



THE GOVERNING BOARDS

*Looking Back
on the First Year
of Operation*

Québec 



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on the First Year
of Operation*

Analysis and report

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BACKGROUND



BACKGROUND

One of the goals of the Ministère de l'Éducation in launching the current reform was to give educational institutions greater autonomy in certain areas. To this end, new structures were created to set guidelines for the institutions as they exercise this autonomy. These new structures, called governing boards, are made up of at most 20 members whose ultimate goal in working together is to help students achieve academic success. The governing board has decision-making power in several matters related to the educational project and the policy directions of the school. Each board member represents a particular group (parents, school staff, the community, etc.). In schools, an equal number of parents and school staff members sit on the governing board and are entitled to vote; community representatives and student representatives (students in Cycle Two or the final two years of secondary school) may take part in board meetings but are not entitled to vote. School governing boards are chaired by a parent.

In vocational education centres and adult education centres, the composition of the governing board is slightly different. Parents may sit on the governing boards of vocational education centres only. Students sit on the governing boards of both vocational education centres and adult education centres, as do representatives of socioeconomic and community groups and representatives of businesses. In both types of centres, the governing board may be chaired by either a representative of the socioeconomic or community groups or a parent, where applicable.

In both schools and centres, the principal or director attends meetings but is not entitled to vote. All governing board meetings are open to members of the public, who may take the floor only when so authorized by the governing board.¹

How have the governing boards fared in 1998-99, their first year of operation? What problems did they encounter and what solutions did they adopt? Are they satisfied with their first year of operation and how, in their view, could their role be improved? These are the questions this report will attempt to answer based on the feedback provided by governing boards in schools, vocational education centres and adult education centres.

1. Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec, *Committees at the School Level*, brochure (Québec, 1998); Ministère de l'Éducation and Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec, *Parents Involved More than Ever!*, brochure (Québec, 1998).

METHODOLOGY



METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION

In May 1999, survey questionnaires were sent to the director general of each school board for all of the educational institutions in the school board. The directors general were asked to forward the questionnaires to the chairs of the governing boards. A total of 1 287 duly completed questionnaires were returned, for an overall response rate of 44%. The response rate varied according to the type of educational institution, namely, 45% for schools, 38% for vocational education centres and 36% for adult education centres.² The overall response rate for English institutions was considerably lower than for French institutions (19% compared to 48%). Completed questionnaires were returned by all school boards, with the exception of New Frontiers School Board.

Some 20 educational institutions reported that they did not have a governing board—in most cases, because no candidates had come to the fore. Some educational institutions cited other reasons for not forming a governing board. For example, one school is affiliated with a youth and family centre which has its own board; another is essentially a service centre and has no direct contact with parents.

DATA ANALYSIS

The results for all but one survey questions will be presented in separate sections, according to the type of educational institution. The differences observed between elementary and secondary schools will be discussed. (Schools offering both elementary and secondary education were counted as elementary schools.) The differences observed between English and French schools will also be noted, strictly for information purposes, as a greater number of respondents among English schools would have been necessary for these findings to provide an accurate picture of the situation.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Table 1 shows the distribution of the governing boards that took part in the survey, broken down by language of instruction, level of education and student enrolment. Of the boards taking part in the survey, slightly over 75% were in elementary schools, close to 15% were in secondary schools and the remainder were in schools offering both elementary and secondary education. Regardless of the type of institution, 94% of the questionnaires returned came from the French sector. Student enrolment varies according to the level of education: most elementary schools have under 500 students, whereas this is the case for only a minority of secondary schools.

2. The response rates were calculated assuming that all institutions had a governing board. Given that this is not the case and that only a certain percentage of questionnaires were returned to the Ministère, the response rates may, in fact, be slightly higher.

TABLE 1 Language of Instruction, Level of Education and Student Enrolment by Type of Educational Institution

Criterion	School		Vocational Education Centre		Adult Education Centre	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Language of instruction						
French	1 078	94.2	64	94.1	70	93.3
English	66	5.8	4	5.9	5	6.7
Total	1 144	100.0	68	100.0	75	100.0
Level of education*						
Elementary	876	76.9	n.a.		n.a.	
Elementary and secondary	77	6.8				
Secondary	186	16.3				
Total	1 139	100.0				
Student enrolment						
199 or less	273	23.9	21	31.3	21	28.8
Between 200 and 499	589	51.6	22	32.8	29	39.7
Between 500 and 999	208	18.2	18	26.9	17	23.3
1 000 or more	72	6.3	6	9.0	6	8.2
Total	1 142	100.0	67	100.0	73	100.0

* Seventy percent of secondary schools have students in Cycle Two.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the governing boards that took part in the survey by region. It should be noted that the Québec—Chaudière-Appalaches and Laval-Laurentides-Lanaudière regions have the highest number of vocational education centres and adult education centres.

TABLE 2 Administrative Region by Type of Educational Institution

Region	School		Vocational Education Centre		Adult Education Centre	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Bas-Saint-Laurent—Gaspésie— Îles-de-la-Madeleine	101	8.9	7	10.3	9	12.0
Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean	64	5.6	3	4.4	4	5.3
Québec—Chaudière-Appalaches	187	16.4	17	25.0	14	18.7
Mauricie—Bois-Francs— Centre-du-Québec	97	8.5	3	4.4	3	4.0
Estrie	59	5.2	4	5.9	5	6.7
Laval-Laurentides-Lanaudière	173	15.2	11	16.2	11	14.7
Montréal	178	15.6	6	8.8	7	9.3
Montréal	150	13.2	6	8.8	7	9.3
Outaouais	59	5.2	4	5.9	5	6.7
Abitibi-Témiscamingue— Nord-du-Québec	46	4.0	6	8.8	7	9.3
Côte-Nord	24	2.1	1	1.5	3	4.0
Total	1 138	100.0	68	100.0	75	100.0

FORMATION OF THE GOVERNING BOARDS



FORMATION OF THE GOVERNING BOARDS

This section deals with the composition of the governing boards, the recruitment of members, and the criteria used to appoint community representatives.

IN SCHOOLS

The composition of governing boards in schools is illustrated in Table 3. Almost all governing boards in schools had at least the minimum number of members required by law, except where community representatives are concerned. In these schools, the governing board was composed of four parents of students, four school staff members, including at least two teachers, and two students, in the case of secondary schools where Cycle Two is offered. Only 43% of governing boards in schools had two community representatives on their governing boards, as could be expected; 28% had only one and 29% had none. Most governing boards included at least one support staff representative while more than 50% included a representative of the non-teaching professional staff. In 16% of schools, the commissioner sat in on meetings at the invitation of the governing board. The average school governing board was comprised of 13 members.

Governing boards in secondary schools were larger than in elementary schools, with an average of 15 members as opposed to 12. With the exception of representatives of school daycare staff, which sit on the governing boards of elementary schools only, there were more representatives of each group on the governing boards of secondary schools.

Governing boards in English schools counted two more members on average than those in French schools. They also featured more parents and teachers than did their counterparts in French schools. However, only one-third of governing boards in English schools included

representatives of non-teaching professional staff, compared with close to 60% in French schools.

A significant number of governing boards (38%) had difficulty filling the positions reserved for community representatives. This problem was less common among secondary schools (32%) than elementary schools (39%). To remedy this problem, the governing boards either launched a recruitment campaign (34%) (for example, by advertising the positions in a local newspaper or by sending letters to organizations), used their members' or the principal's personal connections (30%), or took other measures (17%). These other measures included providing the public with information on the role of the governing board, calling on the regional county municipality (RCM) and recruiting someone from among the members of the parent participation organization. However, 18% of the governing boards were unable to recruit community representatives.

