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Québec 

Taking Ownership of the Reform: Revitalizing Practices

Summary

VOL. 4, NO. 5—JUNE 2004

BUILDING AN EDUCATION PROGRAM 3

- Putting Knowledge into Practice 3
- Adopting a Different Practice 4
- How We Are Living the Reform 5
- A World of Discovery Just a Mouse Click Away! 6
- Original Projects that Promote Teamwork 7
- A Stimulating Environment! 8
- INTEGRATING THE CULTURAL DIMENSION INTO THE CURRICULUM 9**
- A New Program for Bringing Culture into Schools in 2004-2005 9
- How One School Has Successfully Integrated the Cultural Dimension 10
- Culture in English Schools 12

EXCHANGING AND LEARNING 14

- A Look at the Evaluation of Learning 14
- Guest Speakers 15
- Questions and Answers 16
- Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction 18
- Building Communities of Learners 19
- Professional Development in English Language Arts 20
- The Village Simulation Exercise 21

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND COMPLEMENTARY EDUCATIONAL SERVICES 22

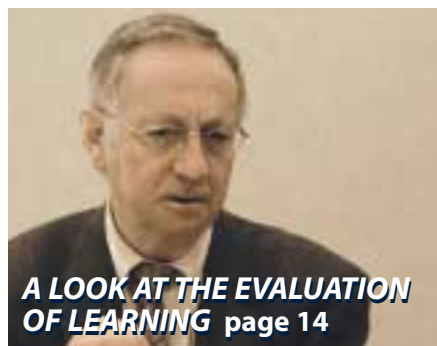
- Individualized Education Plans: Helping Students Achieve Success 22

EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING 23

- Policy on the Evaluation of Learning 23

INFORMATION 24

- News from the DGF 24
- News from... Laurier MacDonald High School 24



COVER PAGE

Students at Louis-Riel Secondary School,
Commission scolaire de Montréal
Photo: Emmanuel Bégin

By Francine Payette (Translation)

As the school year draws to a close, this issue of *Schoolscapes* presents some of the best practices taking hold in schools, as a large number of teachers across the province are resolutely engaged in a reflection on how young people learn. It is a process of action research, anchored in the Québec Education Program and its cornerstone, the competency-based approach.

Helping students to develop competencies means giving them opportunities to combine new and prior knowledge with other methodological, personal and relational resources, in order to broaden their understanding of the world and empower them to take action. The emphasis is therefore on students themselves constructing their learning, rather than on teachers simply transmitting information. Daily classroom activities are evolving in this direction, and the testimonials presented in this issue show that students are finding this approach highly stimulating.

In a few days, you will be saying good-bye to the students you have provided guidance and support to throughout the year. You have tried to nurture and sustain their passion for learning; perhaps you have succeeded in lighting the spark that will keep them going. Your students have no doubt changed a lot since September; having enriched their cultural baggage, gotten to know themselves better, and taken a few more steps toward playing an active part in this world. It is a world that now makes more sense to them—thanks, in part, to your efforts.

We wish you a relaxing and revitalizing summer vacation.

Enjoy your reading!

BUILDING AN EDUCATION PROGRAM

By Réjane Bougé (Translation)

Putting Knowledge into Practice

A third annual regional symposium on education reform was held on February 26, 2004 in Montreal, under the theme *L'Action éducative : de nos apprentissages... à nos pratiques (Action in Education: From Our Learnings to Our Practices)*. "Exchange" was the key word of the day: the goal was to pool concrete actions and knowledge, to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of promising pedagogical practices and that these become a source of inspiration.

The mandate of the *Groupe régional des commissions scolaires de Montréal*, which organized the meeting, is to facilitate the understanding and implementation of the reform. It therefore wishes to promote reflection on the topic, the dissemination of information as well as collaboration between the school boards.

During the meeting, participants were able to visit a dozen stands and attend presentations by a number of schools on specific projects. Around 20 interactive workshops were also offered to help teachers better understand the specific nature of each initiative and determine the key questions to ask. How did the teachers get the students involved in the projects? How did they help the students apply their learnings to various situations? The answers to these questions can be used as tools to meet the challenges offered by the reform. Everyone is keen to resume these discussions in their respective schools.

Learning how to learn

The opening address was given by education consultant Yolande Ouellet. For a number of years, Ouellet has given training sessions to education consultants, resource teachers and school administrators to help each institution be autonomous with regard to the continuing education of teachers. Ouellet suggested a learning scenario, called "Le potentiel de l'approche par compétences sur la construction du savoir" (the potential of the competency-based approach on knowledge-building), to better define the various facets of the reform and help understand them.

Ouellet began by inviting the audience to take part in an activity led by Catherine Thomassin, a teacher at Cavalier-de-LaSalle secondary school, and Sébastien Tremblay, of Antoine-de-St-

Exupéry secondary school, aimed at helping participants gain a clear, common understanding of the term "competency." Then, with the help of Marie-France Crépin of Calixa-Lavallée secondary school, Ouellet explained and illustrated the transition from transmitting knowledge to building knowledge, inviting participants to view lesson planning from a new perspective. Ouellet then talked about the project-based approach to develop competencies, and finally, the key impacts the competency-based approach has on teaching.

The purpose of the presentation was to help the participants better understand the orientations and aims of the new curriculum, while emphasizing the potential of the competency-based approach on knowledge-building. The true nature of a competency was defined during this conference, keeping in mind that "developing a competency requires practice. It's a long process and requires time to learn."

In the following pages, *Schoolscapes* reports on some of the school initiatives presented at this symposium, which demonstrate these changes in practices. 🗨️

The full text (in French) of Yolande Ouellet's presentation can be found on the following Web site:
<www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/virage/boite_outils.htm>



Yolande Ouellet, education consultant

By Réjane Bougé (Translation)

Adopting a Different Practice

A passionate account

Marie-France Crépin teaches students with learning difficulties at Calixa-Lavallée secondary school. During the opening address of the symposium, she presented some highlights of her career.

After having participated in a training program to gain a better understanding of the socio-constructivist approach, Crépin found herself better equipped to help her students overcome obstacles. For example, when students tell her that they “can’t do it”, she takes it to mean they “don’t know how to do it.” Using a math problem, she illustrated the steps of her conceptual process. Although the students solved many problems using algorithms, she notes that they often have trouble applying the techniques to everyday life.

