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Participants at the training session for resource persons held on March 18 and 19 had an opportunity to examine the topic of team planning to encourage learning progress. At the meeting, participants discussed the development of information sharing, coordination and planning tools for the pedagogical process.

Martin Bérubé, an education consultant with the Commission scolaire de Kamouraska, spoke to participants about his experience with the integrative project's Web-based tool, while Richard Leblanc, MELS complementary educational services coordinator, talked about the growth needs of students during the learning process. In addition, MELS representatives from the evaluation team talked to participants about their current work.

The fourth forum on the Ethics and Religious Culture program was held on March 17, and *Schoolscapes* followed the day's activities. The event was attended by nearly 300 people, who had an opportunity to discuss the competency *Demonstrates an understanding of the phenomenon of religion*. The forum program included lectures by Pierre Lucier, who presented a cultural approach to the phenomenon of religion, and Micheline Milot, who spoke about religious culture, mutual recognition and secularity.

A large number of activities took place in February, including the annual meeting on special education issues. The meeting was attended by resource personnel working in special education support and expertise services, and included presentations, workshops and conferences.

The English-speaking school community was invited to attend the ninth annual IDC Learning Symposium in February. This issue of *Schoolscapes* presents summaries of two of the presentations that were given.

In addition, *Schoolscapes* reports on one of the measures from the Action Plan on Reading, namely summer camps for the English sector. In this issue, we present comments from teachers who attended the camp in 2007. The third edition of the camp will take place in 2008.

The *Schoolscapes* team wishes you an enjoyable summer and looks forward to seeing you again in the fall.

Martine Labrie and Maude Fortin



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TRAINING SESSION FOR RESOURCE PERSONS

LEARNING PROGRESS: A TEAM EFFORT

Marie-Josée Lépine

A training session for resource persons, on the theme of team planning to encourage learning progress, was held in Québec City on March 18 and 19. Participants attended workshops, plenary sessions and a conference on the planning of learning progress and reporting on students' competency development.



Margaret Rioux-Dolan, head of the Direction générale de la formation des jeunes, confirmed the Ministère's intention to continue the implementation of the education reform. She felt that after 10 years of extensive change, it was normal for adjustments to be needed in order to improve the education system.

The Plan d'action pour l'amélioration du français à l'enseignement primaire et secondaire

One of the measures recently introduced to help increase student progress is the action plan to improve French in elementary and secondary schools. The action plan, said Rioux-Dolan, is designed to meet a need expressed by schools.

The MELS, the university network and schools are currently working together on several fronts to follow up

on the plan and help schools to implement its 22 proposals. A ministerial committee is currently preparing guides and information documents that will help schools and school boards to select the appropriate measures and implementation methods. These documents will be available at the start of the new school year.

A range of measures

- The French program for both elementary and secondary schools will be revised and elements that students must master, especially in the areas of spelling and syntax, will be specified.
- Two new written ministry examinations will be introduced, one in the fourth year of elementary school and the other in Secondary II.
- The number of consultants in French (language of instruction) will be increased in schools to improve teacher preparation.

A review of Secondary Cycle Two programs

Rioux-Dolan reviewed the most recent communications sent to schools by Pierre Bergevin, Assistant Deputy Minister for the preschool and elementary and secondary school sector. In his messages, Bergevin explains the elements required to implement the education reform this coming September in various Secondary IV programs.

Mathematics program

- It has been decided to make the three mathematics sequences available to all Secondary IV students in Québec, starting at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year.
- The MELS will offer financial assistance for this purpose.
- The three mathematics sequences will provide access to all CEGEP programs.
- The Secondary V technical and scientific sequence will be adjusted and clarified by the end of the year.
- The textbooks for the three Secondary IV sequences will be available by September 2008.

Physics and chemistry programs

- The optional Secondary V physics and chemistry programs will be available by September 2009 but will not be implemented until 2010.
- The new programs will have the same names as the old programs.
- The content of the old and new programs will be fairly similar, the main difference being that the new programs will use a competency-based approach.

Secondary V French program

- Only one French program (language of instruction) will be offered in Secondary V.

The Contemporary World: A new program

The new social sciences program, entitled The Contemporary World, is currently being prepared, and will be compulsory for all students in the third year of Secondary Cycle Two. The new program will become part of the curriculum in September 2009, replacing the Economics program. Current Secondary V optional programs (The 20th Century: History and Civilizations and Geographic Organization of the Modern World) will still be offered.

The educational content of the Contemporary World program will be adapted to the new global situation and will reflect the political, economic, social and environmental issues of the 21st century. Look for further

information in future issues of *Schoolscapes*.

Integrative Project

- This new compulsory two-credit Secondary V program will help students to integrate their learning.

Schools will receive printed copies of the Integrative Project program as soon as it has been approved.

A Web-based tool to support the introduction of the integrative project

Catherine Gaumont

[The integrative project](#) is a new two-credit program for all Secondary V students in the general and applied general streams. Its purpose is to help students integrate their learning by carrying out a project on a topic related to their personal interests. Five schools are currently testing the program. The Direction générale de la formation des jeunes and the Direction des ressources didactiques have developed a Web-based tool designed to help implement the new program in schools.



At a training session for resource persons held on March 18 and 19, Martin Bérubé, an education consultant in information and communications technology at the Commission scolaire de Kamouraska, talked about his experience with the Web-based tool. The technological support he was able to provide helped teachers at École Chanoine-Beaudet, in Saint-Pascal, to learn to use the tool to best advantage.

The Web tool

The tool provides users with a forum through which they can share their project-related experiences. It was created specifically to help the students and teachers who are currently testing the Integrative Project program, and will be made available to the entire school network when the new program comes into force. According to Bérubé, it offers a number of benefits.

During the trials, the tool was used:

- to record work (individual and collective)
- to help visualize progress
- to communicate with fellow students and coworkers
- to submit learning and evaluation situations
- to manage projects
- to facilitate access to Web-based resources

In concrete terms, the tool provides:

- a discussion forum for teachers—a kind of “virtual staff room”
- a portal to the school's Web site
- an administrative space providing instructions, stipulating deadlines, etc.
- an opportunity for students to create their own sites

It is apparent from this that information and communications technologies are useful to the integrative

project. However, Bérubé pointed out that the technology is intended to be a means of supporting teachers, rather than an end in itself.

Application of the integrative project will be compulsory as of September 2009.



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TRAINING SESSION FOR RESOURCE PERSONS

COMPLEMENTARY EDUCATIONAL SERVICES: SOME THOUGHTS ON THE NOTION OF NEED

Catherine Gaumond

At the Training Session for Resource Persons held on March 18 and 19, 2008, Richard Leblanc, complementary educational services coordinator at the Direction générale de la formation des jeunes (DGFJ), presented some thoughts on student needs and learning progress. He suggested that complementary educational services should be designed to fit in with the QEP, and rounded out his presentation with a series of [questions](#).

