



SCHOOL
INFORMATION AND REPORTING
FOR PARENTS AND THE **COMMUNITY**



••• SUGGESTIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Reach for
your **Dreams**

Québec 



SCHOOL INFORMATION AND REPORTING

FOR PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY



●●● SUGGESTIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

This document was produced with the help of the following organizations:

- Association des cadres scolaires du Québec
- Association des directeurs généraux des commissions scolaires
- Association montréalaise des directions d'établissements scolaires
- Association of Directors General of English School Boards of Québec
- Association québécoise du personnel de direction des écoles
- Fédération des comités de parents du Québec
- Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec
- Fédération québécoise des directeurs et directrices d'établissement d'enseignement
- Québec English School Boards Association

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••• INTRODUCTION

In December 2002, new provisions on school reporting and information were added to the *Education Act (EA)*. These changes are in keeping with the government's desire to improve services to the public and modernize the public service.

More recently, the government indicated its intention to improve reporting by schools to help parents and the community clearly identify school strengths and weaknesses, among other things.

As schools enter a new phase in their relations with parents and the community, they are seeking more effective ways to strengthen these important ties.

This document was produced as part of this process by representatives of groups within the education system and the Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ). It is intended for governing boards, school officials and anyone else wishing to better understand the concepts and regulatory framework surrounding school information and reporting. Its aim is to help explain new EA requirements, clarify certain concepts and answer various questions in order to better meet the needs of parents and the community.

••• AN EXERCISE IN TRANSPARENCY

Section 83 of the *Education Act* sets out the obligations of educational institutions to inform and report to parents, the community and staff members. This section is aimed at helping schools better explain their situation and “game plan,” providing parents with tools to better assess or exercise their choice of school and ensuring that staff work together for student success.

SECTION 83 OF THE EDUCATION ACT

83. Each year, the governing board shall inform the parents and the community served by the school of the services provided by the school and report on the level of quality of such services.

The governing board shall make public the educational project and the success plan of the school.

Each year, the governing board shall report on the evaluation of the implementation of the success plan.

A document explaining the educational project and reporting on the evaluation of the implementation of the success plan shall be distributed to the parents and the school staff. The governing board shall see to it that the wording of the document is clear and accessible.

As already specified by Conseil supérieur de l'éducation in its 1998-1999 annual report on the state and needs of education, “reporting . . . involves explaining and contextualizing activities and the results obtained in light of predetermined objectives and, where necessary, linking them to the resources invested to achieve them” [*Translation*].

This exercise in transparency, with its two key components developed to foster student success—namely the educational project and the success plan—can only help schools fulfill their mission and strengthen ties with parents and the community. This exercise is also part of an overall effort at both the school board and the provincial level. The school information and reporting requirements are a link in the chain of complementary activities carried out by all those involved in implementing the EA, since the educational project and success plan must be based on the school board's strategic plan, which in turn must take into account the guidelines and objectives of the MEQ strategic plan.

Although the Act makes information and reporting mandatory for governing boards, it does not specify the type of information required or the way in which it should be presented. Each governing board must determine its approach in light of its own situation. Everyone can share notes and cultivate an individual style.

For this reason, the sections below should be viewed as suggestions or illustrations of how to implement Section 83, rather than as an official guide or prescribed template.

... INFORMING PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS IN SECTION 83

Inform: To make someone aware or report to someone

Community: Social group whose members live together or share common property or interests

...ABOUT SERVICES PROVIDED

There is nothing new about the EA requirement that governing boards annually inform parents and the community about the services schools provide. Schools commonly describe and promote their services in variety of ways (e.g. brochures, leaflets, newspaper inserts, sections in the school board report).

Schools know that publicizing and promoting their services is key to ongoing cooperation with parents and the community. Of course, it is also the first step in the reporting process.

Schools should see the EA requirement as a special opportunity to report on their specific features and environment.

For any given school community, the general notion of “community” may refer to the general public, volunteers, municipal actors, various bodies such as those in the healthcare system, members of regional consultation committees, business associations, etc.

TO WHICH SCHOOL SERVICES DOES THE EA REFER?

To meet EA requirements, governing boards may refer to services identified in the basic school regulation, such as preschool education services, elementary and secondary instructional services, student services, special services, and extracurricular activities as mentioned in EA Section 90 (Appendixes 1 and 2).

In choosing which information to provide, governing boards are well advised to emphasize matters of immediate interest to parents (special programs, daycare services, homework assistance, extracurricular activities, rules of conduct, safety measures, etc.), as well as the school environment (athletic facilities, auditoriums, libraries, computer labs, integrated school transportation, etc.).

REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

- An elementary school in a major urban centre that competes with other elementary schools uses its Web site to present its extracurricular activities. Students have the opportunity to participate in activities such as family events (spaghetti supper and bingo, hot dog picnic), sports (mini-basketball and soccer), creative arts (drama club, Young Authors Conference, Authors in Schools, Artists in Schools) and other extracurricular activities organized by the governing board and Parent Participation Organization (PPO). Students also go on field trips and take part in activities involving Geordie Productions.
- A school in an Italian neighbourhood steps up its Italian Heritage Language Program.
- A school published a pamphlet offering its services:
 - Daycare and preschool
 - Kindergarten programs: English Core Program and French Immersion Program
 - Computer lab
 - Psychologist
 - Speech and language pathologist
 - Dental hygienist
 - School nurse
 - Music program
 - Librarian
 - Resource teacher

...ABOUT THE EDUCATIONAL PROJECT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS PLAN

The EA requires governing boards to make public their educational projects and school success plans but does not specify how often or in what way this information should be provided. However, EA sections 37 and 37.1 identify the content of these key components (Appendix 2).

Since the addition of new EA provisions, schools have worked hard to develop success plans and review educational projects, which must now be based on a situational analysis and focus on student needs, community expectations and the challenges of success. After adopting the educational project and approving the school success plan, governing boards are well advised to make them public immediately, as these hands-on tools motivate staff and clearly demonstrate to parents and the community the crucial role of student success in school life.

It goes without saying that parents and the community will expect to be informed of any changes to the educational project and school success plan, especially as a result of the updating process provided for under Section 37.1.

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES

- A school has set up the home page of its Web site in such a way as to provide users with direct access to its educational project and success plan.
- A secondary school in an urban area publishes a summary of its educational project and success plan in the local weekly newspaper.
- A school provides students with a copy of its educational project and success plan, which they are to bring home to their parents.

... REPORTING

DEFINITIONS

Report: To convey what one has done or seen in order to inform, explain or justify

Quality: What makes something good or better

... ON THE QUALITY OF SERVICES

While most schools have developed a wide range of communication tools to promote their services, they are apparently not as experienced in reporting on the quality of those services. Schools must pay special attention to this aspect of their communications strategy in order to help parents and the community assess the quality and development of the services provided. Schools can take this opportunity to report on their successes and show they are aware of areas in need of improvement.

To this end, schools are strongly advised to use a variety of indicators. Some may be based on surveys rating student, parent or community satisfaction with services received, which is an approach already used by some schools. Other properly contextualized indicators focusing on student retention and academic success and taking into account a school's particular situation can also attest to the quality and improvement of services, notably due to efforts by the school team.

The MEQ has compiled extensive data for each educational institution (see Appendix 3). Some of this data could probably enhance reporting on the quality of services by providing information on schools' community environment as well as multiyear data testifying to changes over time.

Section 83 requires governing boards to report annually on the quality of school services but does not specify when or how.

REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

- A secondary school sends parents of sixth-grade students in its area a leaflet listing student results and pass rates on uniform MEQ examinations. This leaflet is also given to each sixth-grade student when the secondary school principal visits elementary schools.
- At the general parents' meeting at the start of the year, an elementary school principal announces the results of a survey on the school's daycare services conducted at the end of the preceding school year.
- In a brochure for parents on the services it provides, an elementary school publishes student success rates by cycle for the previous three years in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In their promotional documents, some schools publish positive testimonials by former students.

... ON THE EVALUATION OF SUCCESS PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Section 83 specifies that governing boards must report annually on the evaluation of success plan implementation. Evaluation methods should normally have been determined in advance as part of the development of the success plan, since EA Section 37.1 mentions them as required plan components. Each year, governing boards must therefore refer to the success plan in order to evaluate plan implementation during the period, as provided for by law.

The success plan outlines the steps the school intends to take to meet its educational project aims and objectives, particularly regarding student guidance and supervision. It therefore makes sense that reporting should assess these steps according to the evaluation methods selected. Some schools may prefer to base reports on implementation or impact indicators,¹ while others will opt for a more qualitative approach. The ultimate goal is to extract maximum benefit from this

exercise in transparency by generating helpful feedback on success plan implementation, identifying strengths and areas in need of improvement, compiling relevant information for reviewing the plan each year and refocusing everybody's efforts on key issues.

This type of reporting also provides parents and communities with a living portrait of their schools, outlining the efforts they deploy, the difficulties they face and the actions they take to mobilize resources—all of which results in a far more comprehensive view than that provided by the impersonal snapshots presented in school rankings.