Moreover, the young teacher placed great emphasis on allowing students to be “in a relationship of authentic communication with the teacher and the other students in joint, guided and independent practices.” What did they learn? How did they learn it and how did they overcome their difficulties? These elements are as important as the problem solving itself, if not more. The primary concern of this inspired teacher is for the students to be able to build self-esteem during the learning process. ◀



Marie-France Crépin, teacher at Calixa-Lavallée secondary school

The primary concern of this inspired teacher is for the students to be able to build self-esteem during the learning process.



Claude Malenfant, science and technology teacher at Cavalier-de-LaSalle secondary school

How We

By Marie-Michèle Giguère (Translation)

Cavalier-de-LaSalle secondary school is showing innovation by implementing a guidance system for Cycle One students. The key element of this initiative is an information booklet in which students can keep track of their progress. The experience of this pilot school goes hand in hand with its team’s desire to make improvements adapted to the school’s reality. Accounts from members of the administration and the teachers confirm that the reform is possible.

Are Living the Reform

A team project at the pilot school Cavalier-de-LaSalle

At Cavalier-de-LaSalle secondary school, the transition preceding implementation of the reform is a team project that is materializing thanks to a stimulating reorganization. The administration has set up steering committees open to the teachers, education consultants, support staff and administration. The purpose of these committees is to review certain aspects of their work, particularly time management and the teachers' professional development plan.

As a first step, the concept of departments has been revamped. Previously grouped together by subject, the teachers now share their rooms with colleagues teaching the same grades. This type of organization seems to be better adapted to implementing interdisciplinary projects.

The main challenge of this reorganization is definitely including time for group work in the schedule, so a steering committee decided to hold these meetings during the two Wednesday morning periods. However, it was necessary to extend the workdays and divide 10 of the 20 pedagogical days into half-days. These Ped days are for developing projects and holding training sessions or meetings of the steering committees. The teachers can therefore have a more uniform vision of the new paradigms proposed, thereby taking ownership of the cornerstones of the reform.

Rethinking teaching strategies

The Cavalier-de-LaSalle school team began by rethinking the teacher-student relationship. People's notions of the role of teachers was at the heart of the discussions. How does one go from someone who passes on knowledge to a guide involved in situations that help students develop competencies? Reflecting on these issues is a means to changing the way we look at learning activities.

Science and technology teacher Claude Malenfant stated that he prepares his courses differently: he seeks to develop the students' learning processes rather than simply pass on his knowledge of the subject. This method requires rethinking his teaching as well as a great deal of work, but he eagerly pointed out its advantages. For example, by offering learning situations with limited instructions, he can see his students being active, observe them at work, see how they reason and note signs of the development of certain competencies. He still gives lessons in class, but they play a different role in the students' learning processes. The lessons incite students to take stock and ask questions, and they open the way for the students to come up with answers themselves.

More motivated students

Catherine Thomassin, a social sciences teacher, noticed that the teaching methods that encourage students to be more active help many—who in the past have been weaker and less motivated—to show more interest in the course content. In fact, those who did well still get good marks, and others seem to want to follow in the footsteps of their peers. Overall, more students get involved in their learnings, much to the delight of their teachers.

According to school principal Maude Innocenti, the successful transition leading up to the attainment of the reform objectives can be summed up by three key elements: training, collaboration and time. Training allows the teachers to understand the theory behind the reform so that they can apply it in the classroom; collaboration brings about consistency in the application of the *Québec Education Program*; and the time factor is necessary to achieve this success. 🐦



Catherine Thomassin, social sciences teacher at Cavalier-de-LaSalle secondary school

Overall, more students get involved in their learnings, much to the delight of their teachers.



Maude Innocenti, principal of Cavalier-de-LaSalle secondary school

By Marie-Hélène Giguère (Translation)

A World of Discovery Just a Mouse Click Away!

Whether students are interested in illuminations of the Middle Ages or urban plans of New York City, the RÉCIT Web site for social sciences allows teachers to guide their students through discoveries in time and space.

“I search for information and educational material available on line, sort and make connections between it. The RÉCIT Web site for social sciences is first and foremost a reference centre,” explained Steve Quirion, coordinator of the Table nationale du RÉCIT pour l’univers social.

This amazing reference centre can be accessed at www.recitus.qc.ca, and is practically an inexhaustible source of information for elementary and secondary teachers and students. It contains images, photographs, maps and other electronic references for students to use for shorter activities that can be done during one period or for longer projects. “For example, it has a series of photographs of Manila, the capital of the Philippines. You can observe a volcano and its effects on the environment or its shantytowns. Geography teachers can use this material to talk about urban planning or natural hazards,” he added.

The site is very well organized and is divided into several sections. Under the *Projets*, *Sites* and *Outils* headings teachers of all skill levels can be guided through this vast pool of information. Also, the links and their content have been selected in accordance with the Québec Education Program.

“When the time comes to study a narrative or historic text, teachers can select a period photo of Québec and ask the students to use it for inspiration. For example, we found a photo taken inside a house in Québec in the 1960s. To determine the period in which it was taken, students can use clues in the photo, such as the presence of electricity, a Coca-Cola bottle left on the counter, etc. There is also an entire series of photographs of anachronisms on the McCord Museum Web site. You can see Montreal in the 1950s, but with Expo 67 in the distance!” said Quirion.

If technological resources are insufficient, teachers can print the maps, photographs or other documents and reproduce them on acetate sheets to present them to the class. In addition, the local RÉCIT of each school board can host students’ work, if the teacher wishes to place it on line.

“It is a genuine laboratory. There’s a forum for each educational scenario where teachers can discuss approaches, solutions, etc.,” he added. The RÉCIT Web site for social sciences therefore provides a unique opportunity to develop information and communication technology skills and offers teachers more efficient work methods. ❏



The reference centre can be accessed at www.recitus.qc.ca. English-language educators may also want to visit the site of the Social Sciences Resource Centre of the QESN-RÉCIT, at: www.qesnrecit.qc.ca/socialsciences

Steve Quirion, coordinator of the Table nationale du RÉCIT pour l’univers social

By Réjane Bougé (Translation)

Original Projects that Promote Teamwork

In September 2003, in the wake of the reform, 44 teachers from Anjou secondary school, who teach 670 Secondary I, II and III students, decided to embark on new learnings.

The idea originated from Colette Lacroix, who had already implemented multidisciplinary projects for adult learners. She believed that equally inspiring solutions could be had in the youth sector.

Initially, the teachers had to design distinctive research projects for each grade and form teacher teams in various subjects. They then had to select different approaches and adapted teaching strategies while creating new work tools. A process such as this requires teachers to be guides who support students and help them better understand and manage different situations, both at school and in their other environments.