Given that there are generally more candidates than seats available, 52% of schools held elections to fill the seats reserved for parent representatives. More elementary schools than secondary schools held such elections (54% compared with 42%). Elections for teacher representatives were held in 18% of schools. This time, more secondary schools than elementary schools held such elections (32% compared with 16%). Elections for student representatives were held in 28% of secondary schools where Cycle Two is offered.

Slightly more English schools than French schools held elections to fill the seats reserved for parent representatives, and twice as many English schools than French schools held elections to fill those reserved for teacher representatives.

TABLE 3 Composition of Governing Boards in Schools by Level of Education (%)

Category Number of Members	Elementary* (n = 936)	Secondary (n = 180)	Total (n = 1 116)
Parents			
Less than 4	1.7	1.1	1.6
4 or 5	53.4	31.1	49.8
Between 6 and 9	44.9	67.8	48.6
Teachers			
Less than 2	0.7	0.6	0.7
2 or 3	54.8	31.7	51.1
Between 4 and 6**	44.5	67.7	48.2
Non-teaching professionals			
None	48.9	9.4	42.7
1	44.9	82.8	50.9
2**	6.2	7.8	6.4
Support staff			
None	22.0	6.7	19.5
1	69.2	82.2	71.3
2**	8.8	11.1	9.2
School daycare staff			
None	48.6	100.0	56.9
1**	51.4	—	43.1
School staff (all categories)			
Less than 4	2.8	1.1	2.6
4 or 5	52.7	31.1	49.2
Between 6 and 9	44.5	67.8	48.2
Students***			
None	n.a.	5.0	n.a.
2		95.0	
Community representatives			
None	30.6	23.9	29.4
1	27.9	26.7	27.8
2**	41.5	49.4	42.8
Representatives of socioeconomic or community groups			
None	97.9	92.8	97.0
1**	2.1	7.2	3.0
Invited commissioner			
None	84.1	83.3	84.0
1**	15.9	16.7	16.0
Total number of members (not counting the principal and the invited commissioner)			
Between 5 and 9	13.8	2.8	12.0
Between 10 and 12	48.6	19.4	44.1
Between 13 and 15	26.0	29.4	26.4
Between 16 and 20**	11.6	48.3	17.5

* Including schools that offer both elementary and secondary education.

** The percentages given in this row may include school governing boards (less than 12 overall) that had one or two more representatives of the stated category than the highest number indicated.

*** The percentages are based on the number of schools which reported enrolments in Cycle Two of secondary school. The category "2" includes a few school governing boards that had three or up to four student representatives.

Selection of Representatives from Outside the School

Table 4 lists the criteria used to select representatives from outside the school. Involvement in the community (not necessarily in school-related affairs) was the most frequently cited criterion, as people who are involved in the community know the community and may, in certain cases, help secure services for the school. The person may do volunteer work in a community group, for example, or work in a local community social service centre ("CLSC") or municipal recreational centre. The second most common criterion was an interest in children and youth, followed by interest and experience in education. The other criteria given were availability, employment in a field related to education, and a particular status linked to the culture of origin, religion or other characteristic of the student population.

IN CENTRES

Table 5 illustrates the composition of governing boards in vocational education centres and adult education centres. Almost all of both types of centres had at least the required minimum number of school staff representatives on their governing boards, i.e. four, including two teachers. In most centres, the governing board included both support staff representatives and representatives of the non-teaching professional staff. Parent representatives sat on the governing board in only 22% of vocational education centres. All adult education centres and almost all vocational education centres had student representatives on their governing boards.

Some 70% of both types of centres filled the seats reserved for representatives of socioeconomic or community groups, while 77% of vocational education centres and 53% of adult education centres filled those reserved for rep-

TABLE 4 Selection Criteria for Community Representatives on School Governing Boards (n = 779)*

Selection Criteria	%
Involvement in the community, work-related or not, which may be useful in connection with the school's educational project; visibility	53.2
An interest in children and youth	24.5
An interest in education	19.7
Experience in education	19.0
Availability	11.7
Other (knowledge of a particular segment of the student population, etc.)	10.8

* The percentages add up to more than 100% because 40% of the schools gave two selection criteria.

representatives of businesses.³ Moreover, community representatives were appointed to the governing board in only a minority of both types of centres. When all three types of representatives from outside the school are considered, the results show that all adult education and vocational centres had at least one such representative on their governing board. Governing boards in vocational education centres counted 12 members on average, compared with 11 in adult education centres.

Slightly under half (46%) of governing boards in adult education centres had problems recruiting representatives of businesses, compared with 36% of governing boards in vocational education centres. Recruiting representatives of socioeconomic or community groups was not quite as difficult: 33% of governing boards in adult education centres reported problems, compared with 30% of those in vocational education centres. Half of both types of centres seemed interested in appointing community representatives. Of these, most were able to fill the positions, but only with difficulty.

To remedy the difficulties they experienced in recruiting representatives of socioeconomic or community groups or of businesses, most governing boards in centres used their members' or the centre director's personal connections. Some centres approached businesses or other bodies such as local common issues tables (*tables de concertation locale*), local development centres and the Chamber of Commerce.

Elections were held to fill the seats for student representatives in 48% of vocational education centres and 36% of adult education centres because there were more candidates than seats available. As for teacher representatives, elections were necessary in only 37% of vocational education centres and 22% of adult education centres.

Selection of Representatives from Outside the Centre

Table 6 lists the criteria used by the school board to select representatives of socioeconomic or community groups to sit on the governing boards of vocational education centres and adult education centres and those used to select representatives of businesses to sit on the governing boards of vocational education centres. In all cases, the main criterion was involvement in sectors of activity that are related to the centre's activities (such as the organization of work placements) or that give the centre greater visibility. Other selection criteria included suitability to act as a regional representative, characteristics linked to those of the school population (cultural origins, difficulties), and so on.

3. Respondents' answers to an earlier question on the problems encountered in filling the seats reserved for representatives of businesses seem to indicate that 12% of adult education centres made no effort to fill these seats.

TABLE 5 Composition of Governing Boards in Vocational Education Centres and Adult Education Centres (%)

Category Number of Members	Vocational Education Centre (n = 65)	Adult Education Centre (n = 72)
Parents		
None	78.4	98.6
1	6.2	1.4
2	15.4	—
Teachers		
2 or 3	41.5	62.5
4 or 5	35.4	37.5
6 or 7*	23.1	—
Non-teaching professionals		
None	10.8	8.3
1*	89.2	91.7
Support staff		
None	6.2	6.9
1*	93.8	93.1
School staff (all categories)		
Less than 4	1.5	4.2
4 or 5	44.6	58.3
Between 6 and 9	53.9	37.5
Students		
None	4.6	—
1	7.7	1.4
2	69.2	75.0
3 or 4*	18.5	23.6
Community representatives		
None	76.9	69.4
1	16.9	16.7
2*	6.2	13.9
Representatives of socioeconomic or community groups		
None	6.2	11.1
1	21.5	19.4
2	67.7	55.6
3 or 4	4.6	13.9
Representatives of businesses		
None	4.6	27.8
1	18.5	19.4
2	60.0	52.8
3 or 4*	16.9	—
Invited commissioner		
None	92.3	98.6
1	7.7	1.4
Total number of members (not counting the principal and the invited commissioner)		
Between 7 and 9	15.4	16.7
Between 10 and 12	47.7	77.7
Between 13 and 15	23.1	5.6
Between 16 and 18	13.8	—

* The percentage given in this row for each type of centre may include two or three governing boards that had one more member of the stated category than the highest number indicated.