The notion of need: A review

In the current educational context, student needs are often related to difficulties, problems and deficiencies. Leblanc pointed out that schools are right to take an interest in this type of need, and should continue to do so. However, he suggested regarding student needs as sources of potential to be exploited, capabilities to be enriched, interests to be discovered, skills to be developed, talents to be encouraged, and so on. These needs, which Leblanc described as *growth needs*, are just as important in the students' social and personal lives. By focusing on growth needs rather than on deficiencies and problems, we enrich our view of the students. All students, whether or not they are at risk, have growth needs, and every individual student should be regarded as a person who is seeking self-fulfillment. This new point of view requires a more general vision of the student, as well as a coordinated effort on the part of everyone concerned.

“Envision each person’s involvement as part of a brand new musical score that all staff members must play together if the student is to be successful.”

The school's mission of providing instruction, socializing students and providing qualifications, and the aims of the QEP (construction of a world-view, construction of an identity and empowerment), clearly illustrate the extent to which satisfaction of the student's social and personal growth needs is a core element of the

school's and the educator's responsibility. "This mission and these aims cannot be achieved solely through classroom activities or the construction of subject-specific competencies," said Leblanc. "Every one of the school's actions through its complementary educational services is also a necessary element."

If activities are channelled towards a shared goal and if teachers work in a structured, coherent way, students will quickly realize that the school's adults are attentive to their progress and they will therefore be encouraged to work hard. Leblanc cited the following excerpt from the Secondary Cycle Two QEP:

"All [school personnel]—administrators, teachers, complementary educational services personnel and support staff—must work together to create optimal teaching-learning conditions. In so doing, they have to go beyond individual competencies and create collective competency."

Based on the QEP and the MELS' complementary services orientations, Leblanc suggested that teachers and complementary educational services personnel should reposition themselves and try to take a more integrated approach. For example, joint planning of learning and evaluation would help ensure consistency.

Leblanc also raised a series of questions to fuel thinking on the role of complementary educational services in the QEP.

- What can be done to ensure that the relationship between teachers and nonteaching professionals does not stop at identifying and correcting students' problems, but goes one step further by discovering and encouraging students' strengths and talents?
- What place should be given to students' growth needs, including those of handicapped students and students at risk, in the planning of learning and monitoring of progress? How can teachers and other staff work together to ensure that these needs are met?
- When planning learning and evaluation situations, what place should be given to complementary educational services personnel, including those who work directly with students (e.g. resource teachers and speech therapists) and those who contribute in a less direct way (e.g. librarians, facilitators)?
- How can the cross-curricular competencies developed as part of a complementary services activity (e.g. mutual support committee, theatre production, etc.) be applied in a classroom learning and evaluation situation?
- Which "solo" educational activities and complementary services activities have themes, aims and methods that are conducive to joint or complementary interventions?
- With regard to learning and evaluation, what can be done to ensure that students and teachers consider the experience gained through complementary services activities?
- How can learning and evaluation help students to construct their identity and world-view and become empowered?
- From the standpoint of a guidance-based approach in schools, what is the contribution of learning and evaluation?





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PREPARING THE COMPETENCY REPORT: A JOINT UNDERTAKING

Marie-Josée Lépine

In schools, working together to prepare the competency report can be a complex task, since all staff members can join the process, contributing and sharing their expertise and learning from the expertise of others. To help them with this task, Thérèse Laferrière, a professor in the education faculty at Université Laval, suggested that schools should apply the community of practice model.

Laferrière defined the community of practice as a participatory organizational model that takes a collaborative approach and is designed to improve a practice. The competency report is a relatively new requirement, and the introduction of communities of practice would allow everyone concerned to build their skills and expertise, leading to better overall performance.

Community of practice or community of learning?

Learning can be represented by two metaphors (Sfard, 1998). In the first of these metaphors, usually associated with communities of learning, learning is equated with acquisition. Here, learning is approached from the cognitive standpoint, focusing on results and the acquisition of knowledge, concepts, meanings and so on. This is the form of learning encountered most commonly in formal education.

However, communities of practice are based on a completely different logic, using a metaphor that equates learning with participation. Here, the emphasis is on practice; members are required to perform increasingly complex tasks that gradually allow them to acquire the competence related to a given practice. Laferrière proposed workplace training sessions as an example of the participatory model.

Today, said Laferrière, formal learning alone is no longer enough. Although still necessary, it must be completed by informal learning—in other words, participation in a community of practice attached to an organization such as a school, school board or teachers' association. "It is through participation that

members truly become competent,” said Laferrière.

Benefits for everyone

Before launching a collaborative process, Laferrière warned participants that the costs and benefits would have to be taken into account. Social exchange theory, developed by sociologist Georges Homans, is clear on this question: the participation costs of individuals must not be greater than the benefit they obtain from participating. Collaborative work will not be sustained if this theory is not applied.

There are several different kinds of professional benefits to be gained from a community of practice. For example:

- gaining a better understanding of what is being learned
- doing something that cannot be done alone
- having the pleasure of working with other people
- doing something better
- fostering interaction with students, etc.

A Web-based community of practice

According to Etienne Wenger (1998), one of the field’s leaders, a community of practice has three principal features:

- mutual commitment on the part of participants
- a joint undertaking that is constantly renegotiated
- a shared repertory: agreement on language, introduction of routines, creation of artefacts and building of a repertory

In addition, some communities of practice operate in networks—in other words, they are Web-based. Laferrière believes the challenge now facing education is to create a series of small communities of practice in different schools, which will gradually develop network activities and will ultimately connect to one another via the Internet.

Some Web-based communities of practice have already been created in the education sector—for example, in life skills and work skills education (*Insertion sociale et professionnelle des jeunes*, or ISPJ), where a network of teachers has developed elements of a shared repertory both in person and on the Internet. The teachers have used Web-based tools for written and oral discourse, including a moderately interactive site, blogs, forums, whiteboards, videoconferences, chat rooms and so on.

Thanks to their Web-based community of practice, the teachers have been able to share an impressive number of personal documents, and have benefited from one another’s experiences, tools and artefacts. “I’ve never seen as many document exchanges in any other sector,” observed Laferrière. “The concept has worked well in this particular sector, and that should give us hope for future sharing among teachers.”

Conditions

Laferrière proposed five conditions for the creation of a community of learning:

- There must be a contextual element around which participants can rally.
- The members must want to work as a team. (In other words, it is not a question of involving everyone. “In an innovative context,” said Laferrière, “it is often the case that only 10% or 15% of people will be interested. Those who haven’t yet made up their minds will have the chance to join the community of practice later, if they feel it would be beneficial to do so.”)
- It is important to decide who will be responsible for the community of practice. (This may involve financing, among other things.)

- More than one person must be available to moderate the community.
- The members must feel they are supported by the organization and their peers.

Overcoming certain obstacles

Lack of time, lack of access to tools, lack of self-confidence or confidence in the idea, communication difficulties and lack of experience in successful collaborative initiatives can all hinder the creation of a community of practice.

However, a community of practice will be able to move forward if it meets a certain number of criteria. For example, the members must feel they are supported, and must gain relief from being able to share a specific responsibility with others. Similarly, they need to feel they are saving time and developing a certain expertise, while enjoying the experience of working and making decisions together.