In the thick of it

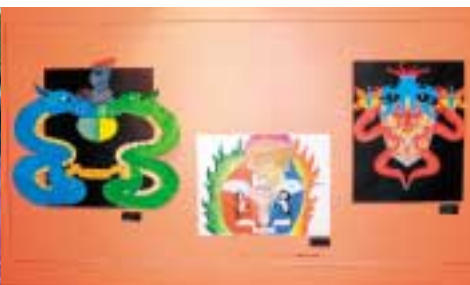
According to principal Bernard Beauchamp, the projects at Anjou secondary school were created by the dynamic teachers who teamed up with project coordinator Lacroix. The teachers behind the project became coordinators for each grade in order to support their colleagues. To come up with projects that would encourage students to get involved, intense brainstorming sessions were held. The broad areas of health and the environment were designated for Secondary I, and it was decided to wage a "war against germs," under the direction of Diane Poirier. For Secondary II, Anne Provencher and the other teachers adopted history and exploration, and proposed "a trip back in time" to the Medieval era. Under the direction

of Daniel Barré, the Secondary III students were paired up with foreign pen pals, whom they invited to come live in a Canadian province to "grow up in a multicultural world." Each project draws on the knowledge of several subjects. So what does math have to do with the Middle Ages? The mere act of analyzing the blueprints of a castle in order to build one is an example of putting math skills to use. Moreover, science helps students understand scurvy, while in physical education, they reproduce sword fights and tournaments!

The students were put into teams, with each team leader receiving specific training. They were given a portfolio containing a diskette for their electronic work, lists of the learning tasks to carry out in each subject and the documentation needed to carry out the different jobs and finalize the research. An activity schedule and the evaluation of each subject were also included. The marks are not yet known, but according to participants, everyone is clearly enthusiastic about the results. The wonderful coats of arms and castles on display at the school stand are indicative of a huge success, not to mention the fact that the students who participated became more autonomous! Next year, Beauchamp will set aside more time so that these projects, which foster the development of cross-curricular competencies, get more teachers involved and help make connections between the learnings and the educational aims of the broad areas of learning. ◀



Ecology teachers Marie Kavanagh and Marie-Pierre Vallée (as Microbe), along with Secondary I students



Some coats of arms by Secondary II students



Secondary III students during their multicultural presentation

With a student body of just 130, Le Vitrail was first established in Villeray in August 2001. It moved to the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve district last year. While this school may be small, there are big, fundamental changes happening. It is the only secondary school on the Island of Montréal with this type of educational mission. Because its innovative instruction is based on the principle of assisted self-training, all students create a learning and life plan, which is reviewed every day, and they are supervised by a tutor. The students—the primary artisans of this general training—meet with their homeroom teacher every morning. Aged between 12 and 18, the students make up groups of all different ages, and work at their own pace to attain the objectives in the curricula. Therefore, while pursuing their secondary studies, they also develop their talents in other areas, such as drama, visual arts, multimedia, science and manual work. The beautiful wooden horses they made in the woodworking shop will certainly convince you that this idea works!

By Réjane Bougé (Translation)

A Stimulating Environment!

Autonomy, accountability, project-based learning and cooperation are just some of the elements advocated by the reform that the students of Le Vitrail secondary school of the Commission scolaire de Montréal use on a daily basis.

Autonomy is one of the key concepts of this philosophy. "When determining which students to accept into the program, we evaluate their autonomy first, then their marks," explained Nathalie Beaulieu, a dynamic special education teacher who has worked at Le Vitrail school since it first opened. The teachers, meanwhile, "must resist the urge to control everything." They are embarking on this experience because this type of instruction is more in line with their values and allows them to establish a fruitful dialogue with the students. The teachers are prepared to be challenged and adapt quickly to any situation. They can be more flexible, thanks to the small size of the school, where anonymity does not exist. "It's a bit demanding, but very stimulating," she said. It seems to be a nonstop job for the team that is continuously being improved. Also, although the students come from the entire CSDM territory, they develop a strong sense of belonging to the school. It is so strong, in fact, that an outside observer cannot tell which students need individualized education plans because they blend in so well with the others!

Le Vitrail school also works closely with the milieu, and is therefore influenced by it. There's a rich social fabric in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve district. Moreover, a number of different community organizations, volunteers and students from Cégep Maisonneuve take part in the school's many projects. In fact, the district—the make-up of which is constantly changing—is an ideal location for the school, which is also continually evolving. In the future, more students may be accepted, but not unless they have strong prior learning. Although it is utopian to think of multiplying the number of innovative schools, it is possible to export the successful projects created there. 🐦

The sense of belonging is so strong that an outside observer cannot tell which students need individualized education plans because they blend in so well with the others!



Nathalie Beaulieu, special education teacher at Le Vitrail school

Integrating the cultural dimension into the curriculum

By Georges Bouchard (Translation)

A New Program for Bringing Culture into Schools in 2004-2005

Another way of highlighting the importance of the school as a cultural venue and culture as a source of knowledge and learning.

The education community has many reasons to applaud the fact that the information document and call for projects related to the new program called *La culture à l'école* is now available in public elementary and secondary schools. This program was created by combining the *Mesure de soutien à l'intégration de la dimension culturelle à l'école* (support measure for the integration of cultural activities into school life) of the Ministère de l'Éducation and the Culture in Education Partnership of the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications. It encourages teams of teachers to carry out cultural projects, with the support of the professional cultural resources in their community and in the spirit of the reform and the school's openness to the world in order to reach as many students as possible.

The targeted objectives include:

- promoting culture in the classroom and the school through the collaborative work of members of a cycle team or school team in consideration of the Québec Education Program
 - integrating the professional cultural resources of the community into this process
 - providing students with many opportunities for cultural experiences that influence their learning and the development of competencies aimed at openness, curiosity, critical thinking and a notion of aesthetics
- supporting the promotion of the school in its community and encouraging collaboration between the school and its cultural partners, while taking into account the diversity of regional realities

It is in this spirit that evaluation committees made up of school and community representatives were set up under the regional offices of the two ministries concerned or under the school boards to ensure that applications for funding of cultural projects are processed.

For more information on this program, please consult the information and call for projects document that the Ministère sent to all the school boards and public schools in May. The document is also available on the Web sites of the Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications. In addition, please note that the deadline for project submissions may vary from region to region. Interested teachers should make enquiries with their school administration or contact the person responsible for this program at their school board. 📧

Reference document for teachers

The document *L'intégration de la dimension culturelle à l'école* (integration of cultural activities into school life) suggests concrete ways of teaching culture that do not weigh down the structure of the programs of study and their application by teachers. It is an extension of the educational policy statement, *Québec Schools On Course* (1997) and in keeping with the orientations of the elementary and secondary Québec Education Program (2001 and 2003).

