To be useful, a logbook must be updated regularly.

b) Anecdotal records

Anecdotal records include a brief description of facts observed in a situation involving a student, or elements relating to a particular difficulty that the student is having. Recording these facts or elements enables the teacher to analyze the situation or difficulty more objectively. Anecdotal records differ from the logbook in that they refer more to targeted situations and are often used with students who have specific learning or behaviour difficulties.

c) Portfolio

The portfolio is a collection of work produced by the student, and it therefore shows how his or her competencies have developed. The teacher builds the portfolio on a regular basis, noting the student’s accomplishments and adding comments on his or her efforts and progress. The portfolio enables the teacher to keep a record of everything the student has produced, and provides material for discussions with the parents.

Information interpretation tools

According to the framework used for the evaluation of learning, teachers interpret the information gathered using scales of competency levels. The scales are made available to schools to assist them in the evaluation of learning, and are designed to take into account the heterogeneity of the abilities of students with a profound intellectual impairment.³³

The information gathered is interpreted according to the evaluation criteria established for each competency. Each criterion specifies the observable elements that provide information on how the competency has developed, at predetermined points throughout a student’s education (ages 4 to 21).

³² Québec, Ministère de l’Éducation, *Evaluation of Learning at the Preschool and Elementary Levels: Framework* (Québec, 2002), 27.

³³ See: Scales of Competency Levels, Education Program for Students With a Profound Intellectual Impairment.

Communicating with parents

Report card and recognition of competencies

The report card is an official communication sent to parents at the frequency set out in the *Basic School Regulation*. It indicates how the student has progressed in terms of the competencies learned. At pre-determined times and in collaboration with other school staff members, the teacher prepares a record of learning based on the expectations set out in the Education Program for Students With a Profound Intellectual Impairment.

Other tools

Because of the particular characteristics of students with a profound intellectual impairment, it is important to use other methods of communicating with parents, such as a school agenda, a communication notebook, meetings, telephone calls, etc. Discussions between teachers and parents help both parties arrive at a better understanding of certain situations experienced by the student at home and at school. They help teachers adapt their interventions, and help parents take advantage of the learning acquired by their child at school.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Program objective

This program is designed to prepare students aged 4 to 21 who have a profound intellectual impairment to develop the competencies that will enable them to take part in and benefit from activities within their family, school or community. This objective matches the current viewpoint within Québec society that people with an intellectual impairment should enjoy greater social participation.

A competency-based program

The Education Program for Students With a Profound Intellectual Impairment is a competency-based program designed with the characteristics and needs of these students in mind.

For students with a profound intellectual impairment, to be “competent” means **to be able to use the relevant resources to deal effectively with similar situations**. One example is the case of a student at school during the lunch period who wants to drink some juice. A competent student takes the “juice” pictogram from his or her communication notebook, a tool that the student has learned to use in the classroom with the teacher at snack time, and gives it to the aide. In this situation, however simple it appears, the competent student has an intention: “to drink juice.” He or she knows which resource to use: “a specific pictogram in his or her communication notebook” and uses it appropriately, by “presenting it to the person who can respond to the request.”

This example shows that a competency is intentional in nature. The relationship between the student and his or her action reflects an intention and a form of practical reasoning that is consistent with his or her thought process. The notion of intentionality, even in a simple action, highlights the fact that the student is aware why he or she is taking a given action. In addition, the action must be effective, meaning that the student must select the appropriate resources. In this example, effectiveness is shown by the fact that the student does not choose a resource at random, but the one that is appropriate to deal with the situation.

Resources are based on a heterogeneous range of knowledge, skills, attitudes, objects, documents and persons on which the student can rely. Resources are essential, but they are not the only component of the competency. The fact that a student has access to resources does not necessarily make the student competent, since he or she must still choose those that are most appropriate and use them. In the example above, the student uses a specific pictogram from his or her communication notebook, a resource adapted to the “drink juice” situation.

The concept of competency also includes the idea of adjustment, since students must adapt their actions and select their resources based on the elements of the situation. In the example, the adaptation is reflected in the fact that the student uses a resource (the communication notebook), developed in the classroom in another context (with the teacher, at snack time), in a new context. In addition, the student does not choose a pictogram at random, but the pictogram that matches his or her intention. These adaptations require a level of reflection that, for students with a profound intellectual impairment, is built up through actions (frequent association of pictograms/words with intentions to create meaningful connections, frequent use of a pictogram bank, etc.) practised with the help of the teacher, other school staff members or parents.

School staff members must take advantage of the student’s existing abilities and resources to strengthen his or her knowledge and skills. They must present objects of learning that are within the student’s grasp, offer challenges that will help the student advance³⁴ and provide support as he or she progresses. If the challenges are within the student’s grasp, motivation will increase, the student will be able to learn and will feel successful.

³⁴ The object of learning must be situated in what Vygotsky calls the “zone of proximal development,” defined as being the difference between the student’s performance when working alone and the student’s performance with assistance from an adult. Ivan Ivic, “Lev S. Vygotsky (1896 - 1934),” *Perspectives: Revue trimestrielle d’éducation comparée*, UNESCO, XXIV no. 3/4, 1994 (91/92), 12.

Construction of knowledge and development of competencies by students with a profound intellectual impairment

The Education Program for Students With a Profound Intellectual Impairment is based on a cognitivist, social conception of learning. It has been shown that cognitive processes play a role in learning and that learning is acquired through the interactions between a student and his or her physical and human environment.

By acting and interacting with the people or objects involved in a learning situation, students with a profound intellectual impairment acquire new knowledge or improve their existing knowledge. They learn to give meaning to the objects and other elements in their physical and human environment by acting on them. They are aware that their actions have an effect and, progressing slowly from one stage to the next, they structure the elements of the situation to represent it to themselves in a new way.

This is what Piaget calls assimilation. The knowledge assimilated in this way becomes an internal resource on which students draw to adjust to the new elements in a given situation; they accommodate the change. Through the dynamic process of exchange between existing internal resources and adjustments to the new elements in the situation, they progress and develop their competencies. During the sensorimotor period, students manipulate and act on objects, and increasingly use previously effective strategies in an active and systematic way. Through trial and error, they become adept at specifying and coordinating action sequences to achieve a goal or solve a problem.

The level of mastery of a competency may differ widely from one student to another, and may also vary, for the same student, from one competency to another, given the diversity of the internal and external resources available to each student and various other factors in his or her family, school and social environment.

To develop their competencies, students must use their abilities and the facilitators provided. The support role played by teachers is a determining factor in competency development by students. They assist the students by designing situations that allow them to act on objects and guide them in the specific actions required by the situation.

STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM

The program focuses on six competencies connected with areas of overall personal development: knowledge, communication, motor development, socialization and affectivity. They are developed or exercised in contexts that are part of the student's everyday life: during structured activities or during games and free activities that take place in various settings including the classroom, gymnasium, schoolyard and classroom workshop. Figure 3 shows the structure of the program.

Each competency is broken down into five sections: focus of the competency, development of the competency, key features of the competency, evaluation criteria and essential knowledge.

Focus of the competency

The focus of the competency specifies its nature and its relevance for students with a profound intellectual impairment.

Development of the competency

This section provides indications about the way in which the competency is developed throughout the program. The indications correspond to key stages along a continuum, and to the end-of-program outcome. However, it is important to remember that the development achieved by each student depends on his or her abilities and the extent of his or her impairment and disabilities.

Key features of the competency

The key features describe the main facets and essential aspects of the competency. Developing a competency involves not only mastering each key feature separately but also being able to combine and coordinate them. Each key feature is defined by certain observable behaviours that help identify the key feature specifically.

