

The Québec Education Program

Preschool Education

Information for Parents

September 2001

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

Your child is starting kindergarten this year. This first step in a child's schooling, which is also called preschool education, has a very important influence on the rest of the child's education. It is the beginning of a long voyage of discovery and learning.

In order for children to want to embark on this voyage, they must enjoy learning from the outset and they must be encouraged to progress. This is one of the goals of preschool education.

As you probably know, the Ministère de l'Éducation has begun a curriculum reform that applies to all schools. The reform was introduced in Preschool Education and Elementary Cycle One (first grade and second grade) in 2000, and the new program is in effect at these levels.

This brochure will help familiarize you with the environment in which your child will learn, develop and gradually increase his or her knowledge. We urge you to read it carefully, keeping in mind that the school is there to support your child and provide him or her with everything necessary to succeed.

A PROGRAM THAT AIMS TO GIVE CHILDREN A DESIRE TO LEARN

This year, your child will experience school for the first time. Rest assured that the school will welcome your child and the life experience and learning he or she brings.

It is important that everything be done to make the start of kindergarten a success and to allow your child:

- to know himself or herself
- to develop his or her personality
- to form relationships with others
- to gradually become independent
- to develop the desire to learn
- to experiment with work methods

A PROGRAM THAT USES PLAY AS THE MAIN WAY OF LEARNING

The kindergarten program takes into account the fact that play has always had an important place in children's development. Because play is part of children's world, the program uses it as a key tool for learning, a way to increase their knowledge and gradually prepare them for elementary school. For example, in addition to piling up wooden blocks simply for the pleasure of building a house, children will have the opportunity to explain how they went about building it and will assess their work. Thus they will develop the ability to:

- express themselves
- work in a group
- take responsibility
- develop their imagination and creativity

Remember that children at this age learn primarily through play, for example, by making up stories or using puppets. This is why preschool education attaches so much importance to play as a means of learning.

A PROGRAM THAT FOSTERS CHILDREN'S OVERALL DEVELOPMENT

The preschool education program fosters children's physical, emotional, social and language development and learning. It does so by helping children acquire and develop abilities that will enable them to live in society and by stimulating their intellectual curiosity.

The program aims to awaken children's desire to discover the fascinating world they will be part of until the end of elementary school. This world will seem all the more inviting to them if they are able to have fun while exploring it. It is not only the learning children acquire that is important, but their enthusiasm for pursuing this learning.

As your child learns, he or she will prepare to be a student who is interested in school, takes responsibility and is capable of using judgment and making wise choices in life. At the end of his or her kindergarten year, your child will be ready to start elementary school.

A PROGRAM BASED ON COMPETENCIES

Through a variety of learning situations, your child will develop competencies that will be useful throughout his or her life:

- By skipping rope or handling scissors with precision, your child will learn to coordinate his or her movements and perform sensorimotor actions effectively.
- By taking initiatives and accepting responsibility, your child will affirm his or her personality.
- By sharing play and ideas, your child will learn to interact harmoniously with others.
- By creating a story to tell to other children, your child will learn to communicate using the right words and expressions.
- By observing, exploring and experimenting, your child will gain a better understanding of his or her world.
- By drawing a plan for a house and then building it out of cardboard, your child will become aware of the importance of carrying projects to completion.

A PROGRAM BASED ON COMPETENCIES

Because they are rooted in children's everyday physical, emotional and cultural life, these situations promote the children's overall development:

- Physical development
- Emotional development
- Social development
- Language development
- Intellectual development

A PROGRAM BASED ON TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

The preschool education program is based in large part on the professional expertise of the teachers, who will use their skills to foster your child's development. The teachers will take into account what each child already knows, and help the children progress at their own pace through learning suited to their age level.

By working with the children to organize activities in keeping with their needs and interests, the teachers will give them opportunities to meet challenges at their level of ability, thus encouraging them to strive and to excel. The teachers will guide the children by suggesting activities that will capture their interest and stimulate their desire to learn.

Throughout the school year, the teacher will keep you informed about the various facets of your child's development. By observing your child during classroom activities and helping him or her do self-evaluation, the teacher will be able to tell you about the child's progress and difficulties. Your child, too, will be able to talk to you about his or her strengths and weaknesses. You will thus be better able to help your child.

A PROGRAM THAT ENCOURAGES PARENT PARTICIPATION

In order for your child to successfully complete the first stage of his or her voyage to the land of learning, it is essential that you provide ongoing support. As your child's first teacher, you know his or her strengths and weaknesses. Throughout early childhood, you have developed a special closeness with your child and learned to interpret his or her physical and verbal language and even silences.

Not only are parents indispensable allies in their children's success, but they are also a constant source of assistance that children may call on at any time:

- to receive the emotional support needed for success in school
- to share their discoveries and their feelings
- to help them progress toward reaching their goals

AN EXCITING CHALLENGE

Remember that the school is there to help you encourage your child to be successful. Rest assured that your child's teacher will work to build a relationship with you that is based on respect, trust and openness, with a view to fostering your child's development and desire to keep on learning.

We are counting on you, as you can count on the school, to meet this demanding and exciting challenge!

TO LEARN MORE

For further information, visit the Ministère de l'Éducation Web site <www.meq.gouv.qc.ca> or contact your school, school board or regional office of the Ministère de l'Éducation.