MORE DEFINITIONS

Evaluation: The act of judging or determining the value, price or importance of something

Implementation: The act of making real, effective

¹ **Implementation indicators** are used to monitor and/or diagnose an evolving process within a school.
Impact indicators are used to gauge the effects of implemented measures.

REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

Below are examples of methods for evaluating success plan implementation specified in the plans themselves. Schools then develop reports based on these methods:

- To increase student success in reading, one school's success plan seeks to spark student interest in reading by providing a reading area in the classroom. The school evaluates the success of this measure by tallying the number of books read and the number of students who take part in this activity at lunchtime. Another measure for achieving the same objective is to have children read daily at home under parental supervision. The teacher measures the impact of these efforts based on the students' reading comprehension in class.
- Another school whose success plan objectives include helping students construct their identity and increasing the number of students with high self-esteem has set up discussion groups on topics of student interest. The impact of this measure is evaluated by tallying the number of participants and gauging their satisfaction using a brief survey.
- A socioeconomic environment questionnaire (SEQ) was administered in a school as part of the *New Approaches, New Solutions* (NANS) program. In light of SEQ results, the school staff developed a number of 5-year goals. Ongoing success plan evaluation and support is carried out as follows: A permanent NANS committee meets regularly to assess plan progress in light of the goals. A team of consultants from the Educational Services Department of the school board meets regularly with teachers and school administrators to assess progress and joins the staff in pursuing success plan goals.

- Another secondary school presents the connection between success plan aims, implementation strategies and evaluation methods as follows:

“Goal: Numeracy

Objectives and targets: The goal of the new success plan is to bring ALL students to math success by the end of their respective cycles.

Means: Teacher and parent training in the Challenging Math Program is our focus for the years ahead. Teacher training in the use of manipulatives and group learning will also be a goal.

Indicators and evaluation: At the secondary level we will continue to administer the MAPCO exams, and use the data from the MAPCO & MEQ exams to measure the progress & output.”

●●● SUMMARY

The table below summarizes the actions involved in meeting governing board information and reporting requirements under the EA.

WHO DOES WHAT FOR WHOM

WHO	WHAT	FOR WHOM
Governing board	Provides information on the school's services and reports on the quality of these services (Sec. 83)	Parents and the community
Governing board	Makes public the educational project and the school success plan (Sec. 83)	Parents, the community and school staff
Governing board	Reports on the evaluation of success plan implementation (Sec. 83)	Parents and school staff
Principal	Assists the governing board in exercising its functions and powers (Sec. 96.13)	

Section 82 also requires governing boards to prepare and adopt an annual activities report and transmit a copy to the school board. This report indicates the number of meetings held, training activities provided for members and resolutions adopted.

Given the variety of information and reporting requirements and their underlying objectives in the EA, the annual report may not be the most appropriate way for schools to show they have fulfilled their obligations toward parents, staff and the community.

QUESTIONS

WHAT METHODS SHOULD BE USED FOR INFORMING AND REPORTING?

Section 83 of the Act stipulates that parents and school staff must be provided with a written document that explains the educational project and reports on the evaluation of success plan implementation in clear and straightforward language. However, there are no provisions as to when the document must be distributed.

It is important to understand that these are minimum requirements and it is expected that other methods will be used, in keeping with the spirit of the Act. Given that Section 83 contains no further provisions, governing boards have full discretion in choosing their communication tools from a wide range of available methods: posting documents on the school and/or school board Web site, sending documents home with students, direct mail, leaflets, brochures, media announcements, parent meetings, etc. School boards make support available to governing boards who ask for help with this information and reporting exercise.

Still, schools seeking to communicate effectively must give priority to one principle—providing their target audience with easy access to comprehensive, up-to-date information throughout the year. School Web sites already offer this advantage and will be used increasingly as information and communications technologies play a greater role in everyday life.

Through a search tool (i.e. School is just a click away!) that enables users to select a school and display its location on a map, the MEQ provides the general public with easy access to information and reports that schools have posted on their Web sites.

IS THERE AN IDEAL TIME FOR INFORMATION AND REPORTING?

Lawmakers have not set specific dates for fulfilling the annual obligations specified in Section 83.

Of course, the report on the evaluation of success plan implementation cannot be produced until the educational project and success plan have been developed and adopted, and implemented as such.

Once the project and plan are in place and running smoothly, some schools will choose to submit their reports at the end of the school year, while others will opt to do so at the start of the year or after the governing board is formed.

Some consider fall the best time for providing information on school services and reporting on their quality, since this is when parents and students are in the process of choosing secondary schools. Others prefer to do this around registration time in February. In sum, any approach is possible. However, a communication campaign tends to have a greater impact on target audiences when it coincides with key dates on the academic calendar.