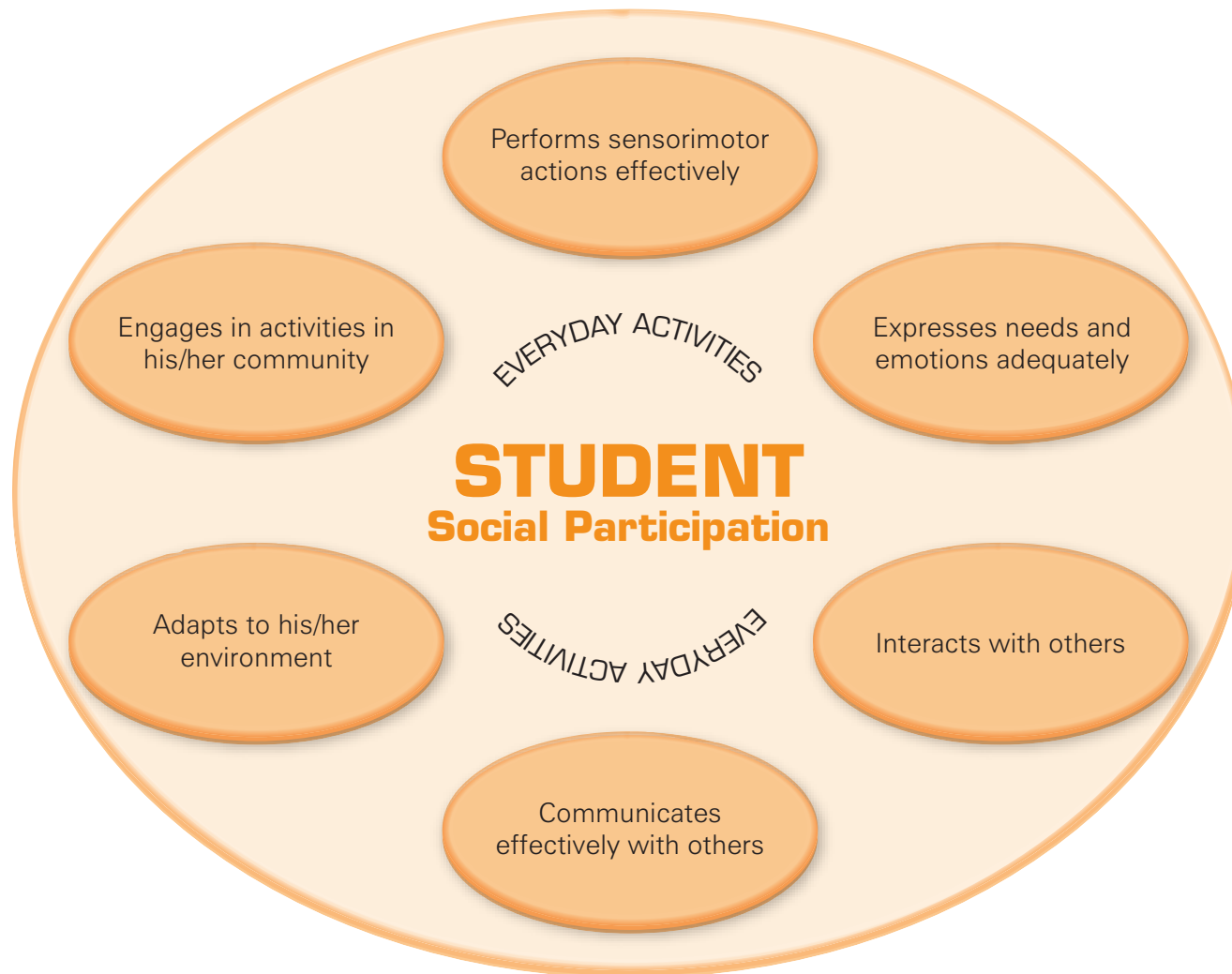
Evaluation criteria

The evaluation criteria are guidelines that enable teachers to judge the level of development of a competency. These criteria must, however, be defined by a certain number of observable, measurable indicators. The data derived from the indicators are an essential component in an enlightened judgment made concerning the level of competency development.

Essential knowledge

Essential knowledge constitutes a repertoire of strategies and learning, which are indispensable to the development and use of a competency. The knowledge is compatible with the level of cognitive development of students with a profound intellectual impairment. The repertoire is not exhaustive, and other knowledge may be useful in exercising a competency. Teachers are responsible for identifying the knowledge and skills each student possesses and those that must be learned. For the students to develop a competency, the learning must be within their grasp and the teacher must use individualized teaching to give the students multiple opportunities to use their knowledge and skills. In addition, some more general strategies or knowledge may be found in several different competencies.

FIGURE 3
Structure of the program



Chapter 2 – Competencies



PERFORMS SENSORIMOTOR ACTIONS EFFECTIVELY

Focus of the competency

This competency relates to the student's psychomotor development. It contributes to the student's well-being by enabling him or her to develop or maintain motor skills, or at least prevent their deterioration. By relying on instinct to discover the world, the student learns to use the senses and makes increasingly precise and intentional motor gestures, which gradually enables the student to explore the surrounding space and coordinate his or her actions in order to use various objects. To the extent that the student's physical and sensory capacities permit, he or she also carries out simple tasks involving motor actions in his or her repertoire. The student recognizes certain dangerous situations and acts with caution. He or she becomes more effective in everyday activities.

Development of the competency

Throughout the student's schooling, body awareness increases. The student discovers his or her body's capabilities by having diverse sensory experiences in different contexts and by experimenting with a variety of actions requiring gross or fine motor skills.

By the end of his or her schooling, the student utilizes his or her full sensory and physical potential. The student has mastered a range of actions involving gross or fine motor skills. This mastery enables the student to act effectively in various situations of daily living, thereby contributing to personal health and well-being.

Essential sensory and motor knowledge

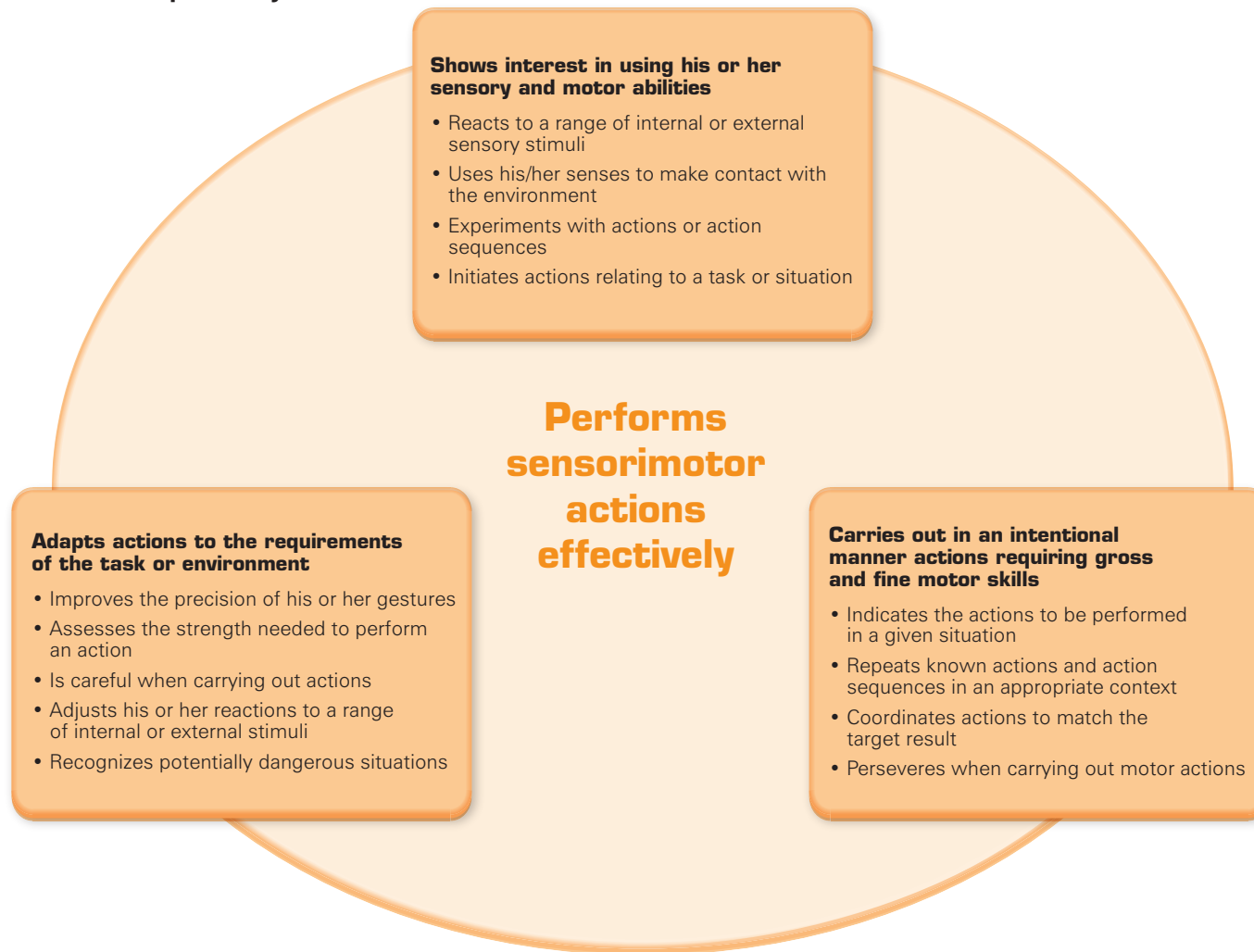
Strategies

- Using sensory capacities to carry out a task
- Using the most appropriate motor capacities to carry out a task or take part in an activity
- Using materials appropriately
- Performing gestures or actions to protect oneself

Knowledge/Learning

- Parts of the body: head, legs, feet, hands, eyes, ears, mouth, etc.
- Sensory experiences: relaxing, tasting, touching, seeing, hearing, feeling, etc.
- Actions using gross motor skills: crawling, turning, walking, climbing, pivoting, getting into, getting out of, running, jumping, swinging, sliding, etc.
- Actions using fine motor skills: holding, squeezing, releasing, dropping, setting down, pointing, throwing, catching, tearing, gluing, etc.
- Physical needs: eating, drinking, dressing, eliminating, moving about, etc.
- Body positions: lying on the floor, sitting, standing, lying on his/her side, kneeling, etc.
- Safety rules: handling tools, instruments or objects carefully, avoiding obstacles, going up and down stairs, etc.