TABLE 6 Selection Criteria for Representatives of Socioeconomic or Community Groups or Businesses on Governing Boards of Vocational Education Centres and Adult Education Centres (%)*

Representatives Selection Criterion	Vocational Education Centre (n = 59)	Adult Education Centre (n = 56)**
Representatives of socioeconomic or community groups		
Community involvement related to the centre's sectors of activity	60.3	53.6
Collaboration with the centre regarding student training, placement and so on	12.1	16.1
Interest or experience in education	22.4	21.4
Willingness to serve	13.8	8.9
Availability	5.2	14.3
Other (regional representation, knowledge of a particular segment of the student population, etc.)	8.6	19.6
Representatives of businesses		
Community involvement related to the centre's sectors of activity	74.6	n.a.
Collaboration with the centre regarding student training, placement and so on	10.2	
Willingness to serve	10.2	
Availability	8.5	
Interest or experience in education	5.1	
Other	6.8	

* The percentages add up to more than 100% because more than 25% of centres gave two selection criteria.

** Adult education centres were not asked to give the criteria they used to select representatives of businesses although most appointed such representatives to their governing board.

OPERATION OF THE GOVERNING BOARDS



OPERATION OF THE GOVERNING BOARDS

This section looks at the governing boards' first year of operation, and more specifically, at meetings, the parent participation organization, the topics discussed during the school year, the main problems encountered and the solutions adopted, training activities, and the Web site for governing boards.

MEETINGS

School governing boards held their first meeting in September or October in 95% of cases (see Table 7). In slightly less than half of schools (46%), the governing boards held nine or ten meetings during the school year. A comparable number of governing boards held fewer meetings, and 5% held more than ten meetings, for an average of 8.2 meetings for the year. In the English sector, two-thirds of the governing boards in schools convened their first meeting in September, compared with only 42% of their counterparts in the French sector. Governing boards in English schools held one more meeting on average.

Half of the governing boards in schools met once a month, 38% met less than once a month and 12% met slightly more than once a month.⁴ Few school governing boards (13%) cancelled meetings because they did not have a quorum. For a governing board to have a quorum, a majority of the governing board members must be present, including at least half of the parent representatives.

In vocational education centres and adult education centres, the month during which the governing boards held their first meeting varied greatly (see Table 7). Few governing boards started their activities in September.

Most, i.e., 56% of governing boards in vocational education centres and 65% of those in adult education centres, did so between October and December. In both types of centres, more than six governing boards out of ten held five or six meetings during the school year, for an average of five meetings over the school year. Few governing boards cancelled meetings because they did not have a quorum (8% of governing boards in adult education centres and 13% of those in vocational education centres).

PARENT PARTICIPATION ORGANIZATION

At the general meetings held in September in schools, parents may decide to form a parent participation organization and elect its members. The role of the parent participation organization is to encourage the collaboration of parents in developing, implementing and periodically evaluating the school's education project. The parent participation organization may advise the governing board on matters of concern to parents or be consulted by the governing board on such matters.⁵ While the parent participation organization is not under the authority of the governing board, it nonetheless constitutes a channel through which the governing board can find out what parents think about certain issues and it serves as a source of support for the parent representatives on the governing board.

A parent participation organization was formed in 63% of schools, more commonly at the elementary level (66%) than at the secondary level (45%). Apart from a few exceptions, the number of members in parent participation

4. These percentages were obtained by correlating the number of meetings held during the year and the month in which the first meeting was held: the governing boards that met monthly are those that held nine or ten meetings since September, eight or nine meetings since October, and so on.

5. Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec, *Committees at the School Level*, brochure (Québec, 1998).

TABLE 7 Month of First Meeting and Number of Meetings Held during the School Year by Type of Educational Institution (%)

	School (n = 1 116)	Vocational Education Centre (n = 64)	Adult Education Centre (n = 69)
Month of first meeting			
September	43.3	9.5	5.8
October	51.5	20.6	23.2
November or December	3.8	34.9	42.0
January	—	19.1	13.0
February or March	—	14.3	11.6
Other month	1.4	1.6	4.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of meetings held during the school year			
Between 2 and 4*	0.4	28.1	20.3
5 or 6	21.2	60.9	66.7
7 or 8	26.8	6.3	10.1
9 or 10	46.4	4.7	2.9
Between 11 and 15	5.2	—	—
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Meeting cancelled because of lack of quorum			
Yes**	12.6	12.5	7.5
No	87.4	87.5	92.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Only a few governing boards in centres held no more than two meetings.

** Governing boards that cancelled more than one meeting were the exception rather than the rule.

organizations varied between three and 25, but more often between six and ten (in 47% of schools). There were fewer than six members in a quarter of schools, and more than ten members in just over a quarter of schools, ten members being the average. Only a quarter of the schools where parent participation organizations were formed gave the organization an operating budget.

Parent participation organizations were formed in slightly more English schools than French schools and counted three more members on average.

The most common reasons given for not forming parent participation organizations were the lack of interest shown at the parents' general meeting (in 39% of schools) and the lack of parents volunteering to serve on the organization (33%). The other reasons given were a lack of time or information (21%), and the existence of other groups with similar functions (7%) such as the Home and School Association in English schools.

TOPICS DISCUSSED IN SCHOOLS

Table 8 gives the list of topics discussed by governing boards in schools and the number of times they came up during the school year. Early on in their term, almost all governing boards discussed their rules of internal management, operating budgets and the Education Act (one of the most common topics of discussion). Around 5% of governing boards also discussed other topics, such as the action plan, the role of the parent participation organization, and school activities.

Some points, such as the educational project, the services offered by the school, and advice requested by the school board, came up more often than others in discussions on the general functions and powers of the governing board. The great majority of governing boards also talked about rules of conduct and safety measures, student supervision policy and the annual report on school activities. Some topics, such as the information to be provided to the community on the services offered, the evaluation of the services offered, the selection criteria for the appointment of the principal, and the confessional status of the school, were broached by only six out of ten schools. The last two topics were of greater importance to English schools than French schools. A few schools mentioned other topics such as student grouping, policies on solicitation and smoking, and measures to help low-income families.

As for educational services, the great majority of governing boards held discussions on the programming of educational activities which entail changes in the students' schedule or leaving the school premises. Three-quarters of the governing boards or less discussed other topics. While the implementation of student services and special services were of equal concern to governing boards in both elementary and secondary schools, other topics were of greater concern to governing boards in secondary schools. These include the approach proposed for the implementation of the basic school regulation, the time allocation for each

subject and observance of the minimum time prescribed for Catholic religious and moral instruction (CRMI) or Protestant moral and religious education (PMRE), the overall approach for the enrichment or adaptation of programs, and the development of local programs of study. In a few schools, the governing board also talked about the new curriculum, the use of information and communications technologies, kindergarten classes, and intensive, special and mentoring programs.

Apart from a few exceptions, all governing boards examined the school's annual budget. Most considered the school's needs for certain human, material or financial resources, and the use of premises or immovables. The question of donations and contributions was of greater concern to elementary schools than to secondary schools. Other topics included fund-raising campaigns, the school fund, teacher training and cafeteria services.

As for extracurricular services, around 70% of the governing boards discussed social, cultural and sports services and lunch-hour supervision, although this last point came up more often in elementary schools than in secondary schools. School daycare services, a relevant topic at the elementary level only, was discussed by 75% of elementary school governing boards. Some governing boards discussed other topics such as student transportation, paratransit, the lunch hour, and the improvement of the school grounds or of a park. With the exception of school daycare services, extracurricular services were the focus of greater attention at governing board meetings in English schools than in French schools.