WHAT ABOUT VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRES AND ADULT EDUCATION CENTRES?

Information and reporting obligations for vocational training centres and adult education centres are similar to those for schools. These obligations are detailed in Section 110.3.1.

SECTION 110.3.1 OF THE EDUCATION ACT

110.3.1. Each year, the governing board shall inform the community served by the centre of the services provided by the centre and report on the level of quality of such services.

The governing board shall make public the policies, objectives and success plan of the centre.

Each year, the governing board shall report on the evaluation of the implementation of the success plan.

A document explaining the policies and objectives of the centre and reporting on the evaluation of the implementation of the success plan shall be distributed to the students and the staff. The governing board shall see to it that the wording of the document is clear and accessible.

There are, however, several differences from Section 83. First, centres must inform a broader community that includes their partners. This is understandable, given that a centre may serve a larger area than its school board—even as large as the entire province—depending on the programs it offers. Communication methods must be determined accordingly.

Second, centres must make their policies and objectives public. The concept of an educational project does not apply in their case.

Lastly, centres must also produce a plain language document, which in their case focuses on their policies and objectives as well as on the evaluation of success plan implementation. However, they are required to distribute it only to students and centre staff.

Information and reporting are just as important for centres. The benefits may even be greater, in that these requirements serve as a bridge between the education community and the concerns of the public and businesses.

••• USEFUL LINKS

www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/databyschool/

- LATEST VERSION OF THE EDUCATION ACT
- *THE NEW PROVISIONS OF THE EDUCATION ACT*
- DATA BY SCHOOL
- UNIFORM EXAMINATION RESULTS
- SCHOOL IS JUST A CLICK AWAY!
- *POUR RENDRE LES COMMUNICATIONS DES COMMISSIONS SCOLAIRES PLUS EFFICACES*

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

Excerpts from the *Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary education*, updated September 7, 2004

1. The educational services offered to students include preschool education services, elementary and secondary instructional services, student services and special services.
3. The purpose of student services is to help students to progress in their various types of learning.
4. Student services for which programs are to be established under the first paragraph of section 224 of the Education Act (R.S.Q., c. I-13.3) shall include the following:
 - (1) support services designed to provide students with conditions that are conducive to learning;
 - (2) student life services designed to foster students' autonomy and sense of responsibility, their moral and spiritual dimensions, their interpersonal and community relationships, as well as their feeling of belonging to the school;
 - (3) counselling services designed to help students throughout their studies, with their academic and career choices, and with any difficulties they encounter;
 - (4) promotion and prevention services designed to provide students with an environment conducive to the development of a healthy lifestyle and of skills that are beneficial to their health and well-being.
5. Student services provided under section 4 must include the following:
 - (1) services designed to promote student participation in school life;
 - (2) services designed to educate students about their rights and responsibilities;
 - (3) sports, cultural and social activities;
 - (4) support services for the use of the documentary resources of the school library;
 - (5) academic and career counselling and information;
 - (6) psychological services;
 - (7) psychoeducational services;
 - (8) special education services;
 - (9) remedial education services;
 - (10) speech therapy services;
 - (11) health and social services;
 - (12) services in spiritual care and guidance and community involvement.
6. Special services are designed for students who, because of particular circumstances, require welcoming services and services providing assistance in learning French or home or hospital instruction.

APPENDIX 2

Excerpts from the Education Act, updated September 1, 2004

37. A school's educational project shall set out the specific aims and objectives of the school, and objectives for improving student success. It may include actions to promote those aims and objectives and integrate them into the life of the school.

The aims and objectives of the project objectives shall be designed to ensure that the provincial educational policy defined by law, the basic school regulation and the programs of studies established by the Minister are implemented, adapted and enriched.

The educational project of the school must respect the freedom of conscience and of religion of the students, the parents and the school staff.

- 37.1 The success plan of a school shall comprise
- 1) the measures to be taken based on the aims and objectives of the educational project, in particular, those relating to the supervision of students;
 - 2) methods for evaluating the implementation of the success plan.

The success plan shall be reviewed each year and updated, if necessary.

82. The governing board shall prepare and adopt an annual activity report and shall transmit a copy of the report to the school board.

90. The governing board may organize educational services other than those prescribed by the basic school regulation, including instructional services outside teaching periods during the school days of the school calendar or on non-school days, and may organize social, cultural or sports services.

It may also allow other persons or organizations to organize such services on school premises.

91. For the purposes of Section 90, the governing board may, in the name of the school board and within the scope of the school's budget, contract with a person or body for the provision of goods or services. In addition, it may require a financial contribution from users of such goods and services.