The three lines of integration of cultural activities into school life

Even when the vision we have of culture and the methods suggested to improve the cultural content of the curriculum are clear, they still need to be applied in the classroom in order for students to benefit from them. This is the purpose of the three lines of integration of cultural activities into school life (learning and teaching, the Québec Education Program and the involvement of the school's cultural partners) presented in this reference document.

This document is available in Word format at the following addresses, for elementary and secondary school, respectively:
<www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/dgjf/dp/programme_de_formation/primaire/feuilles.htm>
<www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/dgjf/dp/programme_de_formation/seconaire/feuilles.htm>

By Pascale Sauvé (Translation)

How One School Has Successfully

Montreal's Sainte-Louise-de-Marillac elementary school has focused on integrating and developing cultural content as a means of providing a motivating and stimulating educational framework for its students. Ever since, the school has been bubbling with excitement.

It all began three years ago, when members of the school community undertook a reflection on the major orientations they wanted for their school. Their goal was to provide a stimulating educational project that would bring a sense of pride and belonging to the school. A survey was conducted among parents and students to find out their interests and aspirations. The result: they wanted a school with a scientific vocation. "This was the starting point for our educational project," explained Jean Pilon, the school principal. "Science and technology was to become our predominant theme." A first orientation was then put forward: to develop among students a taste for the scientific method and culture of science.

But it didn't stop there: a literary and artistic aspect was added to the educational project, encouraging students to explore connections between science and culture. Arts and literature became the catalysts for many projects and multiplied the opportunities for making connections between science and children's literature and the arts.

This double gateway set the stage for integrating a cultural dimension, which, over the past two years, has been taking on greater importance through various pedagogical activities prepared by the school team.

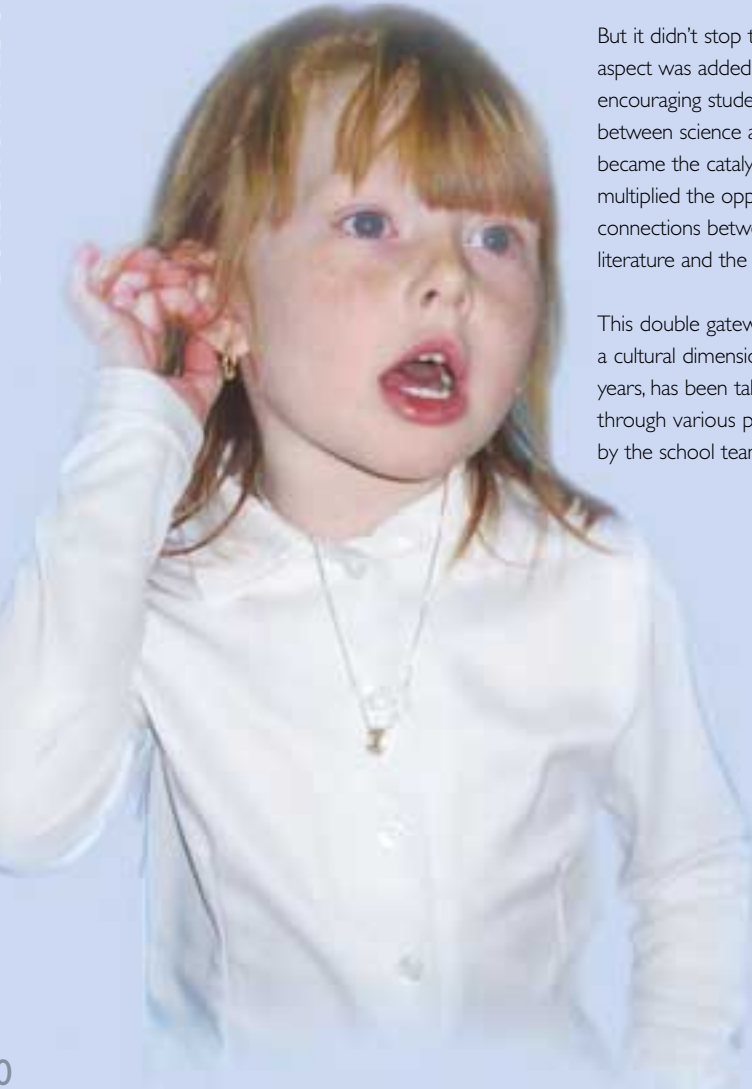
A school taking action

Throughout the year, students devote themselves to a vast reading and writing project. This is because the teachers chose to develop the competencies of the Québec Education Program through a variety of literary genres, such as fairy tales, albums, novels, poetry, biographies and documentaries. They worked as a cycle team to build pedagogical activities focusing on children's literature, which serves as both a teaching tool and a cultural reference.

Throughout the process, the teachers are accompanied by Éline Turgeon, a children's author and specialist in using books for educational purposes. In her capacity as resource person, she helps the team create projects tied to literature and science, while developing the competencies of teachers through professional development on how to teach writing. Teachers can also count on the presence of the education consultant, who ensures the development of the subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies.

As a result of this initiative, this year, students are participating in book appreciation and writing workshops, during which they will create a scientific collection, to be officially launched at the end of the year and exhibited in the library. In addition, throughout the year, they have been building their own encyclopaedic dictionary on science. As well, each cycle team has chosen an educational aim to guide their reading and writing

Each cycle team has chosen an educational aim to guide their reading and writing project.



Integrated the Cultural Dimension

project. For example, students in Cycle Three have made a foray into the world of media. They are learning to distinguish between different styles and qualities of newspapers on the market. Finally, students will produce their own newspaper, which will be distributed to their peers throughout the school.

Arts education has been integrated into the reading and writing project as well. Students are busy preparing a show that they will present to the community in June. A writing team is at work creating dialogue for a play, in which all students in the school will participate. To introduce students to the dramatic arts, each one has attended four shows at the Mercier cultural centre, as part of the *École et les arts* program. In addition, either before or after attending the show, teachers propose reading activities in the classroom to enrich this theatrical experience.

As well, the school has opened its doors by welcoming guests—authors, journalists, illustrators, scientists, engineers, representatives of various organizations—who come to talk about their work or their area of expertise. These topics are then explored in class. A number of activities take place in the form of field trips such as visits to the local library (once or twice a week), participation in activities at the École de technologie supérieure, visits to the Muséobus, the Science Centre and the Botanical Gardens, participation in the *Festival des sciences* and the *Défi Apprenti génie*.