Key features of the competency



Evaluation criteria

- Appropriate reactions to a range of stimuli
- Relevance of actions taken in response to a situation
- Intentional nature of motor actions carried out
- Care in carrying out actions

EXPRESSES NEEDS AND EMOTIONS ADEQUATELY

Focus of the competency

This competency relates to the student's personal and affective development. Some students with a profound intellectual impairment find it difficult, or impossible, to differentiate between themselves and the world around them. This competency enables them to recognize themselves as separate persons and unique beings with their own needs, emotions, personal tastes and preferences. They must also learn to make their needs, emotions and personal tastes known, and how to adjust expressions of happiness or frustration to the circumstances. The competency enables them to develop their areas of interest and to diversify and make known their personal tastes and preferences.

Development of the competency

Throughout the student's schooling, he or she experiences a range of needs and emotions in various school settings, and learns to express them appropriately. The student discovers the existence of other people and learns to differentiate himself or herself from others, recognizing what belongs to him or to her and what he or she is feeling. In addition, the student learns to recognize and diversify his or her areas of interest and to make choices based on his or her personal tastes and preferences.

By the end of his or her schooling, the student expresses his or her needs, emotions and personal tastes more often, in a broader range of situations and more adequately. He or she is better able to assert his or her individuality.

Essential affective knowledge

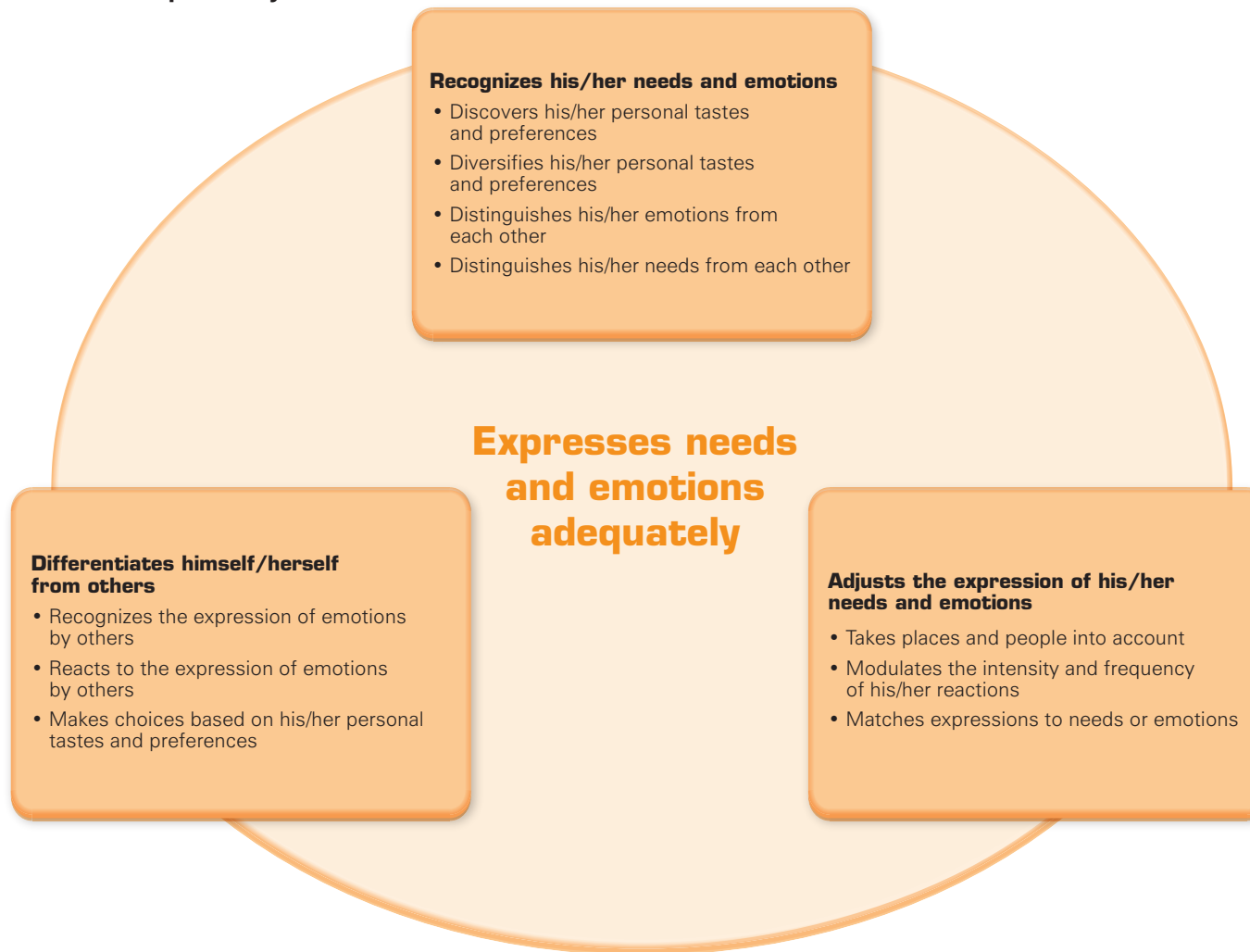
Strategies

- Making choices among his/her preferences
- Modulating reactions to change or unexpected events
- Using modes of expression that reflect his/her emotions, needs, desires and interests

Knowledge/Learning

- Emotions: joy, anger, sadness, fear, surprise, anxiety, etc.
- Physiological sensations: hunger, thirst, fatigue, pain; need to eliminate, rest, move about, etc.

Key features of the competency



Evaluation criteria

- Range of emotions expressed
- Clear expression of emotions
- Range of needs expressed
- Clear needs expressed
- Appropriate expression of needs

INTERACTS WITH OTHERS

Focus of the competency

This competency relates to the social development of students with a profound intellectual impairment. It involves acquiring social skills, interacting with others and making new contacts. In developing this competency, the student can improve his or her interactions with others despite any physical, affective, communications-related and intellectual limitations. He or she can also learn to interact with people other than those he or she usually encounters in daily life.

Development of the competency

Throughout the student's schooling, he or she learns to accept the presence of others, create interpersonal relationships, and have socially acceptable behaviours. The student adapts his or her behaviours to situations, and respects established rules more when participating in social activities.

By the end of his or her schooling, the student is better able to accept the presence of others and engages more frequently in interactions more consistent with what is expected of a young adult.