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TRAINING SESSION FOR RESOURCE PERSONS

CERTIFICATION OF STUDIES IN ART: INTRODUCING THE LEARNING AND EVALUATION FILE

Marie-Josée Lépine

Starting next year, the MELS will provide Secondary IV teachers in the four arts subjects with tools to build a learning and evaluation file. This will help with the task of preparing the competency report for the certification process. Georges Bouchard, coordinator of arts education, and Christian Rousseau, coordinator of research and development in evaluation, both from the Direction générale de la formation des jeunes (DGFJ), presented these tools to training session participants.

The importance of recognition for arts education

The education reform has changed the curriculum significantly. Arts education has become compulsory at the elementary and secondary levels, and successful completion of a course in one of the four arts subjects in Secondary IV is now a requirement for the Secondary School Diploma. These changes, said Bouchard, are part of a movement that has emerged in recent decades both in Québec and in the rest of the world, to acknowledge the contribution of the arts to general education.

In the QEP, the arts constitute one of the six broad areas of learning. As the two speakers pointed out, this is due in large part to an extensive body of research that clearly shows the importance of arts education in keeping students at school and helping them to achieve academic success.

A learning and evaluation file to facilitate production of the competency report

Bouchard noted that there will be no ministry examination in the arts. To ensure that teachers have the tools they need to evaluate their students' progress, the MELS team has joined forces with teachers, education consultants and school administrators to develop what he described as "concrete, realistic tasks

that can be adjusted to local requirements, and that meet the needs of teachers.”

In one such initiative, 26 teachers worked together on an experiment to develop tools for the production of competency reports. During the year-long experiment, the teachers put together a file of their students’ work and achievements, which ultimately made it easier for them to produce a well-founded competency report.

The outcome of the experiment is a proposal to divide the new learning and evaluation file into two sections, a “group” section and an “individual” section. In the group section, teachers can note their comments on yearly planning, describe the learning and evaluation situations (LES) used to assess competency development, list any instructions given to students or deposit group multimedia documents (e.g. sound recordings, videos, photographs).

The individual section can be used to store the student’s work and the evaluation grids (with notes from the teacher where applicable), along with any comments or remarks by the student.

None of the tools developed through these initiatives is compulsory. The tools are offered simply as support mechanisms for teachers in the four arts subjects (drama, visual arts, dance and music), to help them produce the competency report. “Both teachers and students can use the information during the year to guide the learning process, direct thinking or set personal goals,” said Rousseau. In addition, teachers who use the new tools will be in a better position to justify their students’ results if necessary (e.g. where a student contests his or her grade).

An information document will be posted on the MELS Web site, and a sample set of tools and student learning and evaluation files will also be posted on a password-protected site available only to teachers (fall 2008). The tools can be adjusted by each school to suit its own situation and needs.

During the workshops, participants were given a trial version of the tools developed for the drama program and were asked to submit their comments, which will be used to improve the tools.

The Arts Education sector is the first to develop this type of mechanism for teachers. “These new tools will also provide a working framework for other subject areas,” observed Rousseau.





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TRAINING SESSION FOR RESOURCE PERSONS

ENCOURAGING STUDENTS AT RISK: A CHALLENGE THAT CALLS FOR A JOINT APPROACH

Marie-Josée Lépine

At the training session for resource persons, Hélène Poliquin-Verville, from the Direction de l'adaptation scolaire, proposed a number of elements to encourage teamwork when planning the learning and evaluation of students at risk.

Approximately 75% of teachers find it hard to adjust their teaching to the needs of students at risk. As Poliquin-Verville pointed out, it is extremely important for resource people to be involved in selecting and consolidating practices that will allow all students to progress. The challenge is a considerable one, and can only be met through a combination of the individual and collective skills of everyone concerned.

Planning differentiated teaching

To facilitate the progress and meet the needs of students with learning difficulties, differentiated teaching must be used. According to Poliquin-Verville, special attention should be given to the following five elements:

- Produce a detailed analysis of the student's situation.
- Offer the student the same program as other students of the same age.
- If necessary, amend expectations, select methods and provide resources.
- Plan learning and evaluation situations (LES) that will allow every student to learn and progress.
- Plan communication of results.

Produce a detailed analysis of the student's situation

The first step is to identify the student's learning, using the QEP as a basis. Information can be collected from the learning and evaluation situations for each of the program's competencies, which are planned

jointly by the teacher and the resource person, and, where applicable, from out-of-context tasks that help identify the specific difficulties encountered by individual students. At this stage of the process, the support provided by the resource person can greatly facilitate assimilation of the QEP and the task of collecting relevant information.

Poliquin-Verville observed that it is also important, when analyzing the student's situation, to consider any significant elements in his or her personal situation or school, social and family environment that might act as levers for success.

Offer the student the same program as other students of the same age

Research into differentiated teaching has clearly shown that students with learning difficulties should be offered the same program as other students of the same age. The program should be exploited to the maximum, by offering all the learning elements the students are able to assimilate, while emphasizing the key concepts that are most important for competency development.

If necessary, amend expectations, select methods and provide resources

An individualized education plan may be required to meet the student's needs. The plan is a structured approach that involves personalized learning expectations, modifications to original program outcomes where necessary, and methods to achieve those outcomes. The resource person can make a useful contribution in this respect by providing guidance for the team when it selects personalized targets, short-term learning objectives and proven educational methods.

Plan learning and evaluation situations (LES) that will allow every student to learn and progress

At the planning stage, it is important to identify adjustments and amendments to the learning and evaluation situations devised for the rest of the class, so that all students are able to develop and apply the target competencies.

Also at this stage, the teacher and resource person can select diversified teaching strategies and plan effective methods.

Plan communication of results

The task of collecting significant indicators of student progress in a given context, identifying data to support the learning process, making a fair assessment of the learning achieved and clearly communicating the results obtained by a student at risk, especially where outcomes have been modified, can be extremely challenging. The resource person can help the teacher considerably by providing support throughout the evaluation process.

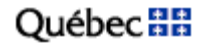
Research is currently underway on the subject of learning and evaluation differentiation. As Poliquin-Verville pointed out during her presentation, the findings support the use of a program that corresponds to the student's age and call former planning and evaluation practices into question. A further aim is to identify guidelines for general differentiated planning and more accurate competency reports, and also to identify effective teaching strategies and the specific conditions in which they are required.

However, Poliquin-Verville also noted that the task of planning for students at risk is extremely challenging. "Your collaboration is essential in this task," she told the resource people present at the training session. "Teamwork is vital. You are in a strategic position; you can help teachers to become more comfortable with the QEP, give them confidence, encourage them and provide support!"

“First and foremost,” she concluded, “it is important for every one of us to believe that failure is not inevitable and that every student is capable of progress if we are able to create conditions conducive to his or her success.”



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TRAINING SESSION FOR RESOURCE PERSONS

THE SCALES OF COMPETENCY LEVELS

Eve Krakow

Christian Rousseau, coordinator of research and development in evaluation, presented the preliminary version of the new scales of competency levels for elementary school, and reminded participants of the reasons for using these scales.