TABLE 8 Topics Discussed by Governing Boards in Schools and Number of Times Discussed during the School Year (%)

Topic Discussed	Number of Times			Total (n = 1 116)
	1	2 or 3	4 or more	
Start of term				
Rules of internal management	37.4	53.2	8.2	98.8
Operating budget	34.9	50.2	12.7	97.8
Understanding of the Education Act	24.3	40.2	29.7	94.2
General functions and powers				
Rules of conduct and safety measures	48.0	37.7	9.3	95.0
Educational project	25.2	43.8	22.6	91.6
Services offered by the school	36.0	38.1	17.2	91.3
Student supervision policy	44.6	40.5	6.0	91.1
Annual report of school activities	57.7	24.6	6.4	88.7
Advice requested by the school board	17.9	37.9	26.6	82.4
Report to the community on the services offered	35.7	16.0	7.3	59.0
Selection criteria for the appointment of the principal	49.9	9.1	0.2	59.2
Evaluation of the services offered	35.3	20.4	2.9	58.6
Confessional status of the school	39.0	13.2	1.8	54.0
Educational services				
Programming of educational activities which entail changes in the students' schedule or leaving the school premises	22.3	41.1	29.0	92.4
Approach proposed for the implementation of the basic school regulation	45.0	28.1	4.5	77.6
Time allocation for each subject and observance of the minimum time prescribed for CRMI or PMRE	49.5	17.7	1.6	68.8
Implementation of student services and special services	42.2	21.0	4.3	67.5
Overall approach for the enrichment or adaptation of programs	36.0	21.1	3.8	60.9
Overall approach for the development of local programs	28.6	14.5	3.3	46.4

(Cont.)

TABLE 8 Topics Discussed by Governing Boards in Schools and Number of Times Discussed during the School Year (%)

Topic Discussed	Number of Times			Total (n = 1 116)
	1	2 or 3	4 or more	
Human, material and financial resources				
School's annual budget	33.8	50.2	14.4	98.4
Needs regarding certain human, material or financial resources	28.4	38.9	17.2	84.5
Use of premises or immovables	42.6	32.2	9.3	84.1
Donations and contributions	29.3	29.3	12.8	71.4
Extracurricular services				
Social, cultural and sports services for students or the community	32.4	32.7	7.3	72.4
Lunch-hour supervision	27.4	31.0	12.4	70.8
School daycare services	18.4	28.1	17.6	64.1
Educational services other than those provided for in the basic school regulation	32.1	21.8	4.5	58.4
Contracts for the provision of goods	25.5	12.7	2.3	40.5

TOPICS DISCUSSED IN CENTRES

Tables 9 and 10 show that governing boards in vocational education centres and in adult educational centres were basically concerned with the same topics, with the exception of one point related to student services. Topics were more commonly discussed once only, rather than several times. This is probably due to the fact that governing boards in centres did not hold as many meetings as those in schools.

Almost all governing boards discussed the rules of internal management, the operating budget and the Education Act at the start of their term, the latter being the most frequently discussed topic, as in schools. A few centres mentioned other topics such as the action plan, the student population and special committees.

With respect to general functions and powers, the great majority of governing boards discussed the centre's policies and action plans, the services offered by the centre and the centre's rules of operation. In most centres (between 64% and 83%), governing boards spent some time discussing the student supervision policy, rules of conduct and safety measures, the centre's annual report and advice requested by the school board. Slightly more governing boards in adult education centres than in vocational education centres (69% compared with 58%) were concerned with reporting to the community on the services offered. Less than 60% of governing boards talked about the evaluation of the services offered and the selection criteria for the appointment of the centre director. Other topics, such as advice to the Ministère de l'Éducation or to a member of the National Assembly, were sometimes discussed.

No more than seven out of ten centres addressed topics related to educational services. Compared with governing boards in vocational education centres, those in adult education centres devoted slightly more attention to the approach for the implementation of the basic school regulation, but slightly less to the implementation of programs of study. Almost half of governing boards, regardless of the type of centre, discussed the implementation of student services. The implementation of popular education services was of greater interest to governing boards in adult education centres than to those in vocational education centres (40% compared with 23%).

All but one or two governing boards addressed the centre's annual budget. Around three-quarters discussed the use of premises or immovables, and slightly less than three-quarters, the centre's needs for human, mate-

rial and financial resources. A minority of governing boards discussed donations and contributions (42% of governing boards in adult education centres compared with 33% of those in vocational education centres). A few governing boards discussed other topics, such as funding by the school board and reorganization.

Extracurricular services, and more specifically, educational services other than those provided for in the basic regulation and contracts for the provision of goods, were discussed by half of the governing boards at most. Social, cultural and sports activities concerned mainly the governing boards in adult education centres (50%). A few centres discussed other topics such as student transportation and special projects.

TABLE 9 Topics Discussed by Governing Boards in Vocational Education Centres and Number of Times Discussed during the School Year (%)

Topic Discussed	Number of Times			Total (n = 65)
	1	2 or 3	4 or more	
Start of term				
Rules of internal management	49.2	46.2	3.1	98.5
Operating budget	47.7	43.1	7.7	98.5
Understanding of the Education Act	32.3	49.2	13.9	95.4
General functions and powers				
Policies and action plan	50.8	36.5	6.4	93.7
Services offered by the centre	50.0	23.4	14.1	87.5
Centre's rules of operation	51.6	27.4	8.1	87.1
Student supervision policy	44.4	25.4	6.4	76.2
Centre's annual report	56.9	16.9	1.5	75.3
Rules of conduct and safety measures	52.3	23.1	1.5	76.9
Advice requested by the school board	20.6	38.1	8.0	66.7
Information to the community on the services offered	37.5	20.3	—	57.8
Evaluation of the services offered	43.8	10.9	1.6	56.3
Selection criteria for the appointment of the centre director	40.6	9.4	—	50.0

(Cont.)

TABLE 9 Topics Discussed by Governing Boards in Vocational Education Centres and Number of Times Discussed during the School Year (%)

Topic Discussed	Number of Times			Total (n = 65)
	1	2 or 3	4 or more	
Educational services				
Implementation of the programs of study	48.4	14.5	—	62.9
Approach for the implementation of the basic regulation	45.3	15.6	—	60.9
Implementation of student services	40.3	8.1	—	48.4
Implementation of popular education services	18.3	5.0	—	23.3
Human, material and financial resources				
Centre's annual budget	41.5	47.7	9.2	98.4
Use of premises or immovables	39.7	31.7	3.2	74.6
Needs regarding certain human, material or financial resources	32.8	28.1	4.7	65.6
Donations and contributions	25.4	7.9	—	33.3
Extracurricular services				
Educational services other than those provided for in the basic regulation	23.8	7.9	—	31.7
Contracts for the provision of goods	18.7	7.8	1.6	28.1
Social, cultural and sports services for students or the community	11.1	1.6	—	12.7

TABLE 10 Topics Discussed by Governing Boards in Adult Education Centres and Number of Times Discussed during the School Year (%)

Topic Discussed	Number of Times			Total (n = 72)
	1	2 or 3	4 or more	
Start of term				
Rules of internal management	55.5	38.9	4.2	98.6
Operating budget	51.4	33.3	13.9	98.6
Understanding of the Education Act	36.1	41.7	16.7	94.5

(Cont.)

