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In Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean

Immersed in Books During Reading and Culture Week



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It was with great pleasure that the English sector joined forces with the French sector this year, launching its own magazine, *Arts and Culture in Québec Schools*, to serve as an English counterpart to the well-established review, *Art et culture à l'école*. In both cases, this October issue is the third to be published exclusively on-line and this has entailed changes in the content and the design of the magazines. Of course, our readers have had to adapt to these changes along with us and now, as we seek to increase our readership, we are counting on you once again to spread the word among your colleagues about our new electronic format.

The arts and culture speak to everyone, and this school year brings more opportunities for sharing ideas. Fresh from their summer vacation, teachers and students alike are reenergized and ready for new experiences and discoveries.

In terms of curriculum, teachers will no doubt be interested in our update on the tools being produced for arts evaluation. This month, we also offer a glimpse of how the Personal Orientation Project ties in with the arts.

In music, private institutions supervising music studies recently spent a day reviewing their instrument programs. They are working to align them with the Québec Education Program to ensure continuity of instruction for young people studying music.

This issue also features profiles of three local artists and educators. Stéphane Lauzon is a visual arts teacher who promotes the use of new technologies and has been involved in collaborative endeavours with several organizations. Héroïse Côté, a Ph.D. student, teaching assistant and author, discusses her research on the *Culture in the Schools* program. Readers will also meet Bogdan Stefan, a filmmaker of Romanian origin who has been helping Québec students produce documentary films on issues of social concern. In particular, he was behind the project *L'Usine-Mémoire*, created by students in the town of La Baie, in the Saguenay region.

Across the province, arts and culture are being integrated into learning in a variety of ways. In the Montréal area, the Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys has partnered with a local arts centre to offer teachers in all subjects professional development in the performing arts, enabling

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them to develop exciting projects and activities for their students both in and outside of the classroom. A group of Secondary Cycle One students from Saint-Lambert enjoyed their first taste of the Blue Metropolis Montreal International Literary Festival, participating in a dynamic, hands-on writing workshop led by young people's author Monique Polak. In the Saguenay–Lac-Saint Jean region, students have been discovering the joy of reading through the annual *Bain de lecture*. They also had a chance to meet with authors and attend workshops in poetry, dance and visual arts during a reading and culture week.

We hope you enjoy this issue. Remember to keep us informed of your arts and culture projects and partnerships!

Diane Shank

Secteur des services à la communauté anglophone

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When the Arts and the Personal Orientation Project Come Together

Carole Viel

The Personal Orientation Project (POP) gives Secondary Cycle Two students a unique opportunity to explore many different areas of professional life and to discover or confirm their interests and abilities, and even their passions. To do so, students are provided with a number of resources. Students then choose the tools¹ they will use to explore the professions or fields that interest them. This places students in experiential situations² where they can perform simulations of work functions, go on real or virtual visits of companies or educational institutions, listen to workers' testimonials, etc. In this way, each student carries out his or her own process of career exploration under the supervision of the teacher, who establishes a context of self-reflection and cooperation with peers. Close to 20 fields of interest are offered, including arts and culture and fashion and design.

When we combine the vast universe of arts and culture with that of the POP, two movements intersect: creation and introspection. To this end, several experiential tools in the arts field allow students to “put themselves to the test.”

For example, students can experiment with basic photographic techniques and then judge the quality of their photographs. They can also use the model³ of a stage equipped with projectors to produce special effects or shadows for some of their photos. This experience with the model might lead students to carry out some of the tasks involved in putting on the play *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Working virtually, they will have to choose the actors, plan a rehearsal schedule, determine the lighting changes and appropriate set for each scene, etc. Other activities might allow students to discover the world of Andy Warhol.

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In this context, where the arts and culture are intimately connected with the POP, creation, trial and error, and reflecting on the experience become key elements in the development of students' personal, professional and even artistic identity.

The POP fosters the consolidation of competencies developed in the arts, as well as a new way of learning. Plunged into action, students discover trades or professions in this sector of interest or others and come up with potential career paths.

1. Many of these tools can be found on the site devoted to this program:
www.repertoireppo.qc.ca
2. This is a reference to a new theory in guidance counselling: action-oriented guidance.
3. The various materials, instruments, tools and software required for these experiential activities are available in the POP classroom, either on computers or in tool kits.





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Evaluation in the Arts: Much Has Been Accomplished

Martin Bellemare

The 2006-2007 school year was a busy one for the arts evaluation team.

Among its achievements was the completion of the scales of competency levels for Secondary Cycle One, which teachers received at the end of November 2006. In addition, eight new learning and evaluation situations (**LES**) were made available on-line the following February. Parallel to this work, **training sessions** were offered to teachers in the four arts subjects, with the goal of helping teachers and education consultants become familiar with some of the basic principles of evaluation in the context of a competency-based program. Finally, because students will have to pass their Secondary IV arts education program to obtain their Secondary School Diploma starting in 2008-2009, the rules for the **certification of studies** are now being revised. This work will continue in 2007-2008.

Scales of Competency Levels

In 2006-2007

At the end of November 2006, a new tool essential to the evaluation of competencies in Secondary Cycle One was published: the **Scales of Competency Levels**. This document presents descriptions of the five levels of competency development that students can attain in each arts subject.

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At the same time, work began to produce the scales of competency levels for Secondary III. This document is expected to be completed in fall 2007, to give Secondary III teachers a chance to become familiar with this tool before producing the competency report in June 2008.

In 2007-2008

In addition to the publication of the scales of competency levels for Secondary III, the arts evaluation team is currently working on the scales for the Secondary IV competency report. Committees of teachers and education consultants working in the schools will validate these scales over the course of the year.