“The scales of competency levels associated with the competency report are part of an approach that focuses on achieving competency standards,” Rousseau began. Québec is not alone in adopting this approach. In fact, he said, it joins a number of countries around the world—Finland, Germany, Switzerland, England, Scotland, the Netherlands, Belgium, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States, as well as Canadian provinces Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta—that have all implemented or are implementing, in one form or another, an educational policy based on the achievement of competency standards.

In most of these countries, this achievement of standards is verified by national examinations in certain subjects. While Québec has such uniform examinations as well, “we’re going a step further, by asking teachers to produce a competency report using scales of competency levels, which present the official competency development requirements established by the MELS, in all subjects,” said Rousseau.

Higher standards and greater comparability

Scales of competency levels help to raise performance standards, said Rousseau. “The use of the scales in both elementary and secondary school will help ensure that the learning of all students in Québec is guided by high-level requirements, right from Elementary Cycle One.” These requirements are in line with all the other evaluation tools available, which guide teachers in setting their own requirements during the cycle to foster their students’ competency development.

The scales also aim to ensure a greater comparability of results. “Research has shown that a cumulative approach . . . involves many choices that can vary greatly from teacher to teacher,” said Rousseau. “This gives us a false impression of a precise, quantitative result.” The scales of competency levels will therefore serve to guide the actions of teachers, schools and school boards, in achieving common and clearly defined learning targets.

The scales contain five levels of competency: Advanced (5), Thorough (4), Acceptable (3), Partial (2) and Minimal (1). The third level is the minimum requirement for success. For each level, the document describes the abilities and typical profile of a student who has achieved that level of competency. The descriptions are designed to enable teachers to interpret the data they have collected so as to reach a judgment on the student’s level of competency.

Elementary school

Rousseau took care to explain the difference between the competency levels for elementary school produced in 2002 and the scales of competency levels being released in 2008.

- In 2002, the competency levels were not prescriptive. They presented a continuum illustrating the progression of a competency; their main function was to serve as an aid for learning.
- In 2008, the scales of competency levels are tools prescribed by the *Basic school regulation*. They present five levels of competency that can be observed at the end of the cycle; their main function is the recognition of competency development, for the purpose of the competency report.

This does not mean that the competency levels produced in 2002 will be discarded. "They have proven very useful in guiding interventions with students at risk," Rousseau noted. To avoid confusion, the new scales of competency levels will contain the subtitle: "Competency Report."

Preliminary edition: Spring 2008

The preliminary edition of the scales of competency levels for elementary school were posted on a Web site in spring 2008. This version will contain examples of the scales of competency levels for most subjects.

The preliminary version will be used for training and validation purposes. It will enable teachers to become familiar with the new structure of the scales, which must be used to prepare the competency report, starting in June 2009.

Secondary school

With respect to the scales of competency levels for secondary school, a project to follow up on the Secondary Cycle One scales, used for the first time in 2007, is being carried out by a team from the Université du Québec à Trois Rivières. The purpose is to make any necessary adjustments to the scales, and to develop complementary tools to help teachers in using the scales.

Work continues on the scales of competency levels for Secondary Cycle Two. A second edition should be ready in the fall of 2008 (Secondary III and IV only), while a complete edition of all scales for Secondary Cycle Two should be ready in fall 2009.

In conclusion, Rousseau reminded his audience of the importance of the scales within an approach based on the achievement of competency standards. "I am convinced that this approach not only fosters greater equity for students, but that, more generally, it contributes to the improvement of our education system."

Examples of scales of competency levels to be disseminated in spring 2008 (elementary):

- English Language Arts: Competencies 1 and 2 in Cycle Three
- English as a Second Language: All competencies in Cycle Three
- Français, langue d'enseignement: Competency 2, all three cycles
- Mathematics: All competencies in all three cycles
- Science and Technology: Competency 1 in Cycles Two and Three
- Drama, Visual Arts, Dance, Music: Competency 1 in all three cycles
- Physical Education and Health: All competencies in Cycle Three
- Ethics and Religious Culture: Competency 1 in all three cycles





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TRAINING SESSION FOR RESOURCE PERSONS

PRODUCING THE COMPETENCY REPORT: GUIDE AND VIDEO

Eve Krakow

Aline Buron, coordinator of research and development in evaluation, presented the new guide for planning and producing the competency report, as well as the video that accompanies it. She also explained the nature of the exploratory study, carried out in three schools, that led to the guide's development.

Intended for schools, the guide *Step by Step: Successfully Producing the Competency Report* presents a process for planning and producing the competency report. Session participants received paper copies as a working document for the afternoon workshops. The final version will be available shortly, in electronic format, on the MELS Web site.

Exploratory study

Aline Buron first explained the nature of the exploratory study that served as the basis for the guide and accompanying video. The study was carried out from September 2006 to June 2007 among Secondary Cycle One students and teachers in three schools: Académie Sainte-Maire, in the Commission scolaire des Premières-Seigneuries; École secondaire Casavant, in the Commission scolaire Saint-Hyacinthe; and Collège Charles-Lemoyne, in Longueuil. In each school, a team of five to twelve Secondary I and II teachers participated, along with the school administration. The study focused on French (language of instruction), mathematics and geography. The three school teams met several times throughout the year and enjoyed the support of a resource person from the Direction de l'évaluation.

The exploratory study had three main goals: to document emerging practices for carrying out the competency report; to field-test a process for planning and producing the competency report, taking into account the specific characteristics of each subject; and to produce a guide and video to support all schools in preparing the competency report. "This was the first time these Secondary Cycle One teachers had to prepare a competency report," Buron reminded participants. "The exploratory study was a chance to

observe the reflections, decisions and actions of the teachers, school administrators and education consultants in preparing the competency report. In this way, we were able to highlight the strengths, the difficulties encountered and the solutions found.”

The guide: Types of activities

Based on the findings of this exploratory study, the guide proposes a process of planning and producing the competency report, suggesting activities to be implemented according to the schedule for communications with parents and students. Buron noted that although the process was developed during the exploratory study in Secondary Cycle One, it can be applied to any level: preschool, elementary or secondary.

There are three types of activities: planning and follow-up meetings, work sessions in the school, and regular classroom activities.

- Planning and follow-up meetings may involve the entire school team, the cycle team or the subject team. They are held at strategic times and may serve to take stock of the situation, become familiar with the ministerial frameworks, set the foundations for overall planning, develop and update an action plan, or share evaluation strategies and tools developed in different subjects.
- Work sessions usually involve teachers of a given subject or cycle, along with the education consultant, if needed. “These sessions aim to set up concrete measures to apply the school’s action plan for preparing the competency report,” said Buron. “They are very important opportunities not only for choosing and developing learning and evaluation situations, but also for designing evaluation rubrics.” These meetings also allow for regular reflection on evaluation practices with respect to the competency report.
- Classroom activities are carried out by teachers in their classrooms. These may include trying out the evaluation tools and strategies that were chosen or developed during the work sessions, highlighting the potential and limits of these tools and strategies, and helping to make adjustments.

“Alternating between these three types of activities led teachers to realize that not all the burden was on their shoulders,” said Buron. In the exploratory study, teachers were given release time to attend the planning and follow-up meetings and the work sessions. In this respect, providing time for school team members to work together is essential for fostering collegiality, Buron noted.