These are just a few of the many projects carried out at École Sainte-Louise-de-Marillac. Each cycle has also developed an educational scenario on a theme—the human body, sound, thermal energy—integrating several subjects. The team is in a constant process of creation.

Creating the right conditions

Of course, to achieve such results, the school first had to come up with the means to do so. The first step was to obtain funding. Upon submitting its projects, the school received a grant under the program *Aide à la relève en science et technologie* and the *Mesure de soutien à l'intégration de la dimension culturelle à l'école* (support measure for the integration of cultural activities into school life), now called *La culture à l'école* (culture at school). "The money we receive gives us the means to realize our dreams," says Pilon. "It allows us to free up our teachers for one day a month so that they can meet to plan, discuss and develop projects."

The school has also set up several partnerships: the Ministère du Développement économique et régional, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, École de technologie supérieure, the Société pour la promotion des sciences et de la technologie, Hydro-Québec and Éco-quartier Longue-Pointe are all actively involved in the school's projects. A representative from each of these organizations

sits on the scientific committee, as well as one teacher, one parent, education consultants and school administrators. The school has also put together special collaborative projects with Louis-Riel secondary school, the Service des ressources informatiques of the Commission scolaire de Montréal and the science education consultant, who has been providing guidance to teachers since the project's inception.

Teachers are also supported through professional development measures. These include training in science and in teaching reading and writing.

"Above all, you need to have a school with dynamic and committed teachers," says the principal. "It's through the teachers' love for their students that a wonderful relationship has developed. It's all well and good to have big projects, but often, the most important aspect is this relationship and the rapport that develops on a day-to-day basis." 🐦

For more information about projects at École Sainte-Louise-de-Marillac, visit their Web site at: <www.csdm.qc.ca/sldm>



Photos courtesy of École Sainte-Louise-de-Marillac

Student works produced at Sainte-Louise-de-Marillac elementary school

By Eve Krakow

Culture in English Schools

Interview with Gretta Chambers

When it comes to enhancing the cultural content of the curriculum, what are some of the issues particular to the English education community? What challenges have English schools in Québec faced in the past, and what challenges do they face today?

In December 1999, the Advisory Board on English Education (ABEE) submitted a report to the Minister of Education entitled *Culture and English Schools in Play*. The report examined issues raised in the educational policy statement *Québec Schools on Course* (MEQ, 1997), which called for the improvement of the cultural content of the curriculum. It offered a series of recommendations to enable the English education community “to transmit its language, values and culture and meet the learning needs of young English-speaking Quebecers.”

Schoolscapes recently met with Gretta Chambers, chair of the ABEE since its inception, to discuss the issue of culture in English schools. Chambers is a distinguished journalist who has worked in radio, television and print for many years, and is recognized as an expert in Quebec politics and society. Her credits are too numerous to list here. She was appointed Chancellor of McGill University in 1991 and Chancellor Emerita at the end of her term in 1999. Among her many awards, she was named Officer of the Ordre national du Québec in 1993, and Member of the Order of Canada in 1994. She sits on several boards, associations and councils, including the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts Foundation, and

has been involved with the Montreal Children’s Hospital Research Institute since 1985. She co-chaired Centraide’s 2002 campaign, and chairs the committee assigned to define the heritage portion of Greater Montreal’s new cultural policy. She was recently named Person of the Year by McGill University’s Centre for Research and Teaching on Women.

Schoolscapes: How would you describe what is meant by the phrase “improvement of cultural content”?

Gretta Chambers: Culture is a difficult word to grasp. Improvement of cultural content means that teaching is adapted to the culture of the students, so that it’s more comprehensible to them and gives them a social framework for the knowledge being imparted to them.

SS: What are some of the challenges particular to English schools?

GC: In the past, what English schools found here in Québec was that there wasn’t enough English culture in the very rigid Basic School Regulation. For example, there were very few anglophones in the story of Québec history. There’s something discouraging in having General Wolfe as your only role model. But it was more than that. It went against the principles of the culture of English education to have the curriculum so divorced from everyday life and the cultures of the communities that it was serving.

When Paul Inchaupé came and spoke to the ABEE about the current education reform, he said that the new way of looking at the teaching and learning process would be more attuned to the anglophone culture of teaching, and that it would have more culture in it. Because in the French or Latin view, culture was something that you learned— literature, art, etc.—but it didn’t necessarily permeate the other subject matters. Whereas, in the English tradition, culture is thought of much more as part of general education.

The ABEE was very interested in this, because in our discussions, we kept coming back to the fact that English teachers didn’t have the freedom to use the teaching materials they felt would be most appropriate for their students. They had to stick to the approved texts, which were not necessarily adapted to the culture their children were from.

Plus, in English schools in Québec, there’s the whole issue of bi-literacy: you have to produce graduates who can actually work and function in French. You can’t possibly do that in French class alone, so you have to “cheat” and teach other subjects in French. But if you were stuck using texts designed for French students (i.e. students whose first language was French), you would find that 1) the level of language was too difficult, and 2) the texts didn’t resonate with an English-speaking culture. So there was a real feeling that teachers should be able to choose the materials.

In this respect, the new curriculum does give much more leeway to English-speaking teachers. On the other hand, it is going to be a long time in the implementation.

SS: English schools in Québec serve a very diverse population. How do you address the issue of culture in this context?

GC: You have to do it school by school. This is something else the reform has put in place. You have

dimension into the curriculum

to look at your class and find ways of being relevant to the children in it. Before, there was one curriculum, period. It didn't matter where you lived or what language you spoke. So it was impossible to adapt it from a cultural point of view. Now it is easier to do.

There should also be an emphasis on having students learn something about the heritage of the community in which they live, so that they can associate themselves with it. There are ways of making it relevant. For example, when students do projects, you can plug these projects into the lives students lead when they're not at school.

SS: The ABEE's 1999 report expressed several concerns over the history curriculum, for example, that it did not include the experiences and contributions of English-speaking communities. To what extent do you feel the QEP addresses this issue?

GC: It addresses this issue in that it can now be remedied completely: the QEP gives teachers the leeway to teach what they think will be relevant to their students. But what hasn't been changed, the concern that hasn't been alleviated, is the provincial exams. If you are going to have these exams as before, written to a textbook, you can't expect teachers to do anything but teach that textbook. There is still that huge hurdle to address.

SS: What were some of the other recommendations in the report that have been or are being implemented?

