



PROGRAM TO SUPPORT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Projects targeting instructional development and the acquisition of skills in the field of information and communications technologies (ICT) in special education

Action-research projects to test innovative initiatives in special education, in conjunction with researchers

School year
2008-2009

Éducation,
Loisir et Sport

Québec 

Call for Projects

What is the Program to Support Research and Development in Special Education?

The Program to Support Research and Development in Special Education encourages innovation and more effective intervention on behalf of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities. The program has two sections:

- one targets instructional development and the acquisition of skills in the field of information and communications technologies (ICT) in special education¹
- the other relates to the testing of innovative special education initiatives (action-research) in conjunction with the research community.

What is the Program to Support Research and Development in Special Education?

This program is designed to provide financial support for the development, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of promising, innovative projects in special education. It aims to foster new strategies for intervention. These promising intervention strategies are intended to help students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties with their learning, social adjustment and qualifications. This program falls under the commitment of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) to support research and development in special education, and to foster the application of the Policy on Special Education. In collaboration with the partners concerned and through the projects it funds, it fosters the renewal of skills.

The program's objectives are as follows:

- to support the schools in their education reform
- to facilitate the development of new approaches or practices in special education
- foster collaboration among educators and the research community or partners who have expertise in competency development through ICT integration (e.g. RÉCIT) and other resources, if necessary, in order to construct, carry out and evaluate projects
- to promote school initiatives by making projects public (MELS and school board Web sites, symposiums, conferences, publications, etc.)
- foster the transfer of knowledge and allow schools to become familiar with projects carried out in other Québec schools.

¹ Projects designed to research ICT and requiring researchers to measure the effects using scientific methodology must be presented in the action-research category and will be judged accordingly.

What are “projects targeting instructional development and the acquisition of skills in the field of ICT in special education”?

These are promising, innovative projects that aim to promote competency development among students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties, while developing expertise in the classroom use of ICT among teachers, non-teaching professionals and technical staff. The projects must use ITC to meet the needs of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties. They must have educational value and address the concerns of school staff.

The process of developing and carrying out the project is structured so that objectives can be determined and it is possible to evaluate whether they have been reached and to identify the benefits for students and the school community. These projects are designed in collaboration with partners such as the Réseau pour le développement des compétences par l'intégration des technologies (RÉCIT). Other collaborators, such as regional resource persons and experts, can make good partners. ICT projects are carried out by school or school board resource persons, or in the context of regional joint action.

The projects must include the participation of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties and aim to improve their competencies. They must clearly show how ICT are integrated into the teaching and learning process and must be used in the classroom; they cannot be limited to upgrading technology. They must be carried out so as to be disseminated and repeated in other environments.

What is an “action-research project to test innovative initiatives in special education”?

Action-research projects carried out in collaboration with the research community are intended to encourage schools to experiment with new strategies for intervention and organization procedures to better meet the needs of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities. While collaboration with the research community is compulsory, other forms of collaboration are possible and encouraged. For example, regional resource persons and experts or health professionals may be called upon.

Action-research consists of hands-on work in the field, with all the advantages and adjustments that this involves. It meets a need in the milieu and is based on recent scientific research so as to be innovative and promising. Research is thus directly connected to the concerns of educators, who can in turn draw upon the researchers' knowledge and expertise to improve their practices. Projects must have pedagogical and scientific value. Working together, the partners in the project develop a dynamic interaction that serves the interests of both parties.

Action-research is intended to update practices in special education by targeting competency development. Through its work, it strives to meet the needs of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties. The projects involve a rigorous and structured process of setting objectives, evaluating the extent to which they are attained and determining the conditions in which the results could be obtained. Action-research must be carried out in such a way that both the process and the results can be recreated in other situations, with a view to the transfer of knowledge. Researchers must support the schools in designing and carrying out the projects in order to ensure accuracy. They also have a role to play in drafting the projects, a contribution from the early stages of collaboration.

As the Program to Support Research and Development does not give out bursaries, projects submitted by a graduate working alone will not be accepted. However, a large part of the research community's contribution could be provided by a graduate, although a university professor such as a thesis director might have to underwrite this participation. The student could receive payment as a research assistant.

What is the procedure for submitting a project?

School or school board personnel who would like to carry out a project must fill out the appropriate funding application form for an action-research project or an ICT project. These forms are posted on the MELS Web site at the following address: www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/das/index.html. The appropriate form must be completed concisely so that the reader clearly understands the nature of the project. The form includes several sections. These refer to one or more eligibility or selection criteria, and it is important to fill them out correctly.