TABLE 10 Topics Discussed by Governing Boards in Adult Education Centres and Number of Times Discussed during the School Year (%)

Topic Discussed	Number of Times			Total (n = 72)
	1	2 or 3	4 or more	
General functions and powers				
Services offered by the centre	52.9	32.8	10.0	95.7
Policies and action plan	40.9	42.2	9.9	93.0
Centre's rules of operation	58.6	25.7	7.1	91.4
Student supervision policy	58.6	21.4	2.9	82.9
Centre's annual report	70.6	10.3	1.5	82.4
Information to the community on the services offered	38.8	25.4	4.5	68.7
Rules of conduct and safety measures	50.8	17.9	—	68.7
Advice requested by the school board	31.9	24.6	7.3	63.8
Evaluation of the services offered	39.7	14.7	1.5	55.9
Selection criteria for the appointment of the centre director	37.7	5.8	—	43.5
Educational services				
Approach for the implementation of the basic regulation	50.0	20.8	—	70.8
Implementation of student services	46.4	7.2	—	53.6
Implementation of the programs of study	38.2	11.8	—	50.0
Implementation of popular education services	27.9	11.8	—	39.7
Human, material and financial resources				
Centre's annual budget	58.3	33.3	8.3	100.0
Use of premises or immovables	46.4	24.6	7.3	78.3
Needs regarding certain human, material or financial resources	41.2	25.0	5.9	72.1
Donations and contributions	32.8	9.0	—	41.8
Extracurricular services				
Social, cultural and sports services for students or the community	38.6	11.4	—	50.0
Educational services other than those provided for in the basic regulation	31.9	10.1	—	42.0
Contracts for the provision of goods	20.3	2.9	—	23.2

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

The governing boards were asked to identify the three main problems they had encountered during their first year of operation. Table 11 gives the breakdown of problems by type of educational institution. It is noteworthy that 22% of governing boards in schools, 31% of those in vocational education centres and 36% of those in adult education centres experienced no particular problems.

The two most common problems, regardless of the type of educational institution, were related to understanding and interpreting certain sections of the Education Act, and understanding and exercising the powers of the governing board in relation to those of other authorities. Around half, or slightly more than half, of all governing boards experienced these problems.

In schools, the third most common problem had to do with the role of the parent participation organization with respect to that of the governing board. This problem affected more elementary schools than secondary schools. Close to a quarter of governing boards reported problems in two other areas: parent participation in a more formal structure than that of the defunct school committee, and understanding and adoption of the school budget. The latter problem came up in twice as many secondary schools than elementary schools. Problems in relations among governing board members are seldom mentioned, but when they are, the problems described are between parents and school staff. Governing boards in schools experienced other types of difficulties related to relations with the school board, the lack of time for consultation, school staff's negative perception of the governing board, teachers' boycott of the governing board, a lack of coordination and cohesion among members of the governing board, relations with the parents' committee, training needs, the budget for training activities for parents, and the redundant formation of governing boards for each separate building of a school.

The third most common problem in vocational education centres and adult education centres pertained to understanding and adopting the centre's budget. A quarter of governing boards in vocational education centres lamented the fact that they either had been unsuccessful or had experienced difficulty in recruiting parent representatives. Several governing boards in both types of centres reported that they had problems understanding the role to be played by representatives of businesses and representatives of socioeconomic or community groups. Problems related to numerous resignations and the adoption of rules of internal management, though not major, were experienced more often by governing boards in adult education centres than by governing boards in vocational education centres and schools.

Governing boards in vocational education centres reported other types of problems related to the recruitment of parent and student representatives, the inflexibility of the law on certain points, and the irregular attendance or low level of commitment of representatives of businesses and representatives of socioeconomic or community groups. Governing boards in adult education centres described other problems tied to the recruitment of student representatives, representatives of businesses and representatives of socioeconomic or community groups, understanding of the role to be played by student representatives, relations with the school board, and the lack of coordination and cohesion among members of the governing board.

Table 12 gives a breakdown of the solutions adopted by governing boards to remedy the problems they encountered, regardless of the type of educational institution. To better understand and interpret certain sections of the Education Act and better understand the powers exercised by the governing board, most respondents consulted the school board, the school administration or another authority, read up on the Education Act, or took part in training activities (conferences, courses, etc.). To understand and adopt the institution's budget, most respondents first consulted mainly

TABLE 11 Main Problems Encountered by Type of Educational Institution (%)

Type of Problem	School (n = 887)	Vocational Education Centre (n = 45)	Adult Education Centre (n = 47)
Understanding and interpretation of certain sections of the Education Act	56.5	48.9	53.2
Understanding and exercising of the powers of the governing board in relation to those of other authorities (school administration, staff, school board, etc.)	57.2	53.3	51.1
Understanding and adoption of the budget of the school or centre	22.2	35.6	31.9
Role of the parent participation organization in relation to that of the governing board	43.0	—	—
Participation of parents in a more formal structure than that of the defunct school committee	24.9	11.4	—
Adoption of the rules of internal management	11.4	9.1	19.2
Numerous resignations (i.e., over a quarter of voting members)	3.1	6.8	17.0
Relations between parent representatives and school staff representatives	16.2	—	—
Relations between governing board members and the school administration	8.8	6.7	2.1
Relations between governing board members and community representatives	2.0	4.4	—
Understanding of the role of community representatives	12.8	6.7	4.3
Understanding of the role of representatives of socioeconomic or community groups	1.8	11.1	17.0
Understanding of the role of representatives of businesses	1.4	17.8	17.0
Other	10.7	40.9	17.0

* These percentages include only those governing boards that reported problems.

the school administration or the school board, and then read up on the subject to foster discussion at meetings, or resorted to other means such as comparing the budget to be adopted with that for previous years. These problems and conflicts between governing board members and the school administration were the main problems for which governing boards consulted outside their own ranks.

To understand the role of the parent participation organization, most governing boards attempted to better define it either orally or in writing, and to build ties with this organization either by meeting its members or by collaborating with them on certain projects.

To solve problems concerning parents' participation in a more formal structure than the defunct school committee, the adoption of rules of internal management, and relations between parent representatives and school staff representatives, the governing boards opted mainly for discussion and tolerance. The governing boards applied the same approach to problems in relations between their members and the school administration, but in this case, they first consulted the school board. Other solutions than those listed in Table 12 as well as solutions to less common problems are discussed in the appendix to this report.

TABLE 12 Solutions Adopted to Remedy Problems*

Problem Solutions	%
Understanding and interpretation of certain sections of the Education Act (n = 399)	
Consult or seek advice from the school board, school administration, etc.	39.1
Read up on the Act, research, etc.	30.6
Take part in training activities (courses, conferences, etc.)	29.2
Discuss and clarify points in order to work out a common understanding	9.5
Other (e.g., information sessions)	2.8
No solution	2.5
Understanding and exercising of the powers of the governing board in relation to those of other authorities (school administration, staff, school board, etc.) (n = 350)	
Consult or seek advice from the school administration, school board, etc.	28.6
Read up on the Act, research, etc.	27.5
Take part in training activities (courses, conferences, etc.)	22.0
Discuss and clarify points in order to work out a common understanding	16.0
Define the role of each authority, orally or in writing	4.3
Other (e.g., review the action plan at each meeting)	3.4
No solution	10.0

* n = number of governing boards that described their solution to the problem on the survey questionnaire.

(Cont.)