GC: We have a tremendous amount of resources in the community. It's not that they're not used at all, but they could be used much more: libraries, museums, etc. One idea that keeps coming back—but that doesn't last—is that the community come to the school, that there be a partnership between the community and the school. But those initiatives never last beyond the teacher who has thought them out and put them in place. Or, they get a grant to do it, but as soon as the grant is over, the project is over too. So the hard part is building these initiatives into the network, and that has to be a joint project, involving all stakeholders. And right now, with so much energy being poured into the reform and retooling teachers, it may be a while.

But in a way, the basic attitude is that if you have the flexibility in the curriculum, good teachers will find the ways to bring the cultural learning that is natural, to these children and into their teaching.

SS: Isn't this putting too great a burden on teachers?

GC: Yes, it's putting the burden on the teachers, but after all, they're professionals, not just executors,

and in a way, they're better teachers if they own the material, if it's theirs. It's not that they're going to write it all themselves, but they have to find it, and now with the Internet, it's easier to find materials. After all, we have all of that English material in North America.

SS: What are the key issues that still need to be addressed?

GC: You have to give teachers time, in this new era, to work with their peers and team-teach, and to understand that they're teaching the whole child.

What teachers need is a solid grounding in their subject matter and a solid grounding in teaching. But they rarely get both in their training. If you start team-teaching, if you get a math teacher who knows math, who can sell it, who has a passion for it, and an English teacher who loves his or her job, and a history teacher who actually knows something about history and how to teach it, and you bring these people together to look at a class, then you have a solid foundation of people who care and can really teach their subject. That's when young people get the best education: one that is rigorous and of high quality. They see the relationships, and so it's bound to be more interesting to them.

SS: Any last words?

GC: Culture is one of those subjects that's hard to pin down; *c'est très flou*. You just know it when you meet it in the classroom; you recognize it. You recognize it because it's talking to those kids. ☑

If you have the flexibility in the curriculum, good teachers will find the ways to bring the cultural learning that is natural, to these children and into their teaching.



Gretta Chambers, chair of the ABEE

Photo: Courtesy of Gretta Chambers

EXCHANGING AND LEARNING

A meeting of the minds

By Pascale Sauvé (Translation)

A Look at the Evaluation of Learning

Training Session for Resource Persons

The second Training Session for Resource Persons of 2003-2004 was held in March, under the theme of the evaluation of learning.

“This training session is a pivotal meeting. Its theme was chosen in response to the needs you expressed,” said Margaret Rioux-Dolan, Director of the Direction générale de la formation des jeunes (DGFJ). “As we become informed of your needs, we are able to bridge the gap between what is going on in schools and what’s happening in the education community.” In fact, the event was in line with the professional development sessions offered by MEQ personnel in regions across Québec, and was organized as a follow-up to the public launch of the *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning*, last October:

“Our aim is to prepare ourselves to better support the school community in its reflection on teaching practices,” said Reinele Landry, coordinator of the province-wide session. The objective of the two days was to help the 600 participants take ownership of ways in which to guide educators and strengthen evaluation practices that provide support for learning and allow for the recognition of competencies.

In keeping with this objective, two guest speakers were invited to share their views at the meeting. Gérard Scallon, from Québec, gave a presentation on evaluation for learning within a competency-

based approach. Jacqueline Beckers, from the French-speaking part of Belgium, talked about the process of accompanying students within learning and evaluation tasks. Participants then broke off into workshops to explore evaluation practices that foster learning and competency development, recognizing competencies in the progress report, and helping teachers understand evaluation for learning. To conclude the session, the two guest speakers were invited to answer questions that had emerged during the workshops.

“I hope this session will serve as an opportunity to renew our perceptions of students and their success as developing human beings, in search of freedom and autonomy. I hope it will shed new light on our profession, our beliefs, as well as how we use evaluation with our students,” said Robert Bisillon, Assistant Deputy Minister for preschool, elementary and secondary education. “This a unique opportunity for us to question our educational practices in evaluation. How do our evaluation activities help students construct their identity, build their world-view and develop their ability to take action, as proposed by the aims of the Québec Education Program?” This is the question we must keep in mind at all times. 🐦

Jacqueline Beckers is a professor in the Faculty of Psychology and Education Science at the University of Liege in Belgium. Her main focus is training teachers and trainers. As well, she participated in a committee that conducted an analysis of the education system in the French-speaking part of Belgium. In 1976, she published a work on descriptive scales in evaluation. In 2002, she published a book on the development and evaluation of competencies, under the title: *Développer et évaluer des compétences à l'école : vers plus d'efficacité et d'équité.*

By Pascale Sauvé (Translation)

Guest Speakers

To provide some food for thought during the training session, two guest speakers, Gérard Scallon and Jacqueline Beckers, presented their views on the evaluation of learning.

Whether you are revising existing programs or offering and implementing new ones, the topic of evaluation is unavoidable. "You can ignore it for a time, but sooner or later, evaluation—and particularly, the evaluation of learning—catches up with you!" says Scallon. That time seems to have come. "Some people say that's when the difficulties begin, because you have to define, articulate and put into concrete terms what you want students to aim for; but in fact, these difficulties already exist; evaluation merely brings them to the forefront!"

In this paradigm of the evaluation of learning, no doubt one of the biggest challenges is how to translate the desired educational aims into learning and evaluation situations. Another major challenge in a competency-based approach is how to define and determine student progress. That is where the teacher's judgment comes in. It is these four interconnected notions—competency, situation, progress and judgment—that Scallon expounded on during his presentation.

Jacqueline Beckers proposed a reflection on the accompaniment of students in their learning and evaluation situations, from a perspective of competency development. "Competency development," she explained, "is the student's ability to deal with a complex task, an open task that allows for and authorizes a choice of several different processes, or even different solutions, and that is entirely new for the student!"

She recognizes that, although essential, this is a difficult and destabilizing process for students; that is why they require guidance. "This means helping the student to do three things: become committed to the task (construct his/her identity), perform the task successfully (develop his/her capacity to take action) and understand what is involved in the complex task (building his/her world-view)," Beckers specified. This is no small feat for teachers, she notes: they must be able to: create a positive environment where students feel secure; plan a coherent curriculum around a few competencies; and manage the group as well as the learning of each student, alternating between periods of social interaction and individual internalization. These were the three essential components that she put into perspective. ◀

To find out more, you can consult an annotated version of Scallon's PowerPoint presentation (in French) online, at: <www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/virage/boite_outils.htm>



Jacqueline Beckers

Photos: Emmanuel Bégin

By Eve Krakow

Questions and Answers

Over the course of the two days, participants were invited to submit questions that emerged from their workshop discussions. Guest speakers Jacqueline Beckers and Gérard Scallon were then invited to provide clarifications on these issues.