The guide: Structure

The guide is divided into five chapters, as follows:

1. Defining the Process of Planning and Producing the Competency Report
2. Planning: Key to a Quality Competency Report
3. Information, Training, Evaluation Tools and Regulation
4. Communicating Results to Parents and Students Over the Course of the Cycle or Year
5. Planning and Producing the Competency Report

All five chapters include testimonials from teachers, administrators and education consultants who participated in the exploratory study, as well as references to the tools that can be used for each suggested activity. These tools are provided in the guide’s appendix. Some are in the form of questions that the school team can use for reflection, analysis or to prepare their action plan, while others are in the form of slide shows presenting information. “Schools can adapt these tools as needed to take into account their own situation,” Buron said.

The video

The video accompanying the guide documents the process of planning and producing the competency

report that was carried out in the three schools participating in the exploratory study. It highlights the realizations of school team members with respect to the evaluation of learning, the challenges faced and solutions found, and the changes made in the schools and in the classrooms to pave the way for the competency report.

Participants had a chance to watch the video in the workshops following Buron's presentation. Every school will receive a copy of the video, which can be used to initiate discussions on the competency report.¹

A harmonization of practices

“The teachers who participated in the exploratory report discovered that the process of planning and producing the competency report leads to a harmonization of evaluation practices,” Buron concluded. “In this respect, it can serve to validate the choices made with respect to the school's standards and procedures, if they have been established. If not, it can serve as a good starting point for developing them.”

1. The video is available in French only.





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TRAINING SESSION FOR RESOURCE PERSONS

THE WORKSHOPS: A BRIEF SUMMARY

Marie-Josée Lépine

Three workshops were offered, at which participants were able to work together to identify actions for planning learning progress and reporting on competency development. The participants, with support from MELS professionals, were asked first to measure general planning requirements and challenges. In doing so, they used the profiles of their own school communities, along with elements already discussed in the plenary sessions.

Some common situations: Challenges and requirements

- The participants agreed on the importance of teamwork in schools. However, in some schools, the concept of teamwork is not fully accepted, and needs to be introduced gradually.
- At the secondary level, planning mainly takes place by subject, among a number of institutions. Planning by cycle does not yet exist.
- Requests for support are usually made when teams are formed.
- Model learning and evaluation situations and model evaluation situations help foster joint action and teamwork.
- Prototypes of ministry examinations are useful for overall planning.

Some significant advantages

Once the demands and challenges had been identified, the participants considered the potential gains of a team approach for the learning and evaluation planning process.

Using [Thérèse Laferrière's presentation on communities of practice](#) as their basis, the participants identified a number of advantages.

Communities of practice:

- enable information to be shared
- allow groups of individuals to share a common interest
- require active participation
- produce better outcomes
- result in a shared repertory
- ensure that issues are raised and addressed

What should be considered when planning learning and evaluation?

The participants went on to identify the conditions for successful teamwork in the planning of learning and evaluation.

- Include all the resources and ensure that they participate:
 - School principals need to be involved and to play a leadership role.
 - Teachers should be involved in preparing tools such as evaluation grids and learning and evaluation situations.
 - Parents should be informed.
- Allow time for coordination.
- Allow time for pooling, comparison and testing of ideas.
- Consult MELS standards and terms.
- Ensure that the process is continuous and is properly regulated.





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FOURTH FORUM ON THE ETHICS AND RELIGIOUS CULTURE PROGRAM

- [Demonstrating an Understanding of the Phenomenon of Religion](#)
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FOURTH FORUM ON THE ETHICS AND RELIGIOUS CULTURE PROGRAM

DEMONSTRATING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PHENOMENON OF RELIGION

Sophie Gaudreault, Denis Watters, Serge Côté

The fourth forum on the Ethics and Religious Culture program was held on March 17 in Québec City, and was attended by teachers, school board personnel and university professors involved in teaching the subject. Some publishers' representatives were also present. During the forum, participants examined the competency *Demonstrates an understanding of the phenomenon of religion* and the process by which it will be applied. Special attention was given to the professional approach required.

Participants were first asked to look at some religious photographs and talk about their representations of the phenomenon of religion. For the rest of the morning, they worked on developing better representations of the competency's key concepts, including the phenomenon of religion, religious culture, expressions of religion, social environment, attitudes, thoughts and actions, and religious profanities.

Following these activities, Pierre Lucier, holder of the Fernand-Dumont Chair on Culture at the Institut national de la recherche scientifique, gave a paper on the cultural approach to the phenomenon of religion.

Lucier's speech focused on the cognitive aim of the second competency in the Ethics and Religious Culture program. Based on the wording of the competency, "demonstrates an understanding," teachers must "ensure that students understand and grasp the meaning, signification and significant relationships." The object of the competency is the "phenomenon of religion." The program gives priority to the culture of Québec, which has been influenced largely by the Catholic and Protestant religions. Lucier presented the principal elements of a cultural pedagogy involving a gradual approach based on the potential available in written discourse, rites and symbols. He warned participants about the pitfalls of overloading the students with unnecessary additional information and "false trails."

In the afternoon, Nancy Houde, an Elementary Cycle Three teacher at École primaire Plein-Soleil in Sherbrooke, talked about her experience testing the Ethics and Religious Culture program in her school.

She described some of the challenges of the year-long trial, including the need for personal reflection on the importance of culture, values, guidelines, impartiality and showing respect for ideologies other than one's own, as well as the need to create a climate conducive to dialogue. She said it had been necessary to accept doubt, and to proceed by trial and error while allowing enough time to master the new program.

To learn the different steps involved in helping students to develop the competency, participants explored expressions of religion, made connections between those expressions and the social and cultural environment, and examined a range of attitudes, thoughts and actions.

Later in the afternoon, Micheline Milot, a professor in the sociology department at the Université du Québec à Montréal, gave a paper on the subject of [Religious Culture, Mutual Recognition and Secularity](#). Her presentation was divided into three sections: the meaning of secularity, including an understanding of the phenomenon of religion, the educational challenge, and the professional requirements associated with the competency. In her view, the Ethics and Religious Culture program will help students to develop empathy, sympathy, an open mind and respect for others. They will learn not to worry about their personal identity being threatened by difference.

Throughout the day, a number of new elements were presented, including a video aimed at introducing the new Ethics and Religious Culture program to the general public. Participants received copies of the program leaflet, which will be available in all schools throughout Québec. The program's official Web site was also officially launched (<https://www7.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DC/ECR/index.php?page=annonce>). It will be a valuable training tool for teachers and teacher trainers alike.





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FOURTH FORUM ON THE ETHICS AND RELIGIOUS CULTURE PROGRAM

RELIGIOUS CULTURE, MUTUAL RECOGNITION AND SECULARITY

Eve Krakow

Micheline Milot, a professor in the sociology department at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), talked about the meaning of secularity, the importance of the ERC program in society today, the implications of understanding the phenomenon of religion, and the challenges involved.

In keeping with the day's theme, Milot focused on Competency 2 of the Ethics and Religious Culture program, *Demonstrates an understanding of the phenomenon of religion*.