Essential social knowledge

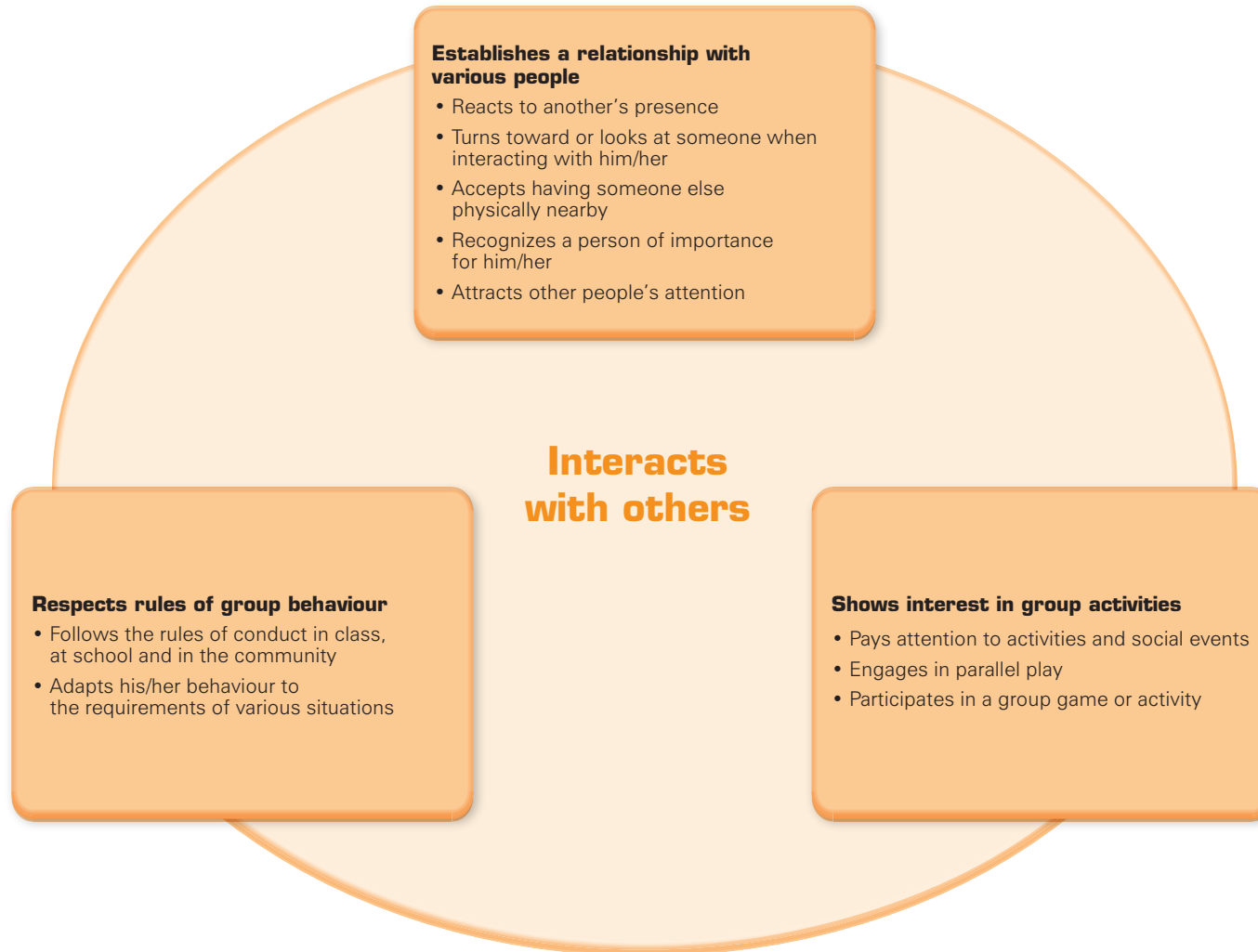
Strategies

- Collaborating in situations involving care and well-being
- Paying attention to others and to activities
- Adjusting his/her behaviour to social expectations
- Establishing a relationship with others to play, exchange an object or signal a need for assistance
- Communicating with others

Knowledge/Learning

- Names of people around him/her: teachers, friends, parents, aides, etc.
- Table manners: sitting at the table, eating with cutlery (spoon or fork), eating one mouthful at a time, chewing food well, not spreading food around, etc.
- Rules of conduct during transportation: staying seated, speaking in an appropriate tone of voice, etc.
- Basic rules of hygiene: asking to go to the bathroom or getting there by himself/herself, washing hands, brushing teeth, combing hair, blowing nose, wiping mouth, etc.
- Forms of politeness: hello, thank you, goodbye, etc.
- Socially acceptable sexual behaviours: undressing at appropriate times, respecting others' privacy, not masturbating in front of others, etc.
- Cooperative attitudes: sharing, words or gestures of encouragement, words or gestures of invitation, etc.
- Actions of participation: putting materials away and distributing them, cooperating with others in the current activities, accepting physical contact, etc.
- Rules of group activities: waiting his/her turn, maintaining a normal distance, respecting others' physical integrity, tolerating the proximity of other students, etc.

Key features of the competency



Evaluation criteria

- Quality of interaction with others
- Relevance of social behaviours in various situations
- Quality of participation in group activities

COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHERS

Focus of the competency

This competency relates to the development of communication. It focuses both on the motivation to communicate and the ability to produce messages and exchange with others. Students with a profound intellectual impairment have extremely limited communication skills, both in terms of understanding and of producing messages. Most of them cannot use speech, and generally use primary and sometimes inappropriate modes of communication that those around them find difficult to understand. To make themselves understood, most must learn to use a structured, personalized mode of communication. In developing this competency, they broaden their repertoire of communication skills, and learn to make themselves understood and to understand messages produced by others. This allows them to establish relationships with other people more easily.

Development of the competency

Throughout the student's schooling, he or she develops the ability to pay attention to messages directed at him or her, to understand these messages, and to formulate short messages in return. The student builds a repertoire of communication skills, and increasingly comes to enjoy communicating with others.

By the end of his or her schooling, the student is able to understand and produce a greater number of messages, using various functional modes of communication.

Essential communication knowledge

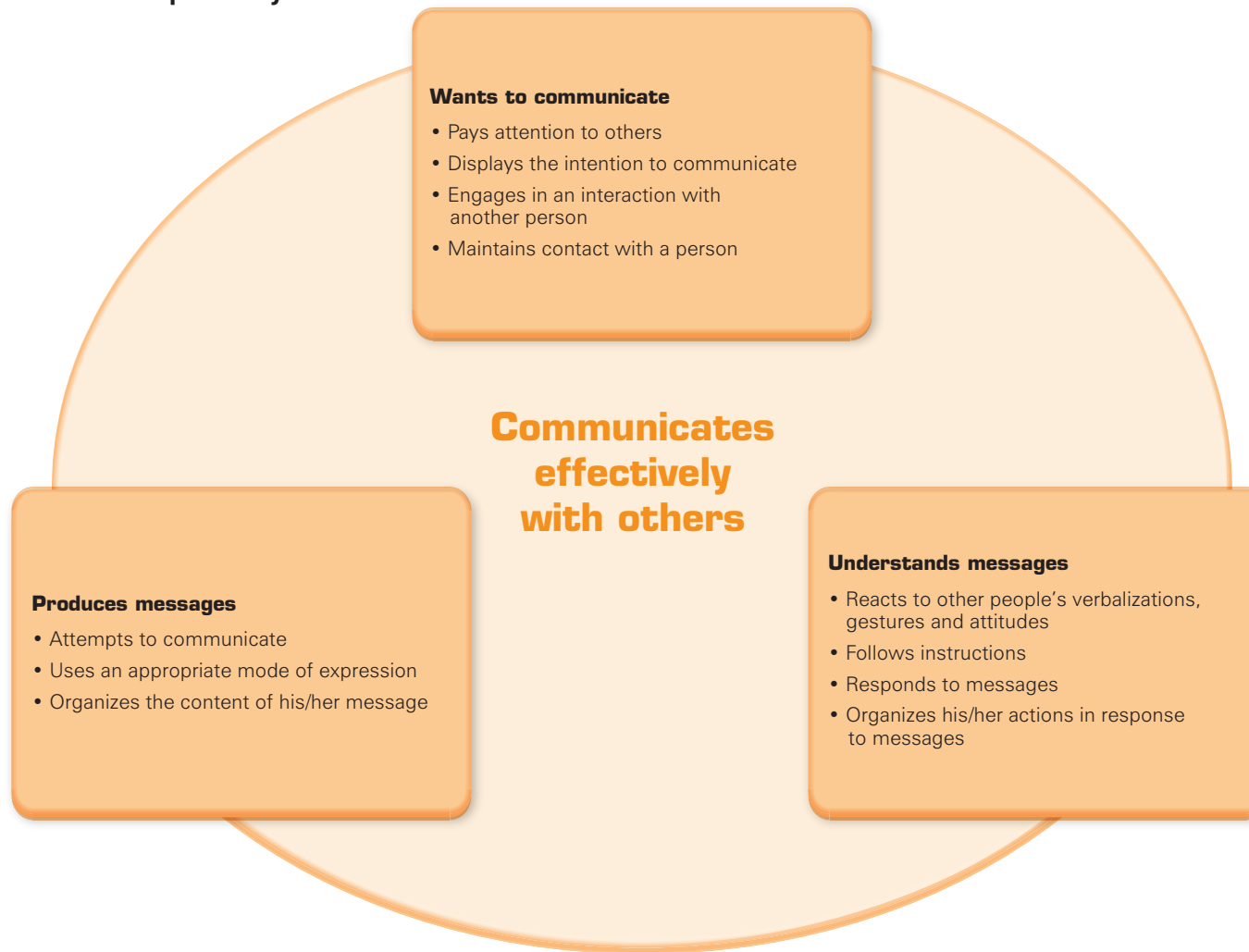
Strategies

- Paying attention to other people's verbalizations, gestures and attitudes (looking at them or turning his/her head toward them)
- Expressing his/her understanding of words, gestures, images, simple instructions or questions (touching an object, pointing to an object or image, verbalizing, raising a hand or foot, standing up, extending a leg, etc.)
- Associating a word with an object, picture, gesture or pictogram
- Using various means to communicate

Knowledge/Learning

- Body language: facial and bodily expressions, miming, natural gestures, etc.
- His/her first and last names
- Names of people closest to him/her: father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, brother, sister, friend, teacher, aide, bus driver, etc.
- Everyday functional words: action words, names of common objects, animals, places, etc.
- Name of his/her pet: Fluffy, Fido, Rosie, etc.
- Signs from different sign languages or pictographic systems

Key features of the competency



Evaluation criteria

- Degree of interest in communicating
- Relevance of the response made to messages received
- Clarity of the messages produced

ADAPTS TO HIS/HER ENVIRONMENT

Focus of the competency

This competency relates to the development of the cognitive abilities of students with a profound intellectual impairment. It focuses on their understanding of their environment and their ability to act in their relationships with the objects and people around them. Most students are at the sensorimotor intelligence level, and use this way of thinking to build their knowledge. Their comprehension, which is acquired through sensory input, experimentation and action, initially remains contextual, general and undifferentiated. With time, their conception of the world becomes increasingly organized as they develop the ability to act, anticipate consequences and associate perceptions. This leads to better understanding of their physical and human environment, and increased ability to act on that environment.