Integrating evaluation into learning

The question period started off with Gérard Scallon, who was asked to clarify what he meant by integrating evaluation into learning and to explain how this can be done.

"To enable students to develop or build a competency, you have to get them to do things that relate to this competency—what we call complex situations or tasks," he began. Ideally, there should be several of these tasks, over a period of time, mobilizing the same set of resources. "That is why we refer to them as belonging to the same family," he added.

When performing these tasks, students are not giving a recital or taking an exam; rather, they are in a practical situation. "This situation enables students to exercise or develop their competency, but it also gives the teacher an idea of where the student is at: this is where evaluation comes in. That's what we mean by integrating evaluation into learning," he continued. "There are tasks that are used for learning and to develop competencies, but those same situations also provide information and indications on the development of the competency."

The student then receives comments from the teacher and the other students on each task. "If this feedback is precise, describing the student's strengths and the aspects that still need work, then it is corrective in nature. That is evaluation for learning."

Formative evaluation

Jacqueline Beckers makes a distinction between formative evaluation and educational evaluation. Formative evaluation gives students precise data on their strong and weak points, guiding them toward activities for remediation or enrichment. The goal of educational evaluation, however, is to get students to take charge of the regulation of their own learning. This transition requires a certain level of commitment and energy from the student. "For even if the student has identified his strengths and difficulties, he still has to commit to putting in the additional effort required to work on the aspects that still need improvement, in order to progress."

So how can we help students make this transition? Beckers suggested a few avenues. First, propose tasks that are meaningful to the student. Second, provide complementary resources to enable students to imagine themselves succeeding in areas they haven't managed to succeed before. Third, help the class become a community of learners, where there are authentic interactions aiming to move everyone forward, rather than an environment that aims to categorize and rank students in relation to each other.



Gérard Scallon

Autonomy and students with difficulties

Another concern related to the question of autonomy and students with difficulties. How far should one go in accompanying students with difficulties? How do you work with them to help them develop a competency?

Beckers rephrased the question as she had heard it in a workshop earlier that day. "When you're having students carry out a complex task and you know there is a student who, because of his or her specific handicap or learning disability, will never be able to carry out the entire task himself or herself, should you consider that student incompetent?"

Competency is not black or white, she stated: we continually progress in the development of a competency. Moreover, we should not restrict access to complex tasks for students with difficulties. "Even if we have to help them for part of the task, this kind of complex task allows them to progress, in a meaningful situation, and may even help them progress much more than if they were confined to limited and isolated tasks."

Beckers highlighted the importance of planning moments of individual verification, that is, times when students are asked to carry out a task within the same family as those they have worked on within a group, but which they must now perform on their own. However, she adds, this does not mean that students can't ask for a bit of help from a friend to perform some aspects of the task. "In the course of an examination, there may be times of co-construction and times where students are required to rearticulate what they have learned with others in a personal production." 🐦

Individual evaluation in group projects

Cooperation and teamwork are important elements in the socio-constructivist paradigm. But how can teachers evaluate students individually when they're doing group work?

While he did not have any magic solutions, Scallon did offer a few suggestions. "It's all in the nature of the work," he said. "There are projects you can assign students that require a very specific kind of participation of each team member; outlining exactly what is required of each student." He also suggests planning tasks where responsibility is shared in a way that enables each student to contribute something of themselves, in their own way.

The question of teamwork brings us back to the issue of autonomy. Both guest speakers emphasized that they were referring to autonomy in relation to the situation or task at hand, and not as a personality trait on its own. "A student who asks for help is mobilizing an external resource," noted Scallon. "This is a component of some competencies. In the early stages of learning, external assistance may be imposed; a complex task may be subdivided into smaller tasks. However, if this continues for too long, then we are going against the notion of competency and the spirit of the Québec Education Program." He added that support (from teachers or from peers) should be gradually withdrawn, so that students are eventually able to work on their own.

Gérard Scallon obtained his Ph. D. in Education Theory, with a specialization in Measurement and Evaluation, from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. He has been a professor in the Faculty of Education Science at Université Laval since 1968, where he has devoted his teaching and research to formative evaluation of learning. He has just published a book entitled *L'évaluation des apprentissages dans une approche par compétences*.

By Pascale Sauvé (Translation)

Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction

In April, the coordinators of the Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction program met with their peers for two training sessions on implementing the new program.



Members of the Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction team

The two-day meetings took place in Montreal and Québec City, bringing together resource persons from regions across the province. According to Denis Watters, program coordinator, the sessions were held “first and foremost, because Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction is an essential component of the Québec Education Program; it is prescribed by the Basic School Regulation. Second, because the MEQ considers it important for people in schools and school boards to take ownership in implementing the QEP, as it is a fundamental tool for achieving success for all students. And finally, because many of the needs expressed by the school community had to do with receiving professional development in the specific subjects.”

During these implementation sessions—intended for resource persons in the public and private, French-speaking and English-speaking sectors—participants carried out activities on several topics: religious cultural references, teaching and learning strategies, the narration and interpretation of

stories from the Catholic tradition, integrating ICTs, the process of moral discernment, the resources that students need to learn to mobilize, the essential content and learning elements, and meaningful learning situations through which students can develop their competencies. Next year, in addition to going into these notions in greater depth, participants will look more specifically at the evaluation of learning and enhancing the cultural content.

“Ultimately,” Watters told his audience, “the goal is to enable you to go back and work with your colleagues to draft an implementation plan for the QEP for your school or school board.” Participants were able to return to their schools and school boards with practical ideas for providing guidance to their staff and colleagues. “We are beginning with the assumption that we are a learning community. Together we will build tools and equip ourselves to ensure that the QEP is put into practice,” he concluded. ◀



Personal Development

Online Resources for the Personal Development Subject Area

Educators can find a wealth of resources on the Personal Development home page hosted by the QESN-RÉCIT. It offers learning activities, teaching and evaluation tools, and links to an array of online

resources for Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction, Protestant Moral and Religious Education, Moral Education and Physical Education and Health.

Check it out! <www.qesnrecit.qc.ca/personal_dev>

By Eve Krakow

The Implementation Design Committee (IDC) held its 5th annual learning symposium on February 16-17, 2004 under the theme, "Building Communities of Learners."