Training Sessions

In 2006-2007

More than 200 teachers and education consultants attended the training sessions in Montréal, Laval or Québec City.

Representing school boards and private schools in both the French and English sectors, participants had the opportunity to become more familiar with evaluation in the context of the education reform. Planning, LES, scales of competency levels, judgment and differentiation made up the program for these two days, to the great satisfaction of those present. Training was also offered to elementary school teachers by the arts programs team, led by France Grenier. This session provided a chance to make connections between the two levels of education, in particular with respect to the evaluation process and tools.

In 2007-2008

Developed in collaboration with the arts programs team, new training sessions are being offered in the 2007-2008 school year. These sessions, intended for elementary teachers (April 2008) and Secondary III teachers, relate to the new rules for the certification of studies (October and November 2007).

([Click here](#) for more information or to register for these training sessions.)



Learning and Evaluation Situations

In 2006-2007

An initial series of learning and evaluation situations (LES) was produced and distributed, intended for arts teachers at the elementary and secondary levels. Since May 2006, a team from the MELS has published eight situations intended for both levels of education and targeting the first competency in each arts subject. These LES are available on the following Web sites:

- the protected site of the MELS (contact your school board or private school association for details)
- the [RÉCIT des arts](#) site, under each arts subject, in the *Situations d'apprentissage et d'évaluation* folder

In 2007-2008

New LES will be produced this year. They will target the competencies of the Secondary IV arts education programs and equip teachers with respect to the certification of studies.

We also plan to publish two LES for developing the competency *Appreciates*. These learning

and evaluation situations will revolve around a cultural outing and a school visit by a cultural resource person. One will apply to Elementary Cycles One and Two, while the other will be intended for Elementary Cycle Three and Secondary Cycle One.



Certification of Studies

In 2006-2007

In the wake of various changes being made to the Basic School Regulation, an information document was developed. It describes the **new requirements** of the Direction de la sanction des études for the compulsory arts education course, defines the **orientations** relating to these new rules, clarifies the **division of responsibilities** between schools and the MELS and establishes the **conditions for success** for students.

NEW CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

As of May 1, 2010, students must have earned a certain number of credits in specific subjects, including 2 credits in Secondary IV arts education.

([Basic School Regulation](#), s. 32)

Thus, **starting in 2008-2009**, students must successfully complete the compulsory program of their Secondary IV arts subject to obtain their Secondary School Diploma.

ORIENTATIONS

Throughout their learning in elementary and secondary school, students can choose to study different arts education subjects. However, a single set of requirements applies to all students enrolled in the compulsory program of a Secondary IV arts subject, regardless of their learning path.

It is important that schools ensure that all the necessary conditions are in place to foster students' success in the compulsory program of the arts subject chosen in Secondary IV.

DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN THE SCHOOLS AND THE MELS

Because the MELS does not intend to impose uniform examinations in the arts education subjects, the student's result will depend entirely on the competency report, that is, the judgment made by the teacher at the end of Secondary IV on the student's development of the competencies outlined in the compulsory program.

The MELS will provide guidelines and tools to help teachers build their knowledge and understanding of evaluation in arts education.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

To succeed in arts education, students must have a mark of at least 60 per cent in their arts subject. ([Basic School Regulation](#), s. 34).

The subject mark is determined by the teacher based on his or her judgment on the development of each of the three subject-specific competencies, using the scales of competency levels.

In 2007-2008

A team made up of teachers, education consultants, education administrators and

members of the MELS programs team and the arts evaluation team has been created to produce information documents and evaluation tools for Secondary IV teachers.



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Francine Gagnon-Bourget

Stéphane Lauzon has been teaching visual arts at École secondaire Marie-Clarac, an all-girls' secondary school, since 1998. At the moment, he teaches Secondary IV and V in both the international education program and the regular program.

This young teacher has worked with a number of organizations, including the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS), the Réseau pour le développement des compétences par l'intégration des technologies (RÉCIT) and the Association québécoise des éducatrices et des éducateurs spécialisés en arts plastiques (AQÉSAP).

What technology brings to arts education

In teaching the arts, Lauzon feels technological tools and means should be given the same importance as traditional materials. He notes that unlike many adults, today's adolescents are not at all hesitant to use new technologies, since they are very familiar with them. For students, digital creation, video and animated films are sources of motivation and creativity.

In Secondary IV, all visual arts classes take place in the computer lab, which contains 36 work stations. The students also have access to scanners and graphics tablets, as well as digital cameras for taking pictures and shooting videos.

In this context, class management can be a challenge, as it differs from a traditional visual arts workshop. For example, a teacher must find ways to:

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- get everyone's attention when students are sitting in front of their computer screens
- oversee the pace and quality of work that is more virtual than material
- personalize student guidance and support according to their respective processes

Stimulating and meaningful projects

Lauzon assigns arts projects that draw on students' interests and concerns. In these projects, the subject-specific competencies play a central role. The cross-curricular competencies are also taken into account and evaluated in the same way as the subject-specific competencies.

Reflective thinking within arts learning

Lauzon notes that student autonomy develops through reflection, and so it is essential that teachers encourage this practice. Reflection helps students become aware of what they have learned and of their artistic potential, enabling them to:

- turn the unexpected into new opportunities
- anticipate results
- make any required adjustments
- find new avenues for creation and appreciation

By recording their observations and comments, students can keep track of their process and refer to it during their evaluation.

Lauzon believes that having students participate in their evaluation makes them responsible for their own learning, develops their autonomy and fosters their motivation and commitment.