Development of the competency

Throughout his or her schooling, the student becomes more aware of the physical and human environment via the senses, which he or she learns to use to observe and explore his or her surroundings. The student learns how to react to appropriate stimuli, manipulate objects, and try out various elements in his or her environment. Acquisition of these skills enables the student to understand his or her environment and progressively acquire a certain degree of autonomy in carrying out tasks requiring the mobilization of more than one skill at a time.

By the end of his or her schooling, the student has greater self-awareness as well as more awareness of the physical and human environment. The student's knowledge and conception of the world are better organized. This improves the student's ability to use the full range of available resources for carrying out the tasks that he or she is assigned.

Essential cognitive knowledge

Strategies

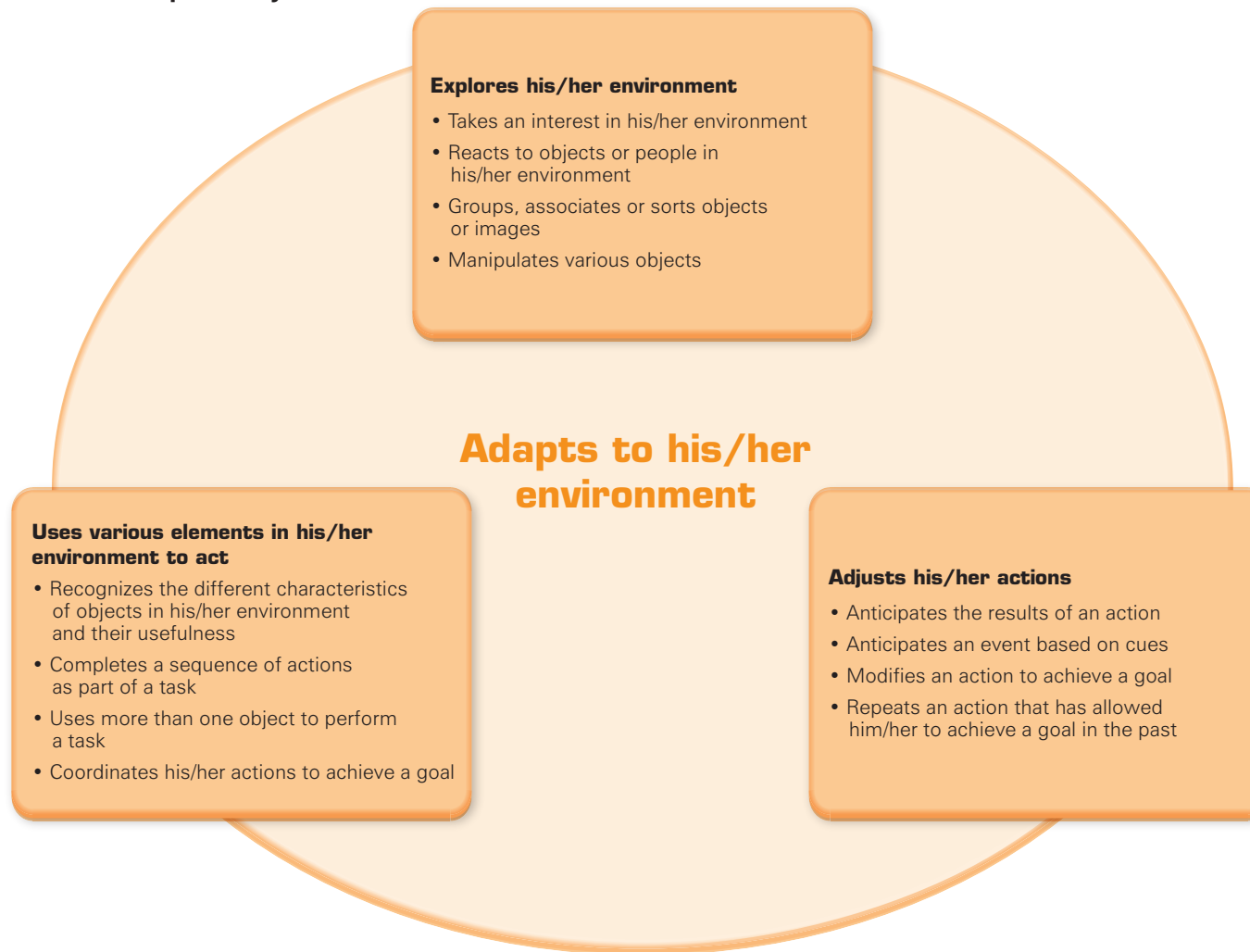
- Observing the human and physical environment
- Imitating sounds, gestures, facial expressions, etc.
- Associating shapes, colours, sizes, temperatures, textures, etc.
- Exploring: bringing something to the mouth, touching different textures, tasting, manipulating objects, etc.
- Comparing shapes, colours, sizes, temperatures, etc.
- Anticipating events based on verbal, visual, tactile or olfactory cues
- Memorizing and remembering places, odours, procedures, noises, words, etc.

Knowledge/Learning

- Parts of the body: head, legs, feet, hands, eyes, ears, mouth, etc.
- Objects: ball, glass, shoe, chair, sand, water, orthotic device, eyeglasses, table, protective headgear, hearing aid, etc.
- Places: home, school, pool, classroom, bedroom, etc.
- Names of certain people: self, father, mother, siblings, friends, teachers, aides, etc.
- Words relating to quantities, time, weather, space, events, means of transportation, etc.
- Actions: standing up, walking, giving objects, touching, sitting down, eating, drinking, turning his/her walker, maintaining a position, manipulating objects, moving his/her wheelchair, etc.

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- Function of objects and places: a fork is for eating, mittens are for keeping hands warm, the park is for playing, the bedroom is for sleeping, etc.
 - Procedure for getting dressed, going to the toilet, setting the table, doing a task, etc.
 - Characteristics of objects: size, colour, shape, etc.

Key features of the competency



Evaluation criteria

- Relevance of reactions to his/her environment
- Quality of the understanding of his/her environment
- Quality of the exploration of his/her environment
- Effective organization of actions

ENGAGES IN ACTIVITIES IN HIS/HER COMMUNITY

Focus of the competency

This competency is integrative in the sense that it mobilizes knowledge and skills linked to each of the other competencies, in various life situations. It focuses on the student's interest in various activities taking place in his or her community, and on his or her ability to participate. The student must be able to make choices, perform various tasks and adjust to the requirements of the activities.

Students with a profound intellectual impairment are called on to participate in the activities of their community, mainly in a family or school context. Other leisure activities and, for some students, work-related activities, are added gradually. Québec society provides a certain structure within which these activities take place, and throughout the student's schooling, he or she is encouraged to apply various competencies to participate more effectively in various situations of community life.

Development of the competency

Throughout the student's schooling, he or she acquires a variety of sensorimotor, social, affective, cognitive and communication skills. Gradually, the student uses his or her knowledge and strategies in other situations and in other places.

By the end of his or her schooling, the student is able, up to a point, to adapt to his or her environment, perform certain tasks and engage in certain activities, allowing him or her to be more active within the community.