TABLE 12 Solutions Adopted to Remedy Problems*

Problem Solutions	%
Understanding and adoption of the budget of the school or centre (n = 144)	
Consult or seek advice from the school administration, school board, etc.	37.5
Hold discussions, read up on the topic and inform members	21.6
Other (ask for information in advance or prior to adopting the budget, compare the budget to be adopted with that for previous years, etc.)	22.2
No solution	20.1
Role of the parent participation organization in relation to that of the governing board (n = 258)	
Build ties with the organization by meeting with its members, setting up a joint meeting with the school principal or centre director, etc.	20.2
Clarify the role of the organization, clearly define its mandate and help it carry out concrete projects	19.0
Consult, research or take part in training activities	11.7
Discuss its role with a view to better understand it	7.8
Other (consult other parent participation organizations to find out how they proceed, strike a special committee, etc.)	12.0
No solution	29.8
Participation of parents in a more formal structure than that of the defunct school committee (n = 116)	
Discuss procedure with parents and provide them with information, relax the rules of order, etc.	42.2
Hold other meetings in a more informal setting, increase the number of meetings, etc.	11.2
Clarify the role of parent representatives and of other members	10.3
Take part in training activities (courses, conferences, etc.)	6.9
Other (keep the same parent representatives on the governing board the following year, follow the rules of order more closely, etc.)	17.3
No solution	13.8
Numerous resignations (i.e., over a quarter of voting members) (n = 24)	
Recruit new members, talk with the people concerned, etc.	41.7
Other (make sure the remaining members stay in office, provide greater incentive to sit on the governing board, etc.)	33.3
No solution	25.0

* n = number of governing boards that described their solution to the problem on the survey questionnaire.

(Cont.)

TABLE 12 Solutions Adopted to Remedy Problems*

Problem Solutions	%
Adoption of rules of internal management (n = 63)	
Discuss the rules of order and provide members with information, hold a vote on the rules of order, adapt the rules to the group, etc.	39.7
Consult or seek advice from the school administration, school board, etc.	20.7
Research the topic, read up on it, etc.	6.4
Other (follow the rules more closely so that each member can play his or her role, consult other governing boards, etc.)	20.7
No solution	6.3
Relations between parent representatives and school staff representatives (n = 95)	
Discuss issues, clarify misunderstandings, and show tolerance	34.7
Clarify the role of each group within the governing board	11.6
Hold other meetings in an informal setting so that members can get better acquainted, relax the rules of order so that members will feel more at ease	10.5
Consult or seek advice from the school board, school administration, etc.	8.4
Other (appoint a mediator to talk with each group, hold meetings with both groups before official meetings, etc.)	12.8
No solution	22.1
Relations between governing board members and the school administration (n = 46)	
Consult or seek advice, mainly from the school board	23.9
Discuss issues, clarify misunderstandings and show tolerance	19.6
Ask for information in advance so that governing board members will be well-informed on the issues	8.7
Other (have the chair of the governing board meet with the administration, go over the issues with each party, etc.)	24.0
No solution	23.9
Understanding of the role of community representatives on the governing board (n = 51)	
Discuss the role of community representatives in order to better understand it	17.6
Clarify the role of each group of representatives on the governing board	13.7
Other (involve community representatives in developing the school's educational project, read up on the topic, etc.)	25.5
No solution	43.1

* n = number of governing boards that described their solution to the problem on the survey questionnaire.

TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Close to two-thirds of governing boards in schools said that they took part in the training session developed and offered by the Ministère de l'Éducation on the formation of governing boards (see Table 13). In around three-quarters of these cases, the session was attended by only a few members of the governing board. Almost all school governing boards delegated parent representatives, 70% delegated teacher representatives and less than 40% delegated other members (see Table 14).

Most governing boards in schools (71%) also attended training activities offered by an orga-

nization other than the Ministère de l'Éducation. In most cases, these training activities were offered by the school board (47%) and the Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec (43%). The training activities organized by the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec were attended by 21% of governing boards in schools. Few governing boards took part in the training activities held by the Fédération des commissions scolaires and private firms. Some governing boards attended training activities offered by other organizations such as the Association des comités de parents, unions, the Conseil de l'île de Montréal, and the Régie régionale de la santé. Governing boards in English schools

TABLE 13 Participation in Training Activities during the School Year by Type of Educational Institution (%)*

Training Provider	School (n = 1 117)	Vocational Education Centre (n = 65)	Adult Education Centre (n = 71)
Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ)	65.2	55.4	54.3
Organization other than the MEQ	71.3	64.6	70.4
School board	46.5	41.5	39.4
Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec	42.5	—	2.8
Fédération des commissions scolaires	3.1	4.6	4.2
Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec	21.1	33.9	49.3
Private firm or consultant	4.5	6.2	9.9
Other	7.1	4.6	7.0
Number of training activities attended in all**			
0	10.2	13.9	9.7
1	31.6	44.6	41.7
2	28.9	26.2	30.6
3 or more	29.3	15.3	18.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

* These percentages are based on the total number of governing boards taking part in the survey.

** This number includes all organizations (including the MEQ) that provided training activities to governing boards.

TABLE 14 Governing Board Members Attending the MEQ Training Session by Type of Educational Institution (%)*

Governing Board Members	School (n = 706)	Vocational Education Centre (n = 36)	Adult Education Centre (n = 35)
Parents	95.6	19.4	—
Teachers	70.4	91.7	74.3
Non-teaching professionals	28.6	72.2	65.7
Support staff	36.4	80.6	62.9
School daycare staff**	20.9	—	—
Students***	17.8	58.3	54.3
Community representatives	12.5	16.7	17.1
Representatives of socioeconomic or community groups	0.6	75.0	54.3
Representatives of businesses	—	58.3	31.4

* These percentages are based on the number of governing boards attending the training session offered by the MEQ.

** These percentages are based on the number of governing boards in elementary schools.

*** These percentages are based on the number of governing boards in secondary schools where Cycle Two is offered.

opted for training activities offered by English-sector organizations such as the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers, the Lakeshore Teachers Association, and the Home and School Association.

Overall, 90% of governing boards in schools took part in at least one training activity offered either by the Ministère de l'Éducation or another organization. Not counting the training session offered by the Ministère, governing boards in secondary schools took part in more training activities than their counterparts in elementary schools.

Close to 55% of governing boards in vocational education centres and adult education centres attended the training session offered by the Ministère de l'Éducation (see Table 13). In approximately 60% of cases, only a few members were delegated. While most of these governing boards delegated school staff representatives, many also sent other representatives (see Table 14).

Close to two-thirds of governing boards in adult education centres and 70% of those in vocational education centres received training offered by an organization other than the Ministère. Among governing boards in adult education centres, the training activities offered by the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec ranked first (49%), while those offered by the school board took second place (39%). The reverse was true for governing boards in vocational education centres. Few governing boards in either type of centre attended training activities offered by organizations other than the Ministère.

Overall, more than 85% of governing boards in centres signed up for a training activity, whether offered by the Ministère or by another organization.

Assessment of the Usefulness of the Training Activities Attended

Table 15 shows governing boards' assessment of the usefulness of the training activities attended, by type of educational institution. Over 80% of governing boards in schools and centres felt that the training session offered by the Ministère de l'Éducation was useful to them (97% of governing boards in vocational education centres; 88% of those in schools and 83% of those in adult education centres). However, the training session was not as well appreciated in the English sector, as only half of these governing boards found it useful.