"There are a number of social realities we cannot ignore," she began. One only has to think of recent events such as the Bouchard-Taylor commission on reasonable accommodation, negative reactions to the wearing of a kirpan (ceremonial dagger) and other religious signs at school, perceptions of incompatibility between secularity and religious culture in the school, and objections to the ERC program and its obligatory nature. "For some people, the deconfessionalization of school was thought to mean the end of all discussion on religion in education," said Milot. "These examples are testimony to a confusion over the relationships between the deconfessionalization of the school system, the moral and religious plurality of society, and the appropriate attitudes in this regard."

Principles of secularity

There are two fundamental principles underlying secularity: freedom of conscience and religion (and its expression), and equal treatment for all. To ensure that citizens are able to live out these freedoms, two operational principles are necessary: neutrality of the state, and separation of the state from religion.

Milot makes an important distinction between the French terms *laïcisation* and *sécularisation*. While the

former refers to the deconfessionalization of political and other institutions, the latter refers to the secularization of individuals and society in general: in the 1960s, Québec society underwent “an accentuation of the autonomy of personal and collective norms in relation to the religious authorities, with the major religious traditions losing a large part of their cultural hold over society.”

This does not mean, however that individuals no longer draw from religious precepts to guide their lives. Within the Christian majority, Milot said, many individuals continue to identify with Christianity, but they select the symbols, precepts or practices that make the most sense to their lives. “Yet we often have difficulty granting this same capacity of selection to people of minority groups,” she said. She pointed to the wearing of the Muslim headscarf as an example. “The large majority of women or girls who wear them do not subscribe to all the precepts of Islam, in particular to the interpretation of the sharia (Islamic law). They adhere to some precepts, but want to live in a society whose civil institutions are not defined by religious dogma. Hence, it does not pose any threat to institutional secularism.”

Ethics and religious culture contribute to socialization

Milot notes that the study of religions in school is often justified as a requirement for understanding the artistic, historical, political and other aspects of Western culture. “While this is a relevant and commendable objective, it could be integrated into other school programs, such as history, literature or geography. It does not necessarily contribute to peaceful and harmonious cohabitation,” she stated. The aims of the ERC program, on the other hand, go well beyond this objective: they are the recognition of others and pursuit of the common good.

In this context, *understanding* means getting to the meaning of religious phenomena, in order to perceive, with sensitivity and real intelligence, the experiences of others who do not think as we do, and to understand each other—that is, to get along. “It is an understanding that involves empathy, an ability to put oneself in the other person’s shoes, with kindness, openness and respect. It’s about learning to live together.”

The ERC program requires tolerance, mutual recognition, understanding of identity and otherness, reciprocity, relativity and reflexivity. While these are attitudes to develop among students, they no doubt represent major challenges for teachers as well.

Challenges and pitfalls

To achieve these goals, it is important to create a safe space where each child feels truly accepted and, above all, not held up as a stereotype. “There is a danger in automatically associating children with all the aspects of a religious tradition (especially children of a minority), when in fact they may only subscribe to some of those practices.”

Teachers should also avoid filtering things from the viewpoint of “the secularized Christian.” In recent years, Milot explained, religious teaching was largely secularized from the inside. “This sometimes creates the expectation that everyone should live their religious affiliation in a secular way.”

Finally, teachers must be open to diversity, and all that it implies: not only must they be tolerant, but they should not feel threatened by what some students may express or their strong religious affiliations.





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IDC LEARNING SYMPOSIUM

THE 2008 IDC LEARNING SYMPOSIUM: NURTURING HEARTS AND MINDS

Eve Krakow

The Implementation Design Committee (IDC) held its ninth annual Learning Symposium from February 11 to 13, 2008, in Laval. Over 700 teachers, education consultants, school principals and other education professionals from across Québec participated in the event.

This year's theme, "Nurturing Hearts and Minds," focused on the humanization of the educational process, "paying homage to the teacher as the nurturing element for all our students," explained Alessandra Furfaro, chairperson of the IDC. "Our job is education, but our profession is humanity."

Leo La France, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education for the English-speaking community, welcomed participants, noting that this ninth annual symposium marked "yet another important milestone for the English sector schools as we journey forward together in the implementation of the secondary school reform and the consolidation of the reform in the elementary sector."

The three-day event featured two keynote speakers and over 60 workshops, giving participants the opportunity to explore a variety of topics and learn about inspiring initiatives being carried out in Québec schools. *Schoolscapes* reports on two of these presentations.

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IDC LEARNING SYMPOSIUM

THE HEALTHY, ACTIVE LIVING JOURNAL

Eve Krakow

A team of teachers and consultants from English-language schools and school boards across the province have created a resource for teachers looking for a way to teach and evaluate the third Physical Education and Health competency, "Adopts a healthy, active lifestyle," in Secondary Cycle One.

Members of the team gave a workshop at the 2008 IDC Learning Symposium to present the resource, which consists of a *Healthy, Active Living Journal* for students and a teacher's guide. They also shared their experience using the tool in their schools.

"The main objective of the Healthy Active Living Journal is to enable students to develop an action plan for the year that will encourage them to change or improve upon their health," said Sandy Farr, physical education and health consultant for the English-Montréal School Board.

The journal is divided into two parts: "fitness" and "lifestyle habits." Students use the same Healthy, Active Living Journal for both years of Secondary Cycle One. In the fitness section, students complete a pre-assessment and a number of fitness tests in which they can compare their results with Canadian standards and assess their fitness level. Then, they make a plan to improve the targeted weaknesses, put their plan into practice and record the results. Finally there is a personal post-assessment to evaluate progress.

In the lifestyle section, students begin by completing a survey to assess their lifestyle habits. Then, they choose one lifestyle habit to target over the course of the year: regular physical activity, nutrition, sleep, stress, detrimental lifestyle habits (smoking, caffeine, alcohol, excessive use of multimedia technology, etc.), personal hygiene, or dental hygiene.

Logs for tracking progress

For each lifestyle habit, the journal contains several logs the students can use to track their progress and

submit to their teacher as evidence. The journal also contains fact sheets, Web sites, and questions for self-assessment and reflection. In the second year of the cycle, students choose a different lifestyle habit and repeat the process. At the end of the cycle, they complete a final reflection.

Students engaged

“We tried to make the journal very teenage-friendly, related to their world,” noted Jeff Kosow, a Physical Education and Health teacher at Westmount High School.

The teacher’s guide includes all the material contained in the student journal, as well as information for planning, answer sheets, additional resources, and criterion lists and rubrics for evaluation. The guide reminds teachers that the third competency, “Adopts a healthy, active lifestyle,” is closely linked to the other two competencies, and should not be taught in isolation. And while the journal is designed to meet the requirements of the QEP, it also ties in with the objectives of the Québec government’s [Framework Policy on Healthy Eating and Active Living](#).

Materials available to all schools

The journal and teacher’s guide are available in electronic format, and may be reproduced for noncommercial use with Québec students.

For more information or to obtain a copy of the Healthy, Active Living Journal materials, contact your Physical Education and Health consultant at your school board.