Essential community knowledge

Strategies

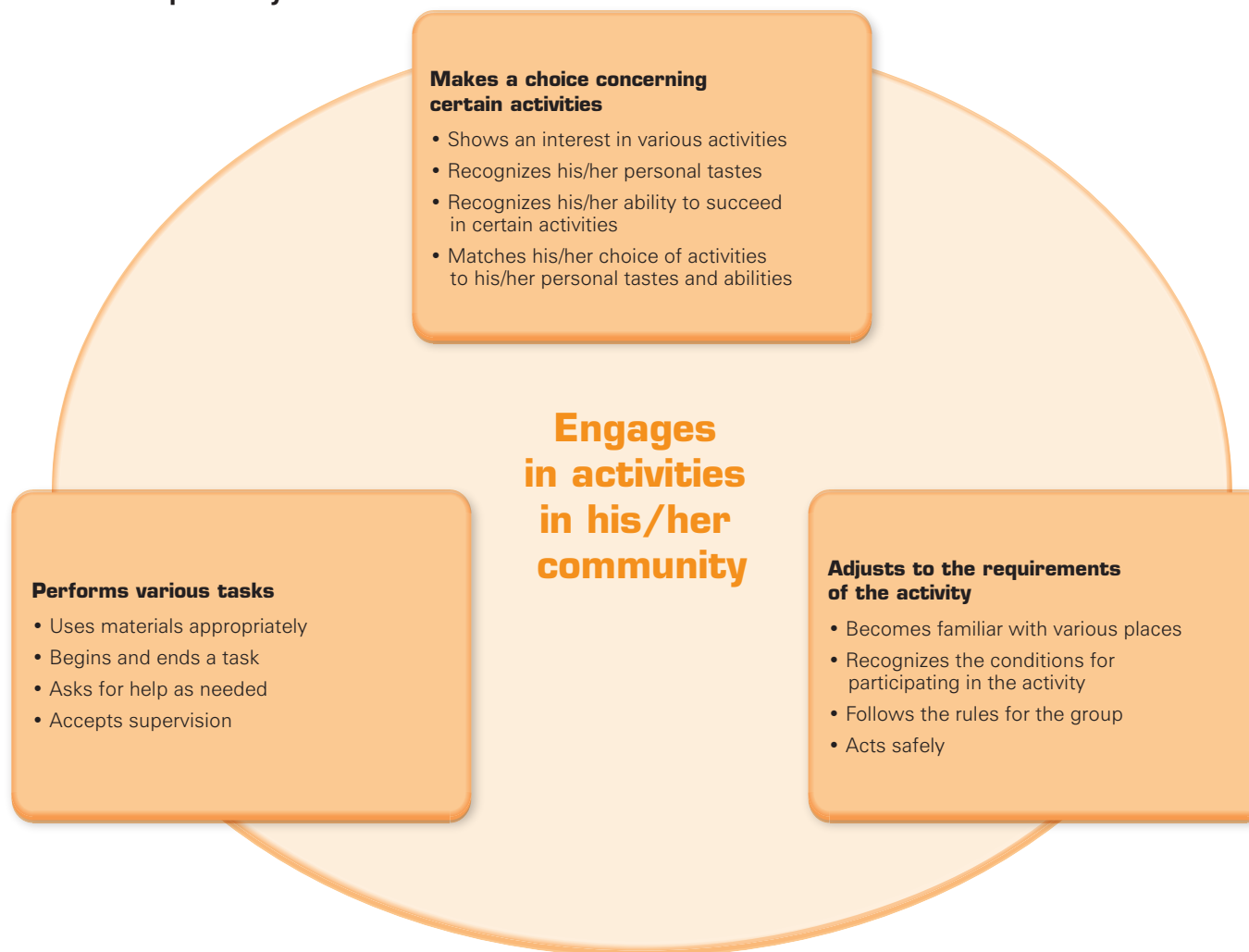
- Carefully handling potentially dangerous objects: pointed objects, cutlery or utensils, pencils, tools, etc.
- Keeping away from places or objects that are labelled dangerous by a pictogram or symbol
- Using products or equipment safely
- Persevering in a task or activity
- Completing a task or activity step by step
- Following procedures: putting away toys or materials, sweeping the floor, handling an audio-visual device, etc.
- Adjusting his/her behaviour to particular places or situations
- Exploring less familiar places in the school or community

Knowledge/Learning

- Safety rules in recreational, work and home environments
- Dangerous objects: knives, matches, electrical appliances, electrical outlets, etc.
- Public places: grocery store, restaurant, pharmacy, recreation centre, etc.
- The function of public places: grocery stores are for buying food, cinemas are for seeing movies, etc.
- Household chores: making a bed, vacuuming, wiping the table, putting away his/her clothes, washing the dishes, etc.
- Sports activities: cycling with an adapted tricycle, snowshoeing, walking, bowling, swimming, etc.

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- Art activities: colouring, drawing, cutting, painting, doing crafts, etc.
 - Routines or rules for recreational activities: board games, card games, television, music, cinema, dancing, going to the zoo, going to the park, etc.
 - Basic rules of hygiene: asking to go to the bathroom or getting there on his/her own, washing hands, brushing teeth, combing hair, etc.
 - Routine daily activities: getting dressed, getting undressed, eating a snack or meal, leaving to go to school or work, etc.

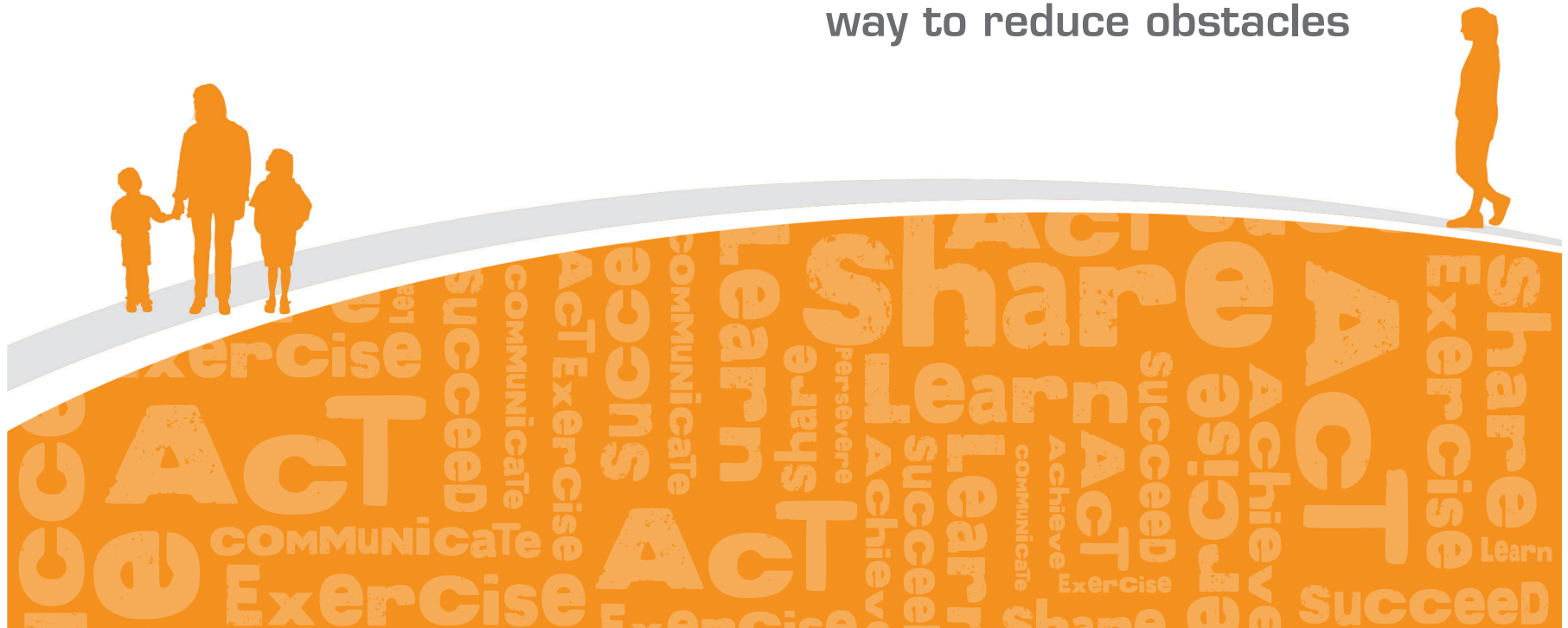
Key features of the competency



Evaluation criteria

- Quality of his/her participation in a task or activity
- Relevance of his/her choice of activities
- Relevance of his/her behaviour within the group
- Quality of his/her participation in the group

APPENDIX I: The disability creation process applied to profound intellectual impairment as a way to reduce obstacles



In this model, an *impairment* refers to “the degree to which an organic system is anatomically, histologically or physiologically compromised.”³⁵ For example, damage to the nervous system at the level of the cerebral cortex may lead to an impairment of the skeletal system (bones and articulations), problems with motor coordination, posture and balance, and major delays in cognitive functions.

A *disability* results from “any partial or complete reduction in a person’s ability to accomplish basic or elementary activities, according to age, gender and functional norm in the human reference group.”³⁶ A person’s impairments may result in major disabilities in terms of mobility, verbal language, the production of sounds, and sphincter control, and in difficulties feeding himself or herself and performing activities requiring elementary mental processes.

Environmental factors can be of two types: social or physical. The social dimension includes the attitudes and perceptions of other people. The physical dimension covers, for example, the organization of educational or rehabilitation services and includes, in particular, access to rooms and technical aids, and adaptations to tasks.

An *obstacle* is an element in the environment “that hinders the accomplishment of basic living activities³⁷ when it interacts with personal factors (a person’s impairments, disabilities and other characteristics).”³⁸ For example, a standard item of furniture or equipment becomes an obstacle when it prevents the person from performing basic activities. It is extremely important to identify obstacles and introduce the facilitators which will allow students with a profound intellectual impairment to act in various situations.