Appreciation and the development of critical judgment

Young people live in a media culture where images are omnipresent. They are not always aware of the impact these images have on their way of thinking or on their value system. In this respect, Lauzon believes that his role as a visual arts teacher is to help students decode these images and become aware of the messages being communicated.

The appreciation of a variety of works and productions, including media images, requires students to reflect and exercise their judgment. By analyzing the image components, looking for meaning, developing their own interpretation and building their arguments, students learn to appreciate works and develop their critical judgment.





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Day of Reflection

Private Institutions Supervising Music Studies Review Their Programs

Claude Duchesneau

Private institutions supervising music studies reviewed their instrument programs during a day of reflection and sharing held March 30 at the Musée québécois de culture populaire in Trois-Rivières.

A private institution supervising music studies is not a music school per say. Its purpose is not to teach, but to provide programs. Thus, its role is to:

- make available to its networks of private teachers or affiliated schools complete programs for musical and theoretical instruction, in preparation for postsecondary studies in music
- uphold the evaluation protocol for the instruction provided by affiliated teachers
- provide guidance to these teachers in applying the programs

Striking a collaborative chord

The day of training, which was organized by the Direction générale de la formation des jeunes of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, brought together sixteen participants

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from nine organizations. The programs of these institutions are accredited by the Direction de la sanction des études of the MELS.

[List of institutions](#) ➔

The reflection process

As a result of their reflection process, the five teams (grouped according to instrument: violin, viola, piano, guitar and voice), produced profiles for a student and a music teacher and highlighted key characteristics for the content of a music performance program.

The subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies provided guidelines for the different exchanges that took place with a view to developing complementary music training, resulting in a stronger, more effective partnership.

Participant comments led to the establishment of a common vision of the reference elements, in particular with respect to the following:

- program orientation
- outcomes
- key features
- musical content
- techniques
- expressive elements
- repertoire
- sight reading
- teaching strategies
- suggested materials
- guidance and follow-up
- evaluation
- the teacher's role
- the student's role
- the parent's role
- suggestions for activities
- applications for the learning

Did you know that

private institutions supervising music studies have a new Web site? Go to:

www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/musique/index_en.asp

Results and challenges

Private music instruction is an indisputable complement to the music education provided under the Québec Education Program. The work carried out at this meeting points to the possibility of harmonizing the programs of these institutions with the educational aims of the subject-specific competency *Performs musical works* in the music programs of the MELS.

Music teaching based on developing the competencies can lead to specialized teaching that focuses on becoming proficient in music performance.

The issues at stake are directly related to the development and enrichment of students in public and private schools who wish to spend more time learning a musical instrument. By sharing their expertise, the MELS and the private institutions supervising music studies are building bridges between the different pathways.

A flourishing partnership

In this light, the term *complementarity* takes on its full meaning, as developing the competency *Performs musical works* suddenly hinges on the involvement of all players.

Performance becomes a key challenge for both the student studying the instrument and the supervising institution.

The development of complementary instruction in music and the collaboration of the **MELS and supervising institutions** is an excellent example of a flourishing partnership. The effects can only be positive for everyone concerned.



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Sébastien Boulanger

Teaching and research assistant¹ and writer, Héroïse Côté is completing her Ph.D. in the faculty of education at Université Laval on the theme of integrating the cultural dimension into school. Her thesis, titled *L'intégration de la dimension culturelle à l'école : du discours officiel à celui des acteurs*, addresses the notion of integrating arts and culture into learning, specifically in the context of the *Culture in the Schools* program.

How would you sum up your Ph.D. research, from both a theoretical and methodological perspective?

H.C. My initial questioning grew out of the many cultural reforms that can be seen around the world: where does this idea come from, and more generally, why are artists taking on an increasingly public role in some western societies? Think of workshops organized for the homeless, for prisoners, etc. These concerns are shared by my supervisor, Denis Simard, whose research focuses on the nature and role of culture in the schools, and by my co-supervisor in France, Alain Kerlan, who studies the role of aesthetics in contemporary societies. These questions led me to analyze the importance of integrating the cultural dimension in the particular area of schools.

I began by looking at the official discourse by consulting various documents: the Arpin report,

Québec's cultural and educational policies, the document *Integrating the Cultural Dimension into School*, the *Culture in the Schools* program, etc. Then I compiled an inventory of the forms submitted for the *Culture in the Schools* program in 2004-2005 by schools in the Québec City and Chaudière-Appalaches regions. I studied a total of 514 forms (project description, number of students, subject, objectives sought, etc.). Of these, I selected 55 for analysis.

I also carried out a dozen semi-structured interviews with cultural resource persons registered in the *Répertoire de ressources culture-éducation*, as well as elementary and secondary school teachers and one school principal. All these people participated in the *Culture in the Schools* program in 2004-2005 or 2005-2006.

Finally, I analyzed the content and discourse of all the official documents, forms and interviews to interpret the meaning of the data collected.

What general conclusions can be drawn from your observations and meetings?

H.C. One of the major questions that has guided my work is this: How should we interpret integrating the cultural dimension into school? Fundamentally, the essence of this process lies in the dialogue between culture and the school. This dialogue occurs when there is a meeting between the artist, who embodies contemporary culture, and the teacher, who is a mediator for the educational context (project-based learning, differentiated instruction, curriculum reform, etc.).

In this light, artists are no longer seen as people who isolate themselves from the rest of society to devote themselves to their inspiration, but as guests who come into the classroom to share their work with a young audience. The *Culture in the Schools* program therefore gives students a chance to meet the creators of contemporary culture through school.