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IDC LEARNING SYMPOSIUM

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Eve Krakow

Keynote speaker Tom Hierck talked about the importance of building relationships with students and colleagues if schools are to become positive learning communities.

"Relationships matter more than anything else," Hierck began. "Long after the lesson plans, assignments and exams are gone, kids will remember you for what you did for them in those moments when they were in distress." That's not to say teachers shouldn't prepare outstanding, motivating lessons, he continued. "But how we treat each individual matters. The behaviours we model and expect make a difference. The depth of our tolerance and the height of our expectations set the tone."

Planning should be based on data and critical evidence, he said. Internal and external stakeholders of an individual school are the most qualified and capable people to plan and implement positive change. "Leaders and managers need to support people during this transition."

Hierck told of his experience taking on the position of vice principal at Trafalgar Middle School in Nelson, B.C. At the time, the school was rock bottom in terms of student achievement and behaviour. Slowly, Hierck worked with the staff to build a more positive climate in the school. "Research shows that when kids feel connected to school, transgressions—violence, drugs, absenteeism—drop off significantly," he said.

He worked to build more collegial relationships among the staff. He defined collegiality as talking about practice, sharing craft knowledge, observing each other and rooting for one another. "As a principal, how can you do this? By stating your expectations explicitly, modelling collegiality, rewarding those who behave as colleagues and protecting those who engage in collegiality," he suggested.

Tom's Tenets

- Every day provides a new opportunity to exert a positive influence.
- When we eliminate hope, we create desperation.
- What we focus on expands.

- Every student represents a success story waiting to be told.



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A REVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Marie-Josée Lépine

A meeting for resource persons and regional coordinators [working in special education support and expertise services](#) took place in Québec City on February 20. The meeting, held each year, was attended by 150 people and included presentations, workshops and a speech by Claude Lessard.

The general aim of the meeting was to discuss changes in the mandates of special education resource persons and regional coordinators. The MELS presented the related issues, along with its own priorities and perspectives, and encouraged participants, as part of a learning organization, to identify ways of providing support to schools.

The meeting began with two general presentations on some of the special education and complementary educational services issues currently under consideration at the MELS. Liette Picard, who is responsible for special education, and Richard Leblanc, the complementary educational services coordinator, identified the main challenges facing their respective sectors and the conditions required to meet those challenges.



The presentations were followed by three information workshops on different themes: the MELS/MSSS agreement, the new requirements for report cards and competency reports, [differentiated teaching](#), [classroom integration of students with handicaps](#), [social maladjustments or learning difficulties](#), and the organization and funding of services for those students.

[Claude Lessard](#), a professor in the education faculty at the Université de Montréal, talked about the concept of a learning organization and its connection with the concept of support. He also described the conditions required to develop effective support strategies in schools.

Easier integration

In December 2006, the MELS set up a committee to review the integration of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties and recommend actions to support schools. Anne Paradis and Annie Beaupré, both from the Direction de l'adaptation scolaire, gave a progress report on the committee's work.



In recent years, the question of integration has triggered a number of reactions and concerns. The MELS, along with its partners from the Groupe de concertation en adaptation scolaire (GCAS), set up a subcommittee composed of representatives from the education system, associations, parents, trade unions and partners including the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec. The subcommittee is currently working to define the issue, and will eventually make recommendations. Although its work is not yet complete, some elements were nevertheless presented at the workshop.

The subcommittee members have agreed to keep their discussions within current ministerial orientations. The *Education Act* recommends integration into regular classes where this will facilitate the student's learning and social integration and would not impose an excessive constraint or significantly undermine the rights of the other students (EA, s. 235). The decision of whether or not to integrate a student into a regular class should be based on the student's best interests and an evaluation of his or her abilities and needs (EA, s. 234).

The subcommittee members have also discussed their vision of successful integration, and defined its characteristics. To be successful for both the student and the school, integration must:

- enable everyone to participate in life at school, and prepare everyone for life in society
- meet the student's needs and be in his or her best interests
- be organized as part of an individualized education plan
- be based on pooling of expertise and effective team support for both the teacher and the student
- take part in a class where all students are able to progress
- allow the student to learn at his or her own level, with appropriate support
- encourage the student to take part in group interactions

Some of the principal difficulties of integration identified by the subcommittee were the challenges raised by the presence of large numbers of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties, the negative impacts of time constraints on coordination, the fact that parents are not always recognized as full partners in the process, the challenge of adjusting the organization of services to meet the students' needs, the need for coordination with the health system, and the importance of reviewing initial teacher training so that teachers are better prepared for the situations they will face in a regular classroom.

In addition, the subcommittee members, along with university researchers, have discussed the conditions for successful integration. A number of elements were mentioned, including the following:

- Leadership is essential, as is the commitment of all parties concerned.
- A culture of cooperation must be established so that student integration is supported by all parties.
- Parental participation must be sought and facilitated.
- Services must be available continuously, so that both the teacher and the student are supported

properly.

- Professional development should be made available to all staff members.
- The research community should be asked to contribute more, with a view to improving practices.

The subcommittee will continue its work in the coming months. It will eventually produce a report, propose support measures for schools, and make recommendations to the Groupe de concertation en adaptation scolaire.

Classroom differentiation: Some potential support measures

The task of helping students at risk to progress as far as they can is sometimes daunting. What should be done to maximize the impact of interventions with these students? What kinds of pedagogical interventions are needed to help them progress? A committee is currently working on potential solutions to help teachers with this aspect of their work.

One potential solution requires that the MELS and school boards reexamine the training they provide “to ensure that it is varied and adjusted to the needs identified by schools.” When the application of the QEP at the elementary level was evaluated, 74% of teachers identified the need to adjust teaching to the special needs of students as being a priority area for training.

It was as a result of this that a working committee was set up to examine a differentiated approach to learning and evaluation. Its mandate is to devise tools that will help teachers to plan their learning and evaluation activities and interventions for students with significant learning difficulties.

The committee began by identifying what researchers consider to be the key elements in reading, writing and mathematics for students at risk. These elements will then be used to target certain priorities.

The committee is working with a researcher from the Université de Sherbrooke to identify and describe teaching strategies that will help students with learning difficulties to achieve success. The strategies can then be applied to learning and evaluation situations tailored to the students’ age and needs. As a result, it will be possible to identify the most appropriate differentiated teaching measures for students at risk from the elementary level to the end of Secondary Cycle One.

Work will continue in 2008-2009, and will include trials in schools. Additional information will be provided to educators as it becomes available.

Organizational learning communities: Supporting change

Our schools are changing significantly, and educational support personnel are being asked to rethink their relationship with teachers. Claude Lessard, a professor in the education faculty at the Université de Montréal, raised the issue of organizational learning and asked the following question: What support for what change?

At the Province-Wide Meeting last October, Lessard suggested that [schools should be managed according to the “learning organization” paradigm](#). His presentation examined the notion of support in this type of organization.

The basic premise of the concept of [organizational learning](#) is that learning derives primarily from the people who work in the organization. In other words, workers in a given group have specific knowledge and expertise that needs to be applied in order to solve problems.

Learning . . . but what, exactly?