A *facilitator* is an element in the environment “that facilitates basic living activities when it interacts with personal factors.”³⁹ For example, in a communications context, a bulletin board and the availability of a resource person are both facilitators.

A *disability situation* “refers to a reduction in the completion of basic living activities resulting from the interaction between personal factors (impairments, disabilities and other personal characteristics) and environmental factors (facilitators and obstacles).”⁴⁰ A person with an impairment eventually finds himself or herself in a disability situation if nothing is done to help him or her overcome the obstacles. The disability situation is therefore the result of a dynamic process involving factors linked to both the person and the environment. It is the opposite of the situation of social participation, in which a person accomplishes the actions necessary to carry out basic living activities.

As a result, if no adaptations are made, the person has to attempt to conform to customary behavioural models and finds it difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish the required physical and mental activities. The inability to act in a given situation triggers the disability creation process and places the individual concerned in a socially disadvantaged position.

If, on the other hand, the situation is adapted to the person by eliminating or attenuating some of the obstacles and introducing facilitators, the person, despite his or her limitations, will be more likely to develop the skills needed to perform an activity. The reduction in the number of obstacles may have an impact on the development of the person’s abilities and lead to improved social participation.

³⁵ Patrick Fougeyrollas et al., *Processus de production du handicap PPH. Évolution conceptuelle internationale dans le champ du handicap*, Guide de formation (RIPPH, 2007), 34 [translation].

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35 [translation].

³⁷ It is important to note that basic living activities include everyday activities, such as domestic chores, in addition to the personal activities essential to support life.

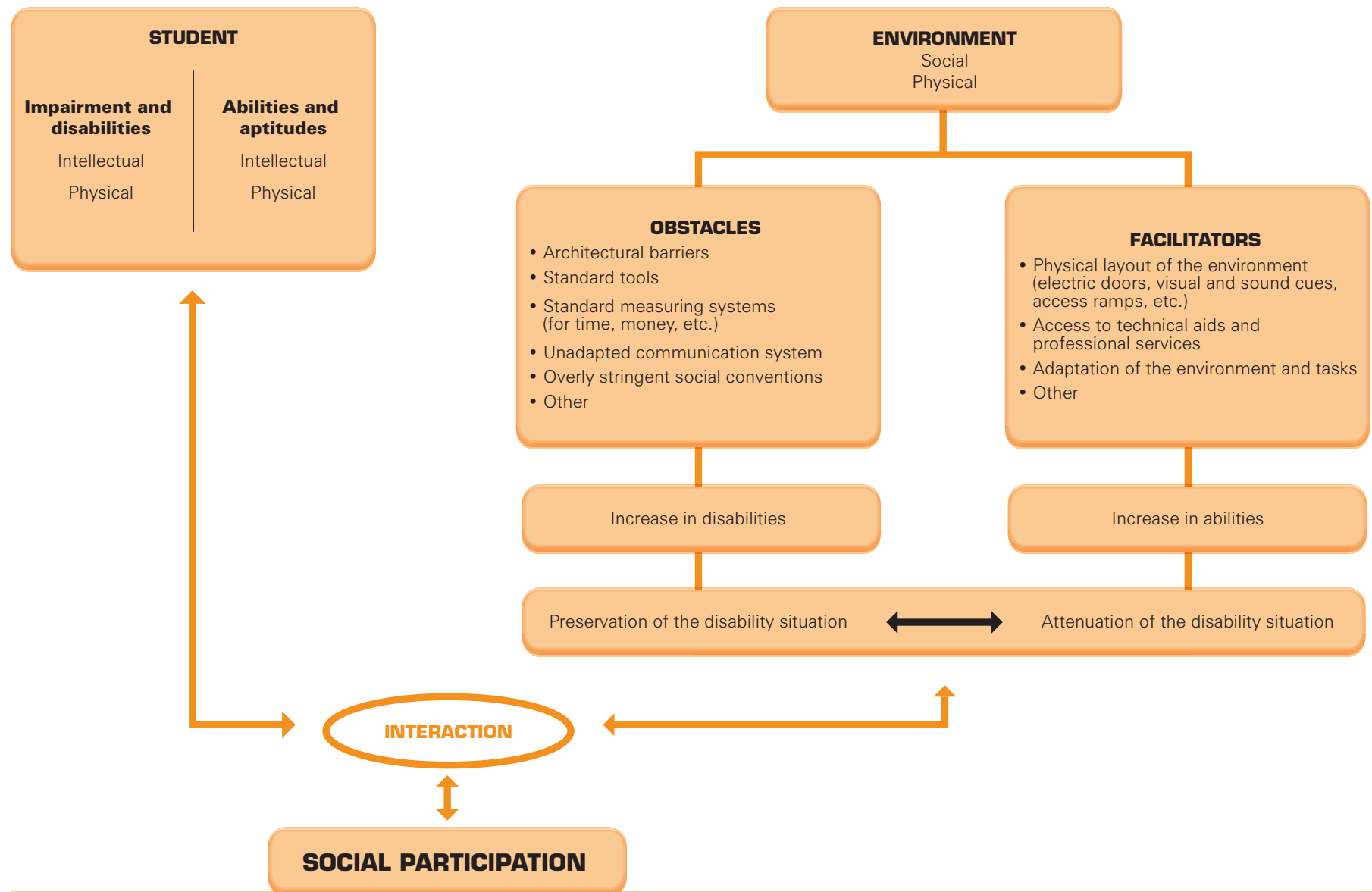
³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35 [translation].

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36 [translation].

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36 [translation].

In the educational context, the main challenge is to find ways to deal with obstacles and to introduce facilitators to attenuate or slow the disability creation process and, as a result, increase the student's social participation. The social participation results from the interaction between the student (with his or her impairments and disabilities) and the physical and social factors in the environment. By adapting interventions, materials and tasks, in particular for learning and evaluation situations, the disability reduction process is launched and the student will be able to develop the competencies needed to exercise his or her power to act.

The disability creation process applied to profound intellectual impairment as a way to reduce obstacles



APPENDIX II: Sensorimotor intelligence



A description of sensorimotor intelligence and preoperational thought, based on the developmental theory of Jean Piaget.⁴¹

Stage 1 – Reflexes and responses

Reflexes are involuntary, automatic responses by an organism to internal or external stimuli. They are innate, not learned, but through repetition they may become better adapted as, for example, in the case of suckling. Reflexes are children’s first mode of action. They enable children to become increasingly efficient in their activities.

MOTOR SKILLS	COMMUNICATION SKILLS	ORAL MOTOR SKILLS
Reacting to various light intensities	Moving limbs, head or eyes in response to a verbal stimulus or noise	Executing an efficient sucking motion
		Coordinating suction, swallowing and breathing movements

⁴¹ Jean Piaget, *La naissance de l’intelligence chez l’enfant* and *La construction du réel chez l’enfant* (Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Delachaux et Niestlé).

Stage 2 – Primary circular reactions to the environment, or first habits

This is a stage during which perceptions are organized. The child develops new reflexes that are not triggered by external stimuli as during the previous stage, but by internal stimuli. These reflexes help the child adapt to his or her life environment. The child is now ready to learn, interacting with his or her environment and developing certain skills. The child can repeat certain behaviours. At the end of this stage, the child is able to combine two different behavioural movements.

At this stage, the child starts to imitate movements. He or she does not (at least observably) show progress in other areas. The child is interested mainly in his or her body, and having passed the stage of sensations, starts to enjoy action.

SENSORIMOTOR SKILLS	COGNITIVE SKILLS	COMMUNICATION SKILLS	MOTOR SKILLS
Establishing eye contact with a face or soft light	Bringing the hands up to the mouth	Making sounds	Kicking with both feet, alternating between the two
Establishing contact between the fingers of both hands while observing them	Looking at an object while holding it		
	Transferring an object from one hand to the other		

Stage 3 – Secondary circular reactions

The child's attention now moves from sensations to objects. If the child makes an unintended gesture, instead of limiting himself or herself to the sensation that the action caused, he or she tries to prolong the effect of this action by repeating it. During this stage, the child begins to identify objects by the purpose for which they are used during an activity. The child is more interested in familiar objects than new ones.

Subject to the limits of the child's repertoire of skills, he or she can easily imitate movements involving body parts that are visible, as well as sounds that are audible. Since the child has a mental image of a familiar object, he or she can leave an activity to look for that object. The ability to follow visual stimuli with the eyes is developed. The child is increasingly aware of the space around him or her and the place that each element in that space occupies. The child starts to perceive cause-and-effect relationships.

COGNITIVE SKILLS	COMMUNICATION SKILLS	MOTOR SKILLS	AUTONOMY
Hitting objects	Imitating sounds	Removing a peg from a board with holes	Holding a spoon (autonomy in eating)
Imitating hand movements		Stretching to reach for an object (gross motor skills)	
Reaching for a partially hidden object			
Trying to touch parts of another person's face			
Watching an object fall on the floor			

Stage 4 – Coordinating two movements and applying them in the environment

The child is now taking action toward specific objectives. He or she is developing the ability to coordinate movements while doing activities. One movement is linked to the next in a logical manner, allowing greater versatility, creativity and resolve in the child's actions.