You mention the importance of dialogue between culture and the school. Can you give some concrete examples?

H.C. In addition to determining, for example, how to meet cycle or schedule constraints in preparing and following up on the activity, it is important for the teacher and the artist to agree on the type of partnership they will have, as well as what the artist will contribute to the subject matter. It is also essential for the teacher and artist to clarify their respective roles before the activity and to respect each other's ways of doing things.

From my observations, I can tell you that a project's success depends on an exchange of good dialogue between the two parties, and that it is important for both parties to be willing to work together and to be flexible. This point is particularly important for the cultural milieu, which sometimes has difficulty working with fixed schedules, an environment that is too rigid or inadequate facilities. For example, some artists may want to rearrange the room to create a climate that is more conducive to creation and contact.

Some artists have excellent memories of unexpected events that occurred during a project. One artist told me that while he was giving a workshop, other teachers learned about it and found the experience very interesting, to the point where the project was expanded to other classes. Parents also become involved, and a large part of the community ended up participating in the adventure. In other words, having the ability to adapt and be flexible can sometimes lead to extraordinary experiences.

Would you say that teachers systematically organize arts and cultural projects that tie in with the subject or subjects being taught?

H.C. It depends. Those who have been doing so for a long time and for whom this way of working has become an integral part of their teaching will generally make links between arts

and culture and their subject matter. But it is mostly art, music and language arts teachers who have experience with this kind of project. For teachers for whom cultural projects reinforce their own efforts, and who can't imagine teaching in any other way, this type of activity is especially appropriate.

What are your general impressions from your interviews?

H.C. What stands out is that at first, some artists don't want to register in the *Répertoire* because they are afraid of being categorized as educational facilitators. But once they've had an experience with a school, most say they really want to continue doing art and writing for students, without putting aside their regular career. They are fascinated by how young people confide in them, telling them things such as, "Your book touched me because my grandmother has the same disease as the main character." For students, cultural projects are often the highlight of the year.

Artists believe that the school plays an eminently cultural role. Many teachers share this conviction; for example, they may play a musical instrument or participate in writing workshops for their own enjoyment. The people who get involved in the *Culture in the Schools* program are, above all else, passionate about culture.

In terms of professional development, many teachers said they learned a lot from classroom visits by artists. For example, a music teacher might enjoy having a professional musician who has mastered a particular technique come to visit, while some arts teachers might find their credibility enhanced through the visit of a skilled artist. They might also find themselves reflecting on their own practices after watching someone else interacting with their group. From the perspective of professional development, the concept of culture in the school becomes particularly motivating for teachers themselves.

The title of your dissertation is *L'intégration de la dimension culturelle à l'école : du discours officiel à celui des acteurs*. Do the views of the people in the field—teachers, students, artists and writers—seem to mesh with the official objectives of the program?

H.C. For many of the people I spoke to, who were making use of the program long before it took on the name *Culture in the Schools*, this is simply a continuation of what they were doing before.

I'd say that sometimes there is a bit of a discrepancy in the concept or definition of culture itself. A certain vision of culture is favoured that is not necessarily shared by people in the field, who tend to see culture as something that stimulates emotion and creativity. Their idea of culture is much closer to the arts, creation, imagination and aesthetics.

The *Culture in the Schools* program aims more to generate several different types of experience, to put students into contact with a variety of information sources. Thus, culture is seen as a kind of network that can be used to make connections between various elements, areas of knowledge or competencies. This view of things has an impact on what schools look for and what goes on in the classroom.

When you ask participants about these encounters, many will simply say that it was a beautiful and intense experience, that they were touched. The emotions it evoked are often difficult to identify, but sometimes it is enough just to have felt them.

If you were to start over, are there any aspects of your research that you would approach differently? For example, would you want to meet with more people?

H.C. Considering that there is very little research on the subject in Québec, there had to be an initial "sorting out." What is the official discourse? What are teachers doing? How does

this all take place in practice? Several questions needed answers. The next logical step would indeed be to meet with more people in different settings, to consolidate some of the interpretations suggested by my results.

Some answers have emerged, such as the idea that an artist's presence in the school leads to an aesthetic experience for all those involved. Now we would need to find out if other people share this hypothesis. Ideally, you would explore a project of considerable size and carry out some in-class observation to determine the effects and impact of the project.

Do you intend to pursue your research on this topic?

H.C. Yes, I'd like to pursue this research if I have the means and institutional backing to do so, while continuing to teach. At the moment I'm a teaching assistant for the bachelor's program in preschool and elementary education at Université Laval. Specifically, I teach the fundamentals of education and major thinkers in contemporary pedagogy.

I also give a three-hour class on integrating the cultural dimension into school. In keeping with the various contemporary instructional approaches, I address the cultural approach and the *Culture in the Schools* program; I even get my students to set up a fictional cultural project using the *Répertoire*.

You have presented your work at various conferences, and you attended the last ACFAS convention...

H.C. Yes, I gave a presentation on behalf of the Groupe de Recherche Enseignement et Culture (GREC), which I am a member of, and which is working more specifically on the relationship that French teachers at the secondary level have with culture. A second presentation focused on the *Culture in the Schools* program. Among other things, I presented the theoretical framework that I used in my dissertation to analyze the official discourse, the views of the people in the field and the forms. It was very well received.

Your work stems from the observation of an increased presence of the artist in society, on many levels. But where does your interest for culture and the arts come from, especially in the school environment?

H.C. I studied to be a French and history teacher at the secondary level. To me, French and history are intrinsically linked to culture. For my Master's, I worked on the cultural approach to teaching French at the secondary level. So culture is something that means a lot to me.