The comments made by the governing boards shed further light on their assessment of the training session. Only 35% of respondents in schools felt that the training session was thorough enough and that it provided clarifications on the role and operation of the governing board. Around 40% said the opposite, i.e., that the training session was not thorough enough, that it clarified the Education Act only in part and that it was not sufficiently practical or interactive. Others made suggestions rather than comments and the most common of these was that all members of a governing board should attend the same training session. Other frequent suggestions were that the training sessions be offered earlier in the school year; that they be offered throughout the school year rather than during a single period of time; that they be repeated every school year for new governing board members; and that documentation be distributed to participants. Some proposed that the Ministère set up a toll-free line (1-800) that governing boards could call should they have questions about procedure. Respondents from governing boards in centres made much the same comments as their counterparts in schools, but added that the training session did not take sufficient account of their particular needs.

Most governing boards in schools and centres felt that training activities offered by organizations other than the Ministère had been useful. Approximately 30% commented on the training activities offered by the school boards; another 30% or so expressed their appreciation of the training activities offered by the Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec; the remainder made general comments that applied to all training activities other than the training session offered by the Ministère.

Sixty percent of respondents from governing boards in schools thought that the training activities offered by organizations other than the Ministère covered all aspects of the role and operation of the governing boards. Several felt that they were practical and encouraged the sharing of ideas among governing boards. It should be noted that the training session offered by the Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec was particularly appreciated. Around 25% of respondents made negative comments to the effect that the training activities were not sufficiently comprehensive, practical or interactive. Some said that there was some redundancy in the training provided due to a lack of cohesion among the training providers. Others suggested that all members of a governing board should attend the same training activities at the same time and that the training activities should be offered earlier in the school year and repeated every school year for those governing boards that need further support. Still others expressed a need for documentation.

Few governing boards in centres made comments about training activities offered by organizations other than the Ministère. Their comments were on the whole positive, especially as regards the sessions offered by the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec.

TABLE 15 Assessment of the Usefulness of Training Activities Attended during the School Year by Type of Educational Institution (%)*

Training Provider	School			Vocational Education Centre			Adult Education Centre		
	Very useful	Useful	Total	Very useful	Useful	Total	Very useful	Useful	Total
Ministère de l'Éducation	49.9	38.5	88.4	38.9	58.3	97.2	54.3	28.6	82.9
School board	49.1	40.3	89.4	51.9	33.3	85.2	64.3	21.4	85.7
Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec	60.8	34.4	95.2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Fédération des commissions scolaires**	48.6	40.0	88.6	—	—	100.0	—	—	100.0
Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec	53.6	43.3	96.9	38.9	55.5	94.4	62.1	34.5	96.6
Private firm or consultant**	71.7	19.6	91.3	—	—	75.0	—	—	66.7
Other**	60.9	33.3	94.2	—	—	100.0	—	—	100.0

* The percentages given for each training provider are based on the number of governing boards that took part in its particular training activities.

** Given the small number of centre governing boards that took part in training activities (i.e., between three and five of each type), only the total percentage of boards that rated the activities as either very useful or useful are given here.

WEB SITE

Half of governing boards in schools were aware that the Ministère de l'Éducation had created a Web site especially for them. Of these, slightly more than half said that their members consulted the site (see Table 16). Most of the governing boards that consulted the site found that it was user-friendly, while approximately three-quarters found that the documents posted on the site were useful. However, less than half felt that its discussion group was interesting. Although most governing boards in English schools knew about the Web site, they did not find it as user-friendly as their French counterparts did and showed little interest for the documents posted on the site.

Half of the governing boards in adult education centres knew about the Web site, as did 54% of those in vocational education centres. Less than half of centre governing boards that were aware of the Web site reported that some of their members consulted it. It should be noted, however, that respondents from several vocational education centres did not know whether or not the site was consulted by governing board members. Most governing boards in centres felt that the site was user-friendly and that the documents were useful, but very few thought that the discussion group was of any interest.

TABLE 16 Awareness, Consultation and Assessment of the Web Site for Governing Boards by Type of Educational Institution (%)

Criterion	School (n = 1 121)	Vocational Education Centre (n = 65)	Adult Education Centre (n = 72)
Awareness of the site			
Yes	49.9	53.9	50.0
No	50.1	46.1	50.0
Consultation of the site by members*			
Yes (a few members)	54.8	39.4	45.5
No	15.3	6.1	30.3
Don't know	29.9	54.5	24.2
Assessment of the site**			
– User-friendliness			
Interesting	90.0	87.0	68.8
Not interesting	10.0	13.0	31.2
– Usefulness of the documents posted			
Interesting	74.3	79.0	76.9
Not interesting	25.7	21.0	23.1
– Participation in the discussion group			
Interesting	46.7	21.4	33.3
Not interesting	53.3	78.6	66.7

* These percentages are based on the number of governing boards that knew about the site; only a few reported that most of their members visited the site.

** Governing boards that reported visiting the site, i.e., roughly 300 in schools, 20 or so in vocational education centres and 15 or so in adult education centres.

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS



SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

This section will discuss governing boards' satisfaction with their first year of operation and possible ways of strengthening the role played by governing boards in their respective schools or centres.

SATISFACTION

More than 88% of governing boards, regardless of the type of educational institution, were either satisfied or very satisfied with their first year of activities (see Table 17). Some made more specific comments on different aspects of the experience.

Most governing boards in schools expressed their satisfaction with the cooperation shown by their members and the school principal, and with the tone of meetings, which took place in a spirit of mutual respect. Many saw their first year of operation as a sort of "dry run" or trial period which allowed them to make adjustments, learn the legal ropes and thus better understand their own role. However, the time spent making adjustments and completing the numerous formalities meant that less time was available for important school affairs such as the educational project. Dissatisfaction among governing

boards in schools was tied mainly to a feeling of not having enough power and to a certain hostility between parents and teachers.

Most governing boards in vocational education centres and adult education centres were satisfied with their first year of operation and with the cooperation shown by their members. Some governing boards also had the impression that they did not have enough power. Others felt that the law was not adapted to their particular situation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Respondents were asked for their suggestions on ways of helping governing boards to better fill their role. Most of the suggestions apply equally to schools, vocational education centres and adult education centres, and focus on training. However, some suggestions call for more concrete resources, support for parent representatives and for representatives from the community, adequate operating budgets, the sharing of ideas with other governing boards and the decentralization of decision-making powers.

TABLE 17 Level of Satisfaction with the Operation of the Governing Board by Type of Educational Institution (%)

Satisfaction Rating	School (n = 1 096)	Vocational Education Centre (n = 64)	Adult Education Centre (n = 69)
Very satisfactory	27.3	26.6	21.7
Satisfactory	63.0	67.2	66.7
Unsatisfactory	7.8	3.1	10.1
Very unsatisfactory	1.9	3.1	1.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

As mentioned in a previous section, suggestions were made to the effect that all members of a governing board should attend the same training session at the beginning of the school year in order to share the same understanding of the Education Act. Some respondents expressed a desire to take part in training activities that include simulation exercises, and to hold such activities more than once a year, as necessary.

Several governing boards would like the Ministère or other training providers to develop resources, such as easy-to-use reference guides, videocassettes or other types of materials. These resources should summarize the provisions of the Education Act to help governing boards understand them, explain who does what, and give guidelines that would help the boards understand what expectations to have concerning the different matters in which they have a say, such as the budget or the school's or centre's educational services. The governing boards would like the Ministère to be more specific on what matters must be given top priority and what matters can be addressed later in the school year. They would also like suggestions and examples as regards the rules of internal management to be adopted, the reports to be prepared, the links to be established with the community, etc. Some of the parents acting as chairs of governing boards would appreciate examples of the procedure to follow in meetings. They would also like to receive part of the documentation they need before meetings as this would reduce the amount of time they spend preparing for them.