It is recommended that a limited number of projects be submitted per school board. The project coordinator must contact the person designated by the school board to receive project proposals in order to ensure that the project has been approved for submission to the MELS. This person, who is generally the special education coordinator at the school board, must choose those projects that best meet the requirements of the Program, particularly the eligibility and selection criteria. This person forwards the selected project proposals to the MELS regional office. Applications forms must be submitted in paper format, as several signatures are required. The special education resource person for each regional office reads the proposals first to check them for eligibility. He or she then sends the eligible proposals, with comments, to the Direction de l'adaptation scolaire.

What eligibility criteria apply similarly to ICT and action-research projects?

- The project must be consistent with the orientations of the Policy on Special Education. It must be geared toward students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties and address their needs.
- The project must have ties to the Québec Education Program. It fosters the development of QEP competencies among students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties, while improving the competencies of teachers, non-teaching professionals and technicians.
- The project must not require more than \$50 000 (action-research project) or \$25 000 (ICT project). A project extending over two years may receive maximum funding in the amount of \$25 000 for the second year.
- The project proposal specifies how the school and the school board, which must contribute financially, participate in the project by providing human resources (education consultants, teachers, non-teaching professionals or technicians, etc.) and material resources (reference works, computer materials, facilities, etc.). The school community may facilitate publication logistics (e.g. computer support for creating a Web site, registration fees for a seminar).
- The project will benefit from this support measure only: it will receive no other funding.
- The project is not designed for profit, as no product of the project (e.g. computer materials, software, and publications) will be sold, except to cover the cost of reproduction.

One eligibility criterion applies differently to ICT and action-research projects. Which one?

The project is designed and carried out with collaborators:

ICT project: The project is designed and carried out in collaboration with ICT specialists such as RÉCIT.

Action-research project: The project is designed and carried out in collaboration with qualified researchers.

What does the project selection process involve?

Projects are selected according to the different evaluation criteria and available funds. In this context, not all projects can be funded, even if they meet the main requirements. A committee, composed of representatives from the MELS and other partners (research sector, RÉCIT, etc.), analyzes eligible projects and decides which ones will be funded. Final decisions may take into account the diversity of the target population and the regional distribution of projects. In June, school boards and project coordinators are informed of the committee's decision.

The selection committee uses the evaluation criteria described below. Please note that, in the written presentation, it is essential to highlight the information corresponding to each criterion so that all projects are evaluated equally.

Evaluation criteria

that apply similarly to ICT and action-research projects

- Educational value

A clear explanation of how the project addresses needs identified in the field is provided. The project is directly linked to the concerns of school staff working with students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties.

- Realistic approach

The project must not be overly ambitious. It must be based on the participation of those who share responsibility for the project, carry it to completion and ensure it will continue. It is sufficiently specific, encompasses a realistic number of goals and includes a schedule.

- Contribution from the school and partners outside the school (e.g. researchers, RÉCIT)

Beyond a simple association in which partners work separately, collaboration between the school staff and the other partners is tangible. Roles are clearly specified.

- Possible application in other schools

The project could be applied in other schools, which could carry out the project using available resources. Professional development and training must not be the main focus of the project. Applicants must show that, following positive results, other schools or school boards could carry out a similar project. If the project is transferable, it could serve as an example to other schools which, with guidance, could repeat the process to meet the needs of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties. This would reduce the preparation time required. Carrying out a project that has been tested elsewhere and proven effective would allow schools to avoid a lot of trial and error.

- Dissemination

Dissemination methods are provided to make the project known to all school staff. The approach to the project, the results obtained and an example of its achievements (particularly in ICT) should be presented on a Web site. If applicable, any tools created and work accomplished should also appear on the site. The MELS encourages participation in publications related to education (Vie pédagogique or Schoolscapes, for example) or science (for action-research projects) and in sharing knowledge (through conferences, symposiums, etc.).

Evaluation criteria

that apply differently to ICT projects and action-research projects

- Projects those are innovative and promising

ICT projects:

ICT projects use innovative ways to encourage students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties to participate and improve their competencies relative to the Québec Education Program and ICT. These projects introduce new strategies for intervention in using ICT with students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties. They provide an interesting option for other sectors working with students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties. They can bring about changes and breathe new life into practices that help these students succeed.

Action-research projects:

Action-research projects inspire renewal in the strategies and organizational services used in schools. These projects provide an interesting option for other sectors working with students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties. They can bring about changes and breathe new life into practices that help students succeed.

- Quality of the approach

ICT projects: strict approach

The objectives as well as the benefits or expected results for the students and the school must be clearly defined. Projects must be structured so as to include the evaluation of these benefits and results. A strict approach must be used to carry out the evaluation.