I'm also a writer, so I have one foot in the cultural world and the other in education. My Ph.D. project is the ideal way to reconcile the two worlds.

1. Héroïse Côté works with the Groupe de recherche enseignement et culture (GREC) and the Centre de recherche interuniversitaire sur la formation et la profession enseignante (CRIFPE) in the faculty of education at Université Laval.





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Art Without Boundaries

Marie-Josée Lépine

At the Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys (CSMB), opening the school to the cultural dimension means first and foremost offering exceptional professional development to school staff. In partnership with the Salle Pauline-Julien, in Sainte-Geneviève (on Montréal's West Island), seasoned artists from the performing arts community offer training to any teachers who are interested. The only requirement is a desire to have a stimulating experience to later share with students.

Called *Intégrer la dimension culturelle dans mon approche pédagogique* (Integrating the cultural dimension into my teaching approach), the project was initiated by Diane Perreault, general and artistic director of the Salle Pauline-Julien, and Christine Touzin, arts and culture education consultant for the school board. In order to bring out the cultural dimension in school, elementary and secondary teachers in all subjects are invited to take part in these training sessions, which are spread over four to eight meetings.

Teachers first receive some artistic instruction from a working artist who explains the nuts and bolts of his or her profession. Participants then have a chance to apply what they have learned by attending three different shows and discussing the performance afterwards with the actors, singers or dancers.

In the second phase of the training, teachers get two release days to work with Touzin to plan how they will apply what they have learned in the classroom. A cultural outing with the students may also be organized.

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The purpose of the project is not to turn teachers into performance arts specialists, but to provide them with cultural reference points that they can incorporate into their own teaching, whatever their subject might be.

Drama in the classroom

In 2005-2006, one project took shape in elementary school under the theme *L'art dramatique en classe*. Led by Gilles-Philippe Pelletier, an author, director and actor, teachers were introduced to the process of analyzing theatrical performance, before carrying out the exercise at selected shows. Inspired by their experience, some teachers then developed a project involving several schools. Each class produced a play or musical comedy, and then presented it to the students of colleagues who had received the same training. The students in the different schools then shared their reflections on the creation and performance of the plays, as well as their appreciation of them.

Singing in the classroom

In 2006-2007, elementary school teachers immersed themselves in the world of singing. Guided by singer-songwriter Nelson Minville, students looked at the writing process behind an album by Luce Dufault as well as the history of French-language songs in Québec. Teachers also wrote their own songs to music composed by Minville. During this year of music, students also composed songs on various themes, including both welcome and good-bye songs, and participated in choirs.

The REPÈRE cycles

Jacques Lessard, creator of the REPÈRE cycles, an original process of creation, invited secondary teachers to create theatrical situations. Exploring the four phases of the REPÈRES cycles (*R*essource, *P*artitions, *É*valuation and *R*eprésentation), teachers had all the freedom they needed to perform, explore, improvise, analyze and, finally, evaluate their creation sequences.

A day of dance

Students enjoyed a special day devoted entirely to dance to help them discover different styles of dance and expose them to something new. Nearly 200 students from four secondary schools gathered at the Salle Pauline-Julien to attend one of 10 workshops offered. Led by professional dancers, each group learned the rudiments of a new style and presented a short choreography at the end of the day. To conclude the afternoon, students turned up the energy level, dancing to music created by a DJ.

Each year, the project *Intégrer la dimension culturelle dans mon approche pédagogique* attracts more and more teachers and results in increased student motivation. Teacher participation and the many ideas developed for applying concepts learned in class are helping to push the boundaries of art beyond arts classes alone. In science, mathematics and the social sciences, there is no limit to the many imaginative ways in which the cultural dimension can be integrated into the classroom.



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In Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean Immersed in Books During Reading and Culture Week

Sébastien Boulanger

From May 28 to June 1, 2007, Chicoutimi's arts and cultural centre played host to the Semaine de la lecture et de la culture. Organized by [Vigie pédagogique](#), this week of literature and culture was the final activity of the 2006-2007 "Bain de lecture." Close to 40 elementary school classes from the Commission scolaire des Rives-du-Saguenay participated in the event by spending a day at this cultural venue meeting authors, attending a science workshop, visiting the library, and participating in a poetry workshop and a dance or visual arts workshop.

La Bataille des livres, an avant-garde initiative

In 1997, Switzerland launched **La Bataille des livres**, an international event intended to help French-language teachers who work with 8-to-12-year-olds to promote their students' interest and enjoyment in reading. Ten years after its inception, the event involves more than 20 000 students in 10 countries: Belgium, Benin, Burkina Faso, Canada (Québec only), France, Haiti, Mali, Senegal, Singapore and Switzerland.

Each year, the Bataille des livres organizes a series of activities based on a selection of

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books. The 30 books or so are by authors from the participating countries, and are carefully chosen for their literary quality and according to the age of the students targeted. Once registered, participating classes in each country receive the books by mail. About 28 000 books are currently in circulation.

Throughout the year, the Web site of [La Bataille des livres](#) invites students to participate in a variety of activities: discussion forums on the themes addressed in the books, an on-line writing workshop with an author, a Web quiz given simultaneously to all countries. Exchanges between young people and authors from participating countries are also part of the annual calendar of La Bataille des livres, which culminates with the Salon du livre in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Bain de lecture in Québec

Lise Tremblay discovered La Bataille des livres while teaching for a year in Switzerland, and met with the project's organizers. Back in Québec, this elementary school teacher from École Vanier, in the Commission scolaire des Rives-du-Saguenay, decided to get her class—and Québec—involved in this rallying activity. Thus in 1998, the Québec version of La Bataille des livres began in Chicoutimi, under the name ***Bain de lecture***.