Governing boards need a better understanding of their specific role as opposed to that of other authorities. They also need to define the roles of their various members more clearly. Such clarification could be provided through training activities or resources. Governing boards asked for clarification on several aspects: their powers and responsibilities; their ties with the parent participation organization at the school level and with the parents' committee at the school board level; the role of community representatives, and so on. In

order to better weigh the consequences of their decisions, individuals from outside the educational institutions—parents especially, but also members appointed from within the community—need further information on the education system, on students' life in school and on a number of other points such as the reform, the new curriculum, educational services and the school's or centre's budget. A glossary of terms frequently used in schools and centres would be useful to governing board members who are not familiar with them.

Several governing boards mentioned that their operating budget was insufficient to cover training expenses, child care expenses in the case of parents, transportation expenses, etc. Some respondents added that expenses for secretarial services and for photocopies should, in principle, be covered by the educational institution. Moreover, it was suggested that, at the beginning of the school year, school boards should prepare a timetable allowing governing board members sufficient time to conduct consultations and to familiarize themselves with upcoming business.

Many governing boards expressed a need to share ideas and information with other governing boards. Meetings could be organized to bring together all members or all chairs of the governing boards within a single school board. The Web site for governing boards could also be used to facilitate information-sharing across the province, just as it was used to facilitate this survey, which some governing boards would like to see repeated in coming years.

Another suggestion was that resource persons be made available to answer questions as they arise during the school year. Some suggested that the Ministère should post questions and answers on the Web site. It was recommended that governing boards strike subcommittees in order to improve their efficiency.

The smooth running of business is contingent upon good relations among governing board members and good relations with the

school board and the school principal or centre director. Some governing boards felt that teacher representatives stuck too closely to their collective agreements, which put a damper on meetings and created tension among governing board members. A number of governing boards lamented that the school board and the school principal or centre director did not invest them with sufficient decision-making power and that this prevented them from fully assuming their role. Measures could be taken to help governing boards gain proper recognition within their respective school communities.

Some governing boards in schools would like the Education Act to be more flexible, especially as regards small schools and schools in remote regions which may, for example, have greater difficulty recruiting members. It was suggested that the Act be amended to specify the circumstances justifying the dismissal of a member and to give all members (excepting, of

course, the school principal or centre director) the right to vote as an incentive to take an active part in discussions and decisions.

Several governing boards in vocational education centres and adult education centres believe that the Act does not take sufficient account of their particular needs and circumstances and does not, for this reason, allow them the flexibility they need. Governing boards in adult education centres found that the composition of the governing board as provided for in the Act is not sufficiently adapted to the characteristics of adult students. For example, it does not take into account the high turnover rate nor the fact that some students study part time. The Act should also allow greater flexibility in rural areas, where a vocational education centre and an adult education centre should be allowed to form a single, joint governing board.

CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

This report attempted to describe how governing boards fared in 1998-99, their first year of existence, by presenting the main findings of a survey of governing boards in schools, vocational education centres and adult education centres.

The average governing board comprised 13 members in schools, 12 in vocational education centres and 11 in adult education centres. The recruitment of school staff representatives and student representatives was generally not a problem. The same can be said of parent representatives in schools, although governing boards in vocational education centres did experience some difficulty here. The recruitment of members from the community was a problem, more so in schools than in centres.

Governing boards in schools held their first meetings in September or October. In vocational education centres and adult education centres, the month during which governing boards held their first meeting varied widely. However, the first meeting was more frequently held in the fall term than in the winter term. Governing boards in schools held more meetings (eight on average) than centres (five on average). This is probably due to the fact that the former held their first meeting earlier in the school year.

Governing boards must attend to all kinds of business. Not counting procedural issues, which came up on their own, most governing boards examined the school's educational project or the centre's policies and action plan, the services offered, the rules of conduct and safety measures, the student supervision policy, the annual report on the school's or centre's activities, matters on which the school board requested advice and operating rules (the latter applied only to centres). All governing boards, whether in schools or centres, looked at their institution's annual budget. Most also considered matters related to human and mate-

rial resources, such as the use of premises. In general, issues connected with educational services (e.g., the approach favoured to implement the basic school regulation) and extracurricular services (such as social, cultural and sports services) did not come up as often as the above-mentioned matters, and they tended to generate more discussion in schools than in centres.

Although most governing boards took part in training activities they generally found worthwhile, they still had many questions and difficulties, especially as regards understanding and interpreting the Education Act and understanding their own powers in relation to those of other authorities. For example, even though a parent participation organization was formed in close to two-thirds of schools, many governing boards were still unclear as to the role played by this organization and the ties they should maintain with it. Several governing boards also had problems defining the role to be played by each of their members. Achieving some kind of cohesion within the group thus proved difficult. Yet, such cohesion is necessary for governing boards to fully assume their role within their respective school communities.

The governing boards asked for concrete measures to help them overcome their difficulties: training for all members, resources (particularly for parents and for members from outside the school community), adequate operating budgets, and other support measures, such as networking with other governing boards or with resource persons.

In short, despite the problems they encountered, most governing boards found that their meetings had gone well and they were satisfied with their first year of activities, which they considered a sort of "dry run" or trial period during which they could make adjustments and learn the ropes in preparation for coming years.

APPENDIX



APPENDIX

Other Solutions

Problem	Solutions
Understanding and exercising of the powers of the governing board in relation to those of other authorities (school administration, school board, etc.)	
	Examine a chart comparing the powers of adult education centres, vocational education centres and school boards
	Hold evening information sessions
	Review the action plan at each meeting
Understanding and adoption of the school's or centre's budget	
	Ask that the budget be approved by the school team before it is submitted to the governing board
	Examine financial reports several times during the year
	Collect newspaper articles which explain financial indicators
	Obtain a copy of the budgetary appropriations charges of the Ministère de l'Éducation
	Strike a special committee to study the budget
	Compare the budget to be adopted with the budget for previous years
	Request information in advance or prior to the adoption of the budget
Role of the parent participation organization in relation to that of the governing board	
	Have parents sit on both the governing board and the parent participation organization
	Appoint members of the parent participation organization to subcommittees to encourage their participation
	Grant a budget to the parent participation organization and have it managed by this organization
	Make governing board members more aware of the importance of involving the parent participation organization in decisions
	Explain the role of the parent participation organization at the general meeting of parents
	Consult other parent participation organizations to find out how they function
	Strike a special committee in charge of defining the role of the parent participation organization
Relations between parent representatives and school staff representatives	
	Refuse to put items suggested by either party on the agenda for governing board meetings unless each party has previously consulted the other
	Hold a vote to dismiss any governing board member who causes problems
	Encourage governing board members to stay on for a second year
	Meet with members of each party prior to governing board meetings
	Call in a mediator, e.g., the school principal or centre director, to settle disagreements

(Cont.)
Other Solutions

Problem Solutions
Other Types of Problems
Problems recruiting parent representatives in vocational education centres Recruit adult students instead of parents Problems recruiting student representatives Request assistance from the student committee Lack of time to become familiar with the details of items on the agenda, excessive number of items on the agenda, or delay in obtaining relevant documents from the school board Request information ahead of time Hold additional meetings or extend meetings Set priorities Parents' lack of awareness of what is going on in the school Reserve a block of time during meetings to brief parents Lack of communication between the governing board and the parents of students attending the school Publish a newsletter for parents Lack of quorum Turn the governing board meeting into a working committee meeting Relations with the parents' committee Meet with members of the parents' committee



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