A draft of a contract to be entered into under the first paragraph must be sent to the school board at least 20 days before its conclusion. Within 15 days after receiving it, the school board may indicate its disagreement on the ground of non-compliance with the standards governing the school board; in the absence of such indication, the contract may be concluded.

92. Revenues derived from the provision of goods and services under section 90 shall be credited to the appropriations allocated to the school.

- 96.13 The principal shall assist the governing board in the exercise of its functions and powers and, for that purpose, the principal shall

- 1) coordinate the analysis of the situation prevailing at the school and the development, implementation and periodical evaluation of the school's educational project;
- 1.1) coordinate the development, the review and any updating of the school's success plan;
- 2) ensure that the proposals required under this chapter are prepared and submitted to the governing board for approval;
- 2.1) ensure that the governing board is provided all necessary information before approving the proposals made under this chapter;
- 3) encourage concerted action between the parents, the students and the staff, their participation in the life of the school and their collaboration in fostering success;
- 4) inform the governing board on a regular basis concerning the proposals approved by the principal under section 96.15.

If the principal fails or refuses to submit to the governing board a proposal concerning a matter within the purview of the governing board within 15 days of the date on which the governing board requests the proposal, the governing board may act without such a proposal.

96.15 The principal is responsible for approving, on the proposal of the teachers or, in the case of matters referred to in subparagraph 5, of the members of the staff concerned and after consulting with the governing board in the case of proposals under subparagraph 3,

- 1) in accordance with the policies determined by the governing board, the local programs of studies developed to meet the special needs of students;
- 2) the criteria for the introduction of new instructional methods;
- 3) in accordance with this Act and in keeping with the school budget, the textbooks and instructional material required for the teaching of programs of studies;
- 4) the standards and procedures for the evaluation of student achievement in keeping with the prescriptions of the basic school regulation and subject to the examinations that may be imposed by the Minister or the school board;
- 5) the rules governing the placement of students and their promotion from one cycle to the other at the elementary level, subject to the rules prescribed by the basic school regulation.

The proposals of the teachers or the staff members under this section shall be made according to the procedure determined by the teachers or the staff members at general meetings called for that purpose by the principal or, failing that, according to the procedure determined by the principal.

A proposal of the teachers or the staff members concerning a subject referred to in this section must be made within 15 days after the proposal is requested by the principal, failing which the principal may act without such proposal.

If the principal does not approve a proposal of the teachers or the staff members, the principal shall give reasons, in writing, for the decision.

APPENDIX 3

Data by School available on MEQ Web Site <www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/databyschool/>

DATA BY SCHOOL

DETAILED STATISTICS ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATION RATES

... **Public, private and government system**

- School's number
- School's name
- School's address
- School's city
- School's postal code
- School's phone number
- School's administrative region
- School's language of instruction
- Preschool enrollment per level
- Elementary school enrollment per cycle
- Secondary school enrollment per grade
- Vocational training enrollment

SOCIOECONOMIC INDEX

... **For each public elementary and secondary school**

- School's code
- School's name
- Low-income cut-off (LICO) index
- LICO decile rank of schools
- Socioeconomic environment index
- Socioeconomic environment index - decile rank of schools

JUNE UNIFORM EXAMINATION RESULTS AND GRADUATION RATES

... **Overall uniform examination results for all private and public schools in Québec**

- School's name
- School's municipality
- Exam attendance (number of uniform examinations taken at the school)
- Number of students who took at least one examination
- Average mark on all examinations in percentage terms
- Student success rate on all examinations
- School rank and variance between school's success rate and average private or public school success rate, as applicable

... **Results for each uniform examination by private and public school, June**

- Student success rate by school for each uniform examination in June

QUÉBEC-WIDE INDICATORS

Each year, the MEQ prepares Québec-wide indicators for the school boards, which then make this information available to each of their schools and centres

... **Elementary education**

- Age of students on starting a cycle
- Extension of studies in a cycle
- Age on leaving elementary school
- Attendance in a welcoming class
- Integration of SHSMLD² into regular classes
- Total leavers with a diploma or qualification
- Success in ministry examinations
- Integration of SHSMLD into regular classes

... **General secondary school education, youth sector**

- Age on starting at the secondary level
- Leavers without diploma or qualification by cycle
- Leavers with a Secondary V diploma
- Total number of enrollments
- Number of new enrollments
- New enrollments under 20 years of age
- Obtaining a Diploma of Vocational Studies
- New enrollments in work-study programs

... **Adult general education**

- Total enrollment by instructional service

² Students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties.



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