At this stage the child becomes interested in novelty, taking pleasure in exploring with learned gestures, and attempting to imitate (though imprecisely) new sounds and movements. The child may, however, be able to imitate certain learned motor movements without prompting. The child tries to find an object by looking for it in the place where he or she first found it.

The child reacts, and understands certain spatial concepts, particularly relating to familiar objects. The child also makes the link between various actions relating to social skills, and is able to choose certain behaviours that will make it possible to meet his or her objectives.

COGNITIVE SKILLS	COMMUNICATION SKILLS	SOCIAL SKILLS	MOTOR SKILLS	AUTONOMY
Examining a new object	Recognizing and imitating the sound of syllables combining consonants and vowels	Establishing contact with another person through touch	Pointing (fine motor skills)	Chewing with lateral tongue movements (autonomy in eating)
Imitating faces	Imitating various sounds, including throat clearing and tongue clicking (informal communication)	Participating in games that associate gestures with nursery rhymes	Scribbling (fine motor skills)	
Imitating new movements with varying degrees of ease			Moving from one place to another (gross motor skills)	
Pulling on a string to bring forward a ring				

Stage 5 – Tertiary circular reactions

The child is starting to learn by trial and error, discovering new behaviours and varying them according to continually changing objectives. Constantly seeking novelty, the child reproduces numerous sounds directly or from memory, and imitates gestures involving parts of the body that may or may not be visible to him or her, succeeding after many repetitions.

The child is now able to use certain objects in the immediate environment because he or she is capable of establishing a link between his or her own position in space and the location of elements in his or her environment. The child is therefore able to pile, fill, overturn and pull objects. At this stage, the child is aware of the effects of gravity and inertia. The child is able to use objects to interact with the environment.

COGNITIVE SKILLS	COMMUNICATION SKILLS	MOTOR SKILLS
Imitating a body movement by playing with a doll or puppet	Imitating sounds, producing onomatopoeia, reproducing parts of familiar words	Reproducing a pencil mark (fine motor skills)
Imitating a new movement		Inserting pegs in a board with holes, and stacking cubes on top of each other (fine motor skills)
Finding an object that was hidden from sight		Stacking blocks Filling a container
Manipulating objects efficiently and placing them in a container		Pulling objects
Using an object (stick) to reach another object, and overturning a container to take out an object inside		Overturning an object

Stage 6 – Creating new ways of doing things using mental combinations

The child is now able to make mental representations, and no longer requires such frequent modelling. The child carries out a form of mental planning before doing an activity. Actions are spontaneous and result from a stage in the problem-solving process.

The child can easily reproduce actions and behaviours witnessed in the past. The child can determine by deduction where an object has been placed, and get around obstacles to reach it. He or she is now able to relate cause to effect and to predict an event based on a cause.

MOTOR SKILLS	COGNITIVE SKILLS
Inserting small objects into an opening, container, etc., in a relatively short time (fine motor skills)	Accomplishing simple tasks after observing how they are done
Reproducing body movements after observing how they are done (gross motor skill)	Trying to set an object in motion

Preoperational Thought

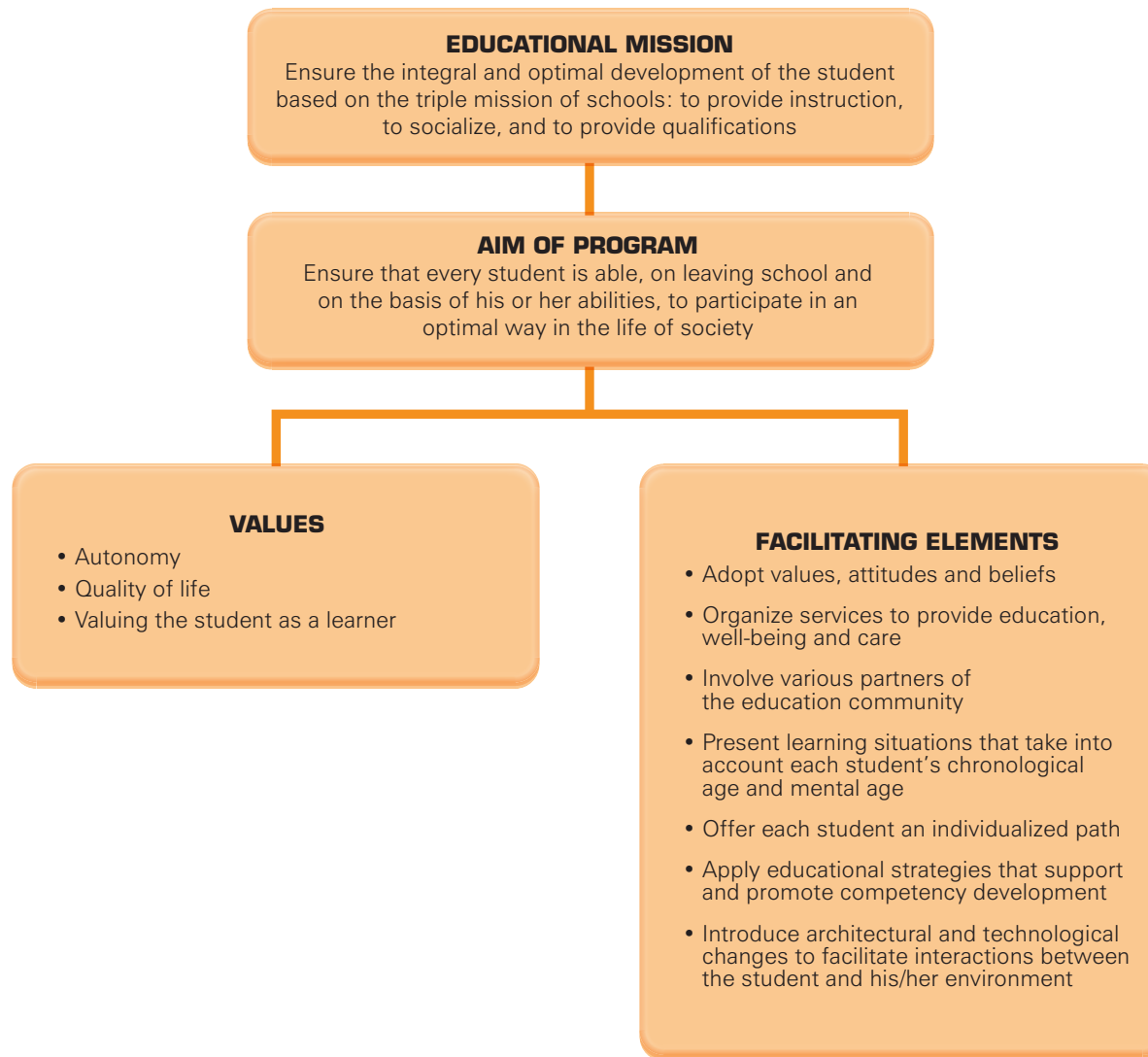
The child develops mental images that make it possible to imagine objects that are absent. The child gradually creates a memory image of each object for reference purposes, thereby carrying a personal world around in his or her mind. However, that world corresponds only to the child's own reality. Since words are not concepts for the child at this point, this type of thought is said to be egocentric.

COGNITIVE SKILLS	COMMUNICATION SKILLS	SOCIAL SKILLS
Representing actions in thought (mental experience)	Developing his/her own personal language	Bringing others to adopt his/her viewpoint
Using signs and symbols		
Playing make-believe with or without objects		

APPENDIX III: Overview of the program



OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM



APPENDIX III (cont.)

COMPETENCIES					
MOTOR SKILLS	AFFECTIVITY	SOCIALIZATION	COMMUNICATION	KNOWLEDGE	COMMUNITY LIFE
Performs sensorimotor actions effectively	Expresses needs and emotions adequately	Interacts with others	Communicates effectively with others	Adapts to his/her environment	Engages in activities in his/her community
Key features of the competency - Shows interest in using his or her sensory and motor abilities - Adapts actions to the requirements of the task or environment - Carries out in an intentional manner actions requiring gross and fine motor skills	Key features of the competency - Recognizes his/her needs and emotions - Differentiates himself/herself from others - Adjusts the expression of his/her needs and emotions	Key features of the competency - Establishes a relationship with various people - Respects rules of group behaviour - Shows interest in group activities	Key features of the competency - Wants to communicate - Produces messages - Understands messages	Key features of the competency - Explores his/her environment - Uses various elements in his/her environment to act - Adjusts his/her actions	Key features of the competency - Makes a choice concerning certain activities - Performs various tasks - Adjusts to the requirements of the activity

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