Action-research projects: methodological quality (scientific merit)

A brief review of the literature was performed. The projects meet a need that is justified by scientific research. Objectives are observable and measurable and the method for measuring results is specified. The selected methodology is scientifically valid.

What expenses are allowable?

Allowable expenses are those that are directly related to the participation of **human resources** in the design, development, evaluation and dissemination of the project. They may include:

- teaching staff substitution costs associated with participation in meetings, training, production (e.g. scenarios, instructional materials, summaries, reports)
- certain expenses for training or guidance
- consulting fees associated with the development and evaluation of the project
- expenses associated with the hiring of research assistants (for action-research projects). However, the researchers' salaries are not allowable expenses if conducting research forms an integral part of their role as teacher-researcher; however, replacement costs are allowable (as long as they do not exceed one course load per semester, per year of implementation of the project)
- other expenses required to carry out the project, up to 10 per cent of the total amount allocated. These expenses must be justified by the nature of the project. They must be specific and essential to the project in the sense that, if they are not covered, it would be impossible to carry out the project.

Please note that a 15 per cent charge for administrative overhead must be included for all grant amounts disbursed midway through a university research project.

Awarding of grants

Grant allocations to carry out projects selected will be distributed in two instalments. The first will be equal to two thirds of the grant and be used to carry out the project. It will be allocated at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year. The second instalment will be equal to a third of the grant and is conditional upon reception of the project report at the end of that school year. When a project lasts two years, the second instalment is allocated at the end of the first year, upon reception of the status report.

When should project proposals be submitted?

The timetable for submitting and carrying out projects is as follows:

- **February 22, 2008:** project proposals are submitted to school boards
- **March 7, 2008:** projects are forwarded to the MELS regional office
- **March 28, 2008:** the Direction de l'adaptation scolaire du MELS receives the projects
- **April and May 2008:** project analysis and selection
- **June 2008:** decisions are sent to the schools and school boards
- **September 2008 to May 2009 or May 2010:** projects are carried out
- **early June 2009:** status or final reports are submitted to the MELS
- **early June 2010:** final reports are submitted to the MELS (only for projects lasting two years)

Any questions?

For further information, please contact the special education coordinator at your school board or in your MELS regional office. You may also consult the appendix, Useful Information.

IMPORTANT

Please note the timetable and send the completed project submission form to the special education coordinator at your school board, ***no later than February 22, 2008***. This individual must send all of the school board's projects to the MELS regional office ***by March 7, 2008***.

APPENDIX

Useful Information

Eligible projects must aim to improve practices in special education. It is important to consider the needs of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or in difficulty and to show how the proposed project will help them in school.

For ICT projects, do not hesitate to contact your local RÉCIT resource person before filling out the application form. He or she can help you define your project. If necessary, you may consult the provincial RÉCIT resource person in special education through your local RÉCIT contact. You may also choose to communicate with the resource person for special education at your MELS regional office.

For action-research projects, please contact the special education coordinator at your school board. If necessary, you may also consult the resource person for special education at your MELS regional office.

Please remember that the different partners mentioned must be involved in the project when the request for funding is submitted. They must have a clear role and the collaboration must be already established.

Projects requiring large amounts for additional resources (e.g. remedial education teacher, resource teacher) are not usually selected. These projects are not transferable as they are too costly in human resources.

The selection committee must understand a project in order to select it. You must make sure that your application is brief but precise and complete. You might ask two or three people who do not know the project to read it for you. If they understand the application and can summarize it for you, there is a good chance that the selection committee will also understand it.

Pay particular attention to the admission and selection criteria. If necessary, ask people who know the program well. Make sure that your grant application provides the information the committee will need to judge the quality of your project according to each of the selection criteria.

The project coordinator must come from the school system. In fact, important information such as the deadline for the final report will be transmitted through the school system. The project coordinator must be the person who knows the most about the project. He or she will receive all the important documents by e mail. Should the coordinator take a prolonged absence, a co-coordinator may take over.

School boards with an idea for a project but no researcher to associate with may consult the Web site for the university they would like to collaborate with in order to find out about the researchers working there. School boards may also contact the faculty they would like to work with or visit the Québec Researchers Directory at this address:

< http://www.erq.gouv.qc.ca/site_html/pages/chercheurs/index_en.html >.

In an exceptional case where a project that has already received funding is presented again, the applicant must clearly show why it is necessary to carry the project further. He or she must also show how the initial results justify funding this project again and what value will be added. It is essential to prove that continuing with the research is still innovative and promising, and that the previously presented project was carried to completion. In such a case, the maximum available grant is \$25 000.