Like the Swiss battle of the books, the primary goal of the Bain de lecture is to equip elementary school teachers with a national and international network and a pedagogical framework to promote reading among their students. With this backing, teachers help their students:

- develop an enjoyment of reading
- adopt the habit of engaging in reading as a means to become informed, have fun and dream
- discover the wealth of children's literature from Québec and elsewhere, from yesterday and today
- make connections with the QEP using the themes addressed in the books
- develop their subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies through reading
- develop an openness to the world

Reaching more students

Originally intended for students in Elementary Cycles Two and Three, the Bain de lecture recently expanded its scope at the urging of a number of Québec schools. Thus the **Bain de lecture junior**, intended for children in preschool and Elementary Cycle One, was created in 2005.

The Bain de lecture and Bain de lecture junior offer activity suggestions throughout the year to participating classes, including a starter activity to get to know the selected books and *Le livre voyageur*, a book that travels from one class to another. All the activities are entirely optional and teachers are free to choose the ones they wish to carry out with their students.

In 2006-2007, some 30 classes from across Québec took part in the Bain de lecture activities, while about 20 groups participated in the activities of the Bain de lecture junior. The event's coordinators are currently working to set up a Québec Web portal dedicated to the project, and are considering opening the Bain de lecture up to secondary schools as well as other school boards, starting in 2007-2008. The activities of both the Bain de lecture and the Bain de lecture junior are now coordinated by Vigie pédagogique.

Closing event: reading and culture week

Also organized by Vigie pédagogique, the Semaine de la lecture et de la culture caps off the

year of activities for students in the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean area who have participated in the Bain de lecture and Bain de lecture junior. This year, for logistical reasons, only classes from the Commission scolaire des Rives-du-Saguenay took part in the event, for a total of 39 classes, or 850 young people.

The primary objective of the week is to get students to associate reading and culture with the notion of pleasure, in a particularly festive way. Over the course of the five days, each class was invited (according to a predetermined schedule) to spend a full day at the Centre des arts et de la culture de Chicoutimi, an arts and cultural complex located next to the municipal library.

All the young people had a chance to meet with an author (Caroline Merola, Marie Barguirdjian, Alain Bergeron or Élisabeth Vonarburg), attend a science workshop (Conseil du loisir scientifique or Groupe Nature Animée), take part in either a visual arts workshop (Hélène Soucy) or a dance workshop (Marie-Josée Paradis), go on a discovery tour of the library or participate in a poetry workshop (Virginie Beaudoin).

The Semaine de la lecture et de la culture also provided a venue for the students to present an exhibition of works that had been carried out under the project *Lecture et culture : rencontre avec un artiste*. In this multidisciplinary activity, begun in January 2007, students worked with artists from the region to produce works of art inspired by the books of authors whom they had met. Parents and friends were then invited to Chicoutimi's municipal library from May 28 to June 8, 2007, to admire the canvases, giant puppets and photos created by these students as part of this original meeting between reading and the arts.

For more information on how to register for the Bain de lecture or the Bain de lecture junior, consult the global Web site of [La Bataille des livres](#) or contact Lise Tremblay at the following address: lise02@videotron.ca.

Vigie pédagogique is a multidisciplinary working group made up of elementary school teachers, researchers from the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi and community groups. The organization has a mandate from the four local school boards and the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean regional office of the MELS to support the implementation of the Québec Education Program in the region's elementary and secondary schools. To accomplish this, Vigie pédagogique has developed an offer of service for teachers who wish to focus on a key educational area: reading.





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Bogdan Stefan – *L'Usine-Mémoire*

Sébastien Boulanger

Originally from Romania, Bogdan Stefan has lived in Chicoutimi for six years. For the last 10 years or so, he has been interested in exploring ways of transmitting his passion for cinema. He has worked on various cinematographic projects in schools, including the production of *L'Usine-Mémoire*. This series of three documentaries on the demolition of the Port-Alfred factory in La Baie was produced last year with a group of Secondary V students at the Polyvalente de La Baie. We interviewed the artist at the Maison du Cinéma de Saguenay.

Could you tell us about your artistic path and your work with young people in general?

B.S. After studying cinema in France, I returned to my native city in Romania to set up an introductory workshop to cinematographic culture. The project was called *La génération du II^e siècle*, which was intended as a reference to the second century of cinema that was beginning at that time, in 1996. Broadly speaking, the workshop was about creating a new generation of movie viewers.

Students aged 15 to 16 were invited to come watch films in a theatre, before being introduced to various theoretical tools. Then, they had to discuss the films from an interdisciplinary point

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of view: visual arts and cinema, music and cinema. The goal was to get them to see the work that took place behind the scenes and to understand more of the theory involved in the craft of cinema. The two-year project culminated in the production of a short film.

Then, I went to Bucharest and worked for a few years as a screenwriter, production manager and international relations coordinator at a film production house. While I was there, I found out about the Master's program in interdisciplinary arts at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi. I applied and was accepted immediately. My thesis, submitted in 2005, dealt with how to communicate the passion of cinema through the creative process.

Does that mean you were already interested in working with schools at that time?

B.S. While I was working on my Master's degree, I developed some production projects and contacted some local schools about offering introductory workshops in film production. After my first workshop, in 2004, École Charles-Gravel, under the Commission scolaire des Rives-du-Saguenay, approached me to give another workshop the following year, and gave me free rein over the choice of subject.