Lessard suggested that organizational learning takes place at two levels. The first step is to make an accurate reading of a given situation—its environment, historical mission, mechanisms and internal

practices—and then interpret and question all these elements. The second step involves looking more specifically at how problems are solved.

If the individuals within an organization are to assimilate the learning, they must know how to use certain key materials, including the experience of the organization's other members, the knowledge available from external networks, and tools such as strategic planning and consulting groups.

Supporting educational change in a learning community

School support resources, said Lessard, must constantly deal with change. Their job requires them to manage the complexity of change by working successively on mentalities, practices and structures. They act as interpreters between the research community and practitioners, and must not only understand what is being planned by decision-making authorities, but must also be familiar with what is being done in the field.

If a change is to be made successfully, its meaning must be construed at the point where these two elements meet. "True change," said Lessard, "must take shape with local agents, who must integrate it." Change cannot therefore flow solely from the top down, or conversely, from schools to decision-making authorities. Instead, it must be assumed willingly by all the actors.

The role of support in a process of change

In a context of change, support personnel must listen and advise, being careful not to impose their vision. First and foremost, they should ensure that the people they are supporting have a sense of their own competency, and hence of their professional independence.

This involves identifying answers to the questions raised. It also involves giving advice and providing the conceptual frameworks and tools needed to form an independent judgment.

In schools, support also involves creating and circulating relevant professional knowledge adapted to the practical context.

Given the need to create, support and expand learning communities in schools, Lessard noted the importance of ensuring that the organization's internal practices are legible, considering the concerns of teachers, stimulating debate both inside and outside the organization, and changing the organization of work so that both the providers and recipients of support have greater flexibility.

Communities of practice

A community of practice is a group of people who share certain problems in their professional activities and expand their knowledge and expertise by interacting regularly and, where applicable, producing manuals, standards and tools and or forming associations. A community of practice is a flexible, horizontal form within an organization or between organizations, which may be real or virtual.

Organizational learning

Organizational learning is a group process through which an organization "learns from its experience and has a memory, knowledge and the ability not to make the same mistakes three times over." (Perrenoud) According to Lessard, it incorporates learning processes (triggered by the need to solve a problem) in its operations, develops new knowledge and acquires a lasting ability to adjust, innovate and develop.





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In short

ACTION PLAN ON READING IN SCHOOL

CONTINUATION OF THE ACTION PLAN ON READING IN SCHOOL: *AND WHAT ARE YOU READING?*

Catherine Gaumond

The Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports recently announced the renewal of the three-year action plan on reading in school. The announcement was made at the launch of the *Plan d'action pour l'amélioration de la qualité du français à l'école* (action plan to improve the quality of French in schools). School librarians will also be hired within the network. The measures proposed in the 2005-2007 Action Plan, namely promoting reading, supporting the school system and improving access to resources, will be continued, and new measures will be introduced.





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SUMMER READING CAMPS: TEACHING THOSE HARD-TO-REACH STUDENTS

Eve Krakow

This August will mark the third edition of *R.I.S.E. and Shine!*, a reading camp for educators in English-language schools. The camp originated with the MELS *Action Plan on Reading in School*, and aims to help educators translate their own passion for reading into actions in the classroom.

R.I.S.E. stands for Reading in School Event. Following the success of the first edition in 2006, funded by the MELS, the English-language sector sought alternative sources of funding to keep the camp going. Held at the Far Hills Inn in Val Morin, Québec, the three-day event is intended for elementary and secondary teachers, librarians, education consultants and administrators. Its underlying philosophy is to get educators to look at their own passion for reading and at themselves as readers, and then to look at how to convey that passion to students through concrete actions in the classroom and in libraries.

Putting the spark back into teaching

Teachers who have attended the camp in the past have high praise for the event. Debbie Laurie, a participant in summer 2007, has been teaching for 30 years at Riverview School in Port-Cartier, on the north shore of the St. Lawrence (Eastern Shores School Board). She teaches a number of subjects to a multilevel class of Secondary I, II and III students. "The experience gave me a new life," she said. "I was in a rut, extremely tired, but it put a spark back into my teaching career."

Two sessions are being offered this year: a "beginner's camp" for first-time participants, and a "graduate camp" for people who attended one of the previous years. The theme of this year's graduate camp is the Reading/Writing Connection. "We're taking things a step further," explained John Ryan, the reading camp coordinator. "The research shows that children learn to read through their own attempts at writing."

As in previous years, all participants will have the opportunity to work with an author in residence and

experts in the field of literature and literacy.

Follow-up activities

In February 2008, *R.I.S.E. and Shine* organized a live, on-line follow-up session for camp participants, led by Larry Swartz. Teachers discussed questions such as “How do we get our young readers to a deeper understanding and not to be satisfied to have simply completed the text? How do we get them to sustain their effort with more challenging texts?” and “How do we assess the student’s literacy development?”

Information on the MELS *Action Plan on Reading in School* can be found at:

http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/lecture/index_en.asp.



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ACTION PLAN ON READING IN SCHOOL

PROJECTS PROMOTING BOOKS AND READING: 2007-2008 RECOGNITION AWARDS

Catherine Gaumond

Under the Action Plan on Reading in School, regional prizes were awarded to schools for designing innovative projects to encourage young people to read. In the Capitale-Nationale et Chaudière-Appalaches region, the prizes for the most original projects were given out at the Salon international du livre de Québec 2008.

Marie Laberge, honorary president of the Salon international du livre de Québec 2008, began the awards ceremony by talking about the impact books had on her in her youth. Then, Margaret Rioux-Dolan, head of the Direction générale de la formation des jeunes, and Guy Larose, regional director for the Capitale-Nationale et Chaudière-Appalaches region, presented the recognition awards. Three prizes went to elementary schools, and three to secondary schools and adult education centres. The grand prize was awarded to École Fernand-Saindon, under the Commission scolaire de Charlevoix, for the most outstanding project in the region.

All the prize-winning projects were very innovative and took an original, dynamic approach to attaining the objectives set by the school teams. Below are a few examples:

- Promoting an appreciation of library books: *Inspecteur Ervil Mubla* (École primaire Notre-Dame-d'Etchemin, Commission scolaire des Navigateurs)
- Familiarizing students with different genres (e.g. stories, plays, novels): *J'ouvre un livre sur le monde* (École primaire Les Bocages, Commission scolaire des Découvreurs)
- Promoting young people's literature and the different types of books: *Valise de l'auteur* (École Guillaume-Mathieu, Commission scolaire des Premières-Seigneuries)
- Self-fulfillment through books and reading and introduction to the world of books: *Camarades de lecture* (École secondaire Vanier, Commission scolaire de la Capitale)

Margaret Rioux-Dolan ended the ceremony by reminding the audience of the importance the MELS places

on encouraging young people to read and congratulated all the participants for their efforts.

Provincial level

From the projects submitted in all the regions of Québec, a provincial jury selected 12 finalists and 5 grand prize winners. The recognition awards at the provincial level were presented on May 27 at the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec. Read more about the awards in upcoming issues of *Schoolscapes* and on the MELS Web site, where you will find [descriptions of the winning projects](#).



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