It was then that I started to become interested in producing documentaries with more of a social connection. I wanted to get young people more involved, so that they could talk about their experiences. This resulted in my second project, *Passeport*. It consisted of three documentary profiles of new Quebeckers who had settled in the Saguenay: a Rwandan, a Colombian and a Cambodian. The videos, produced by three groups of students from the same class, attempted to convey the realities of these three individuals. How did they come to the Saguenay? Under what circumstances? What was their world like in their respective native countries?

Not only did the project enable the students to acquire tools for reflection and creation, but it gave them an awareness and openness by telling someone else's story. Don't forget that the geographical conditions of the Saguenay meant that for a long time the region didn't experience immigration. The project concluded with a screening of the documentaries in the school auditorium, followed by a discussion with a number of immigrants.

Tell us about *L'Usine-Mémoire*.

B.S. After being accepted for the *Répertoire de ressources culture-éducation* in the fall of 2006, I submitted a few projects to schools, and some were selected. *L'Usine-Mémoire* was the one I felt most strongly about carrying out, because the events were unfolding at that very moment.

L'Usine-Mémoire is made up of three documentary videos produced by Secondary V students, and deals with the demolition and then the disappearance of the Port-Alfred factory from the town's landscape. The idea was suggested to me by Giuseppe Bendetto, the project's initiator and a visual arts teacher at the Polyvalente de La Baie. One evening, Giuseppe called me and said: "They're tearing down the factory. A piece of our history and of the region's landscape will be gone forever. We need to do something now."

I was immediately very interested in the idea, and I was lucky to have the backing of a number of organizations.¹ The teacher wanted his three visual arts groups to take part in the project. At our first meeting, I showed the students the *Passeport* documentary and answered many of their questions. Then, I asked who would be interested in the project.

Were all the students in all three classes interested? It probably wasn't possible for everyone to participate...

B.S. True, I couldn't do more than three films. Ideally, in a film team, everyone is assigned a role: production, camera, sound, artistic direction, etc. The critical number is about six people

per team. I prefer working with fewer people and doing a better job. Sometimes that's hard for teachers to understand, because they wonder what they'll do with the rest of the class. That's the disadvantage of this kind of workshop.

On the other hand, very strong bonds form within the team. Everything takes place during the visual arts class, but project participants get to go on film shoots, discuss the project in the library, take part in the editing process, etc. Meanwhile, the other students in the class simply continue working on their regular visual arts projects with their teacher.

Some students experienced the factory's closing directly, a few years before it was demolished. The film shows some former workers, and we can guess that they may be related to the young people who made the film. Did you find that most students were already aware of the issues at stake before the project began?

B.S. Yes, certainly. When 600 jobs disappear in a small town like La Baie, everyone who lives there feels the repercussions. And it's not just the people who lose their jobs that are affected, but also small businesses and stores in the surrounding area. Some couples split up, and there were even suicides. There was a kind of exodus from the region along with other major problems.

Often, under these circumstances, families try to hide the reality from their children, to protect them—it's a normal reaction. This can lead to emotional strain within the family. The children know there's one income less at home, they see the material consequences, but there isn't always a dialogue with the adults. No one sits down with these young people to explain things to them.

How did you go about making these three documentary videos with the students?

B.S. Even if it's painful for them to talk about this event, a project such as *L'Usine-Mémoire* helps to reassure young people by creating awareness. For me, it was very important that they become aware of their family history. What did their father do at the factory? What was his daily routine? These are personal stories that are part of a bigger story and shape a life.

It's also crucial to work with the students to find the ideal angle for approaching the subject. For me, it's more important to provide them with a foundation to structure their project than to show them how to manipulate a camera or use a computer program. In the end, when it comes to the technical aspect, the more you handle the tools, the better you get at using them.

So I spent a lot of time listening to their stories. What did your families go through? What happened? I let them talk, and then ideas began to take shape: the night of the last shift, that night in December when everyone stood in front of the factory holding candles. Drawing on their stories, I made them realize the importance of having a continuous thread and a concrete story, from start to finish. That's what makes a film solid and coherent.

It's also essential to find the right images for the concept. After all, we're expressing ourselves more through images than through words. For example, since we didn't have any pictures from the night of the last shift, and because it's complicated to obtain archival documents, we chose to do drawings. We had to rely on students' creativity to find ways to compensate for the lack of images: using archival pictures of the factory that belonged to another teacher, alternating pictures of the demolition with interviews, etc. Students came to understand that in art as in life, a continuous thread can help structure a project.

There was a public screening of *L'Usine-Mémoire* at the Musée du Fjord in La Baie at the end of the school year. What impact did the project have in the community, both within and outside the school?

B.S. The day after the public screening at the museum, there was a screening in the school auditorium. A former union leader from the Port-Alfred factory and a journalist from Radio-Canada attended, and the students who had participated in the project had a chance to give their opinions on the subject.

Curiously, the day after the public screening at the museum, the newspaper *Le Quotidien* ran an article that focused primarily on the distress and pain tied to the factory's closing. At the school, the students stuck to relating the facts. They told the journalist from Radio-Canada that their project was intended to give hope, to make people aware that even though a lot has changed, life goes on. The project was therefore the subject of several articles, a radio report and a television report on Radio-Canada.

Given the media attention it received in the region, will *L'Usine-Mémoire* generate interest in other schools for carrying out this kind of initiative?

B.S. I hope so! I'm currently working to set up another project, this time on the environment. The idea is to raise students' awareness of the various issues surrounding this very current topic. The project is on a larger scale, involving four schools and using animation. For example, a film on climate change at the North Pole will lend itself very well to animation techniques, considering how difficult it would be to film on site.

At the request of the teachers, two pedagogical documents could also be created. I'd like one team working on a documentary and another working on an animated film to produce, in tandem, a kind of "making of" that shows how a cinematographic workshop is carried out in a school setting. All this would be done by the students themselves, under my supervision.

I'm also concerned about distribution. I'm trying to think of ways to share the young people's productions with the general public, the families of the participants, teachers and schools. For example, we could show the students' films at the Pulperie de Chicoutimi (a cultural and tourism centre). I've already taken steps for carrying out these projects, but several partners still have to be confirmed, before we embark on this new adventure.

1. The *Culture in the Schools* program, the *Culture-Éducation* program, the city of Saguenay, the Commission scolaire des Rives-du-Saguenay, the Polyvalente de La Baie and the Musée du Fjord.





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ARTS IN ACTION



Writing Workshop Unleashes Students' Stories

Eve Krakow

Last April, a group of Secondary Cycle One students from Collège Durocher Saint-Lambert participated in a writing workshop at the Blue Metropolis International Literary Festival. Led by young people's author Monique Polak, the inspiring workshop gave students a chance to learn some new writing techniques.

About the author

Monique Polak teaches English and humanities at Marianopolis College. She has published seven novels for young adults, including *Scarred*, *Home Invasion*, *Finding Elmo* and *All In*. They deal with some tough subjects: an athlete who cuts herself, parental divorce, juvenile prostitution and on-line gambling.

Polak, who also gives workshops under the *Culture in the Schools* program, loves to talk about writing, and students are a great audience. "It's really about communicating—we all need to communicate. We're also all curious to know what other people's stories are, and reading lets us peek into other people's lives."

Polak believes it's important for students to meet authors and to show them that writing is a

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real career possibility. “If I’d been exposed to it at a young age, I might have taken writing more seriously. Instead, I was 30 when I started to write professionally!” Even for students not interested in such a career, “it’s inspiring to listen to people who are passionate about what they do.”

The workshop

“Stories are everywhere,” Monique Polak began. You can get material from the people around you, by being “snoopy” and conducting research, or from your own life.

Before getting the students to write, Polak turned off the lights and had them close their eyes. She told them to think back to when they were in Elementary Cycle Three and to rest their mind on a place, a scene. What did they see? What were the sounds, the smells? What was going on? Were other people involved? Then she turned the lights back on and had students write down everything they remembered about that moment, without judging.

Afterward, a few students read what they had written, and the class discussed what stories lay within. Interestingly, when asked what was the best or most interesting part, everyone tended to agree on the same aspects. Later students did an exercise on dialogue, and Polak gave them feedback on improvements they could make.

Finally, Polak told the students about her own career path. As a kid, she loved writing. But in high school, when she had to write papers, it became a burden. It was only much later in life, through journal and letter writing, that she regained the pleasure of writing. Her first few books were rejected by publishers across Canada. But she persisted, and with each book, her writing got better. Finally, her fourth manuscript was accepted. The moral of the story: “Never give up. Especially when you are closest to giving up.”

Applying what they learn

Students Charlotte Mercille and Ariane Simonelis both really enjoyed the workshop. “It’s cool to get feedback from someone who has published books,” said Charlotte, who is interested in becoming a writer. Ariane doesn’t see herself as a languages person, but she still found the workshop useful. “We’re going to have to write a short story in class, so I’ll be able to use these techniques.” The students also liked hearing about the writer’s own experiences, and appreciated the life lesson of not giving up. “It’s inspiring,” said Charlotte.

Patti McCurdy, their English teacher, thinks the workshop “unblocked” her students. “I saw them writing like crazy. They were really into it.” She took thorough notes and will try to incorporate some of the ideas from the workshop into her teaching. “I already have my own way of doing things, but it’s good to get a different perspective,” she said. For example, she liked the idea of turning off the lights to have students imagine the scene and think about the five senses. “We go, go, go in our society—we don’t take time to think. If you say, ‘write a story,’ students are going to pick up their pens or start typing, without planning it.”

McCurdy also believes that meeting a published author who writes for teens makes the experience authentic. “They’re getting something more than with a teacher. It makes it more real to them.”

Blue Metropolis educational programs

This year marked the 8th edition of the Blue Metropolis Festival’s Student Literary Program. A total of 780 students and teachers participated in 32 workshops over three days, in English and French. While the workshops are generally intended for Secondary Cycle Two students, they can be adapted to younger students—as with McCurdy’s class. The Festival also receives funding from the Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du

Sport (MELS) to help pay travel costs for English-speaking students from outside the Montréal area—Gaspésie, Côte Nord, Estrie, even Nunavik.

“The general mission of the Blue Metropolis Foundation is to share the joy of reading and writing, and to promote the discovery of Québec, Canadian and foreign authors,” said Maïté de Hemptinne, Educational Programs Coordinator. The Foundation offers educational programs throughout the year that give students a chance to meet and work with professional writers, photographers and journalists, in person or on-line. It works closely with MELS staff to ensure that projects fit with the curriculum. Ongoing projects include *Don't Touch My Board/Touche pas à ma planche!*, *Teledocumentation*, *Jeux de Mots*, *Québec Roots*, *Québec Reads*, *Carnets Sonores* and *Sounds Like Québec*. Many of the programs are designed especially for schools in remote communities.

Engaging in this creative process “leads to some beautiful surprises, by motivating students, enhancing their self-esteem, and awakening their passions,” De Hemptinne concluded.





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