Building Communities of Learners

IDC Symposium

About 600 school teams from English school boards and associations across Québec attended the event, which provided an opportunity to share best practices and support implementation of the Québec Education Program—particularly as the reform moves into the secondary level.

"This is where the tires meet the road," said Noel Burke, Assistant Deputy Minister, Services à la communauté anglophone, in welcoming participants. "Our greatest challenge now lies in the decartmentalization of learning in secondary school. We need to respond to natural learning patterns."

Participants chose from about fifty workshops and presentations given mostly by teachers, education consultants and principals on projects, strategies and organizational models being carried out in their respective elementary and secondary schools.

The two keynote speakers invited for the occasion were Gary Phillips, Director of the National School Improvement Project Inc. (Bainbridge Island, Washington) and Jay McTighe, educational consultant and co-author of *Understanding by Design*. The address by Gary Phillips centred on "What effective teachers do." He discussed notions such as creating classroom rituals to build "positive addictions," and what to do with students who don't respond to the traditional rewards and punishment approach: "Do the unexpected," he said. "Brain research shows that if the input is the same, the reaction will be automatic. But if the input is different, it interrupts the subconscious patterns." It is also important for teachers to remember that students are on a journey and to instill in them the following attitude: "Who I am is not necessarily who I will become."

Jay McTighe's presentation discussed "The Logic of Backward Design." A common mistake when doing project work with students, he pointed out, is to have students do all sorts of great activities without being clear on what they should be learning or how the teacher will recognize whether or not students have achieved the intended goals. "Beginning with the end in mind is not a new concept, but it is a powerful one," said McTighe. He took participants through a three-stage model for developing units and assessments, drawing on examples from real classrooms and curriculum standards. 📄



About fifty workshops and presentations were given.

Building Curriculum Links

Mathematics, Science, Social Sciences and FLS

The third annual "Building Curriculum Links/Sous le signe de la convergence" conference will be held June 28-29 at Laval Catholic High School. Intended for preschool, elementary and secondary teachers, its purpose is to provide educators with opportunities for professional development in mathematics, science, social sciences and French as a second language.

Over 40 workshops, as well as educational tours, will be offered. Keynote speakers are Brian Doyle, a popular author of books for young adults; John Van de Walle, Professor Emeritus at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia; and Dr. David Bird, Director of the Avian Science and Conservation Centre at McGill University.

The event is sponsored by the History and Geography Task Force, the Math Action Plan Committee, the Science Action Plan Committee, Portes françaises, the Ministère de l'Éducation and the Québec Association of Mathematics Teachers.

For more information, please visit:
<www.qesnrecit.qc.ca/links>

Photos: Paul McCarthy

Professional Development in English Language Arts

The English Language Arts (ELA) team has been working with its partners in the education community to support educators in a variety of ways. While tailored professional development sessions are provided to schools and school boards upon request, a number of other resources have been developed to help teachers implement the new curriculum in their classrooms. Abigail Anderson, ELA Coordinator of Curriculum, provided *Schoolscapes* with an overview of these projects.

Site-based projects

For the past seven years, schools, school boards and professional associations have been implementing successful projects in the following categories: i) Teaching to Competency in ELA; ii) Learning Across the Curriculum; iii) Literature in the Classroom; iv) Mentoring: teachers teaching teachers; and v) Media Literacy: the classroom as laboratory.

Projects are accepted from both elementary and secondary schools, with schools in the public sector given priority. They must be related to the new ELA curriculum and be compatible with the principles and vision of the reform. All projects must demonstrate a working partnership, e.g. between two or more schools, between a school and a university, etc. Moreover, project coordinators agree to share their completed

materials with other schools and school boards in Québec, upon request.

Completed projects will be listed on the QESN Web site in September 2004. In addition, several projects were presented at workshops held on April 23 in Montreal at *Springboards 2004, the 30th Annual English Language Arts Conference* sponsored by the Association of Teachers of English in Quebec (ATEQ).

The Elementary Language Arts Consultative Committee (ELACC) and the Secondary Language Arts Advisory Council (SLAAC)

Given the shortage of ELA consultants in the province, ELACC and SLAAC play an increasingly important role in circulating information about the reform to school boards and in providing valuable feedback to the ELA Writing Team and the ELA Coordinator of Curriculum, Abigail Anderson.

As well, these two committees have held several professional development sessions on implementing the new ELA curriculum: two on media literacy in the elementary classroom, one that introduces key elements of the SELA program for Secondary Cycle One and, most recently, one on reporting.

ELACC and SLAAC include representatives from the English school boards, QPAT, McGill University, teacher professional associations, CEGEPs, QESN-RECIT, QAIS, the Association of Jewish Day Schools and parent organizations.

Other projects

• **An Annotated Bibliography of Children's Literature:** In collaboration with the QESN-RECIT, this project is dedicated to launching a bibliography of children's literature that will be made available for teachers on the QESN-ELA Web site.

• **ELA Site on QESN**

(www.qesnrecit.qc.ca/ela): This Web site offers resources for classroom teachers and teacher educators, links to the latest research in ELA education and a teacher chat room.

• **Video/DVD on teaching media at the elementary level:**

Scheduled for release in June 2004, this resource is designed for teacher educators as well as classroom teachers. It looks at media literacy through the lens of the illustrated picture book and connections to other types of media involving the visual image. It will be distributed to the ELA educational milieu free of charge.

• **Research into the needs of students at-risk in the secondary school:**

This qualitative research project has been underway for the last two years. It aims to provide the ELA Coordinator of Curriculum and the ELA Writing Team with data on the needs of these students and will be used to write the SELA program for Secondary Cycle Two.

• **Whispering Dreams** (see article on page 24):

Under the direction of Laurier-MacDonald High School (EMSB), this project involves collaboration between communication studies and ELA teachers. Previous publications have included the text and teacher's guide, *Once Upon A Journey*. A stellar example of literacy-in-action, this resource will be available to the ELA educational milieu in the fall of 2004. Both the text and the teacher's guide are suitable as classroom resources that integrate ELA, Media Literacy and cross-curricular competency. Requests for copies of the book and teacher's guide should be made directly to the school. 📄



Abigail Anderson, Coordinator of English Language Arts

Photo: James Goodman

By Eve Krakow

The Village Simulation Exercise

Imagine you belong to a band of hunters who have tired of nomadic life and want to put down roots. Where will you settle—on a plain, in the mountains, near a river or a forest? Are there hostile or friendly villages nearby? What kind of structures would you build—a marketplace, artisan shops, a place of worship?

These are some of the things secondary students in John Jenkins' history class at Marymount Academy have to think about in the village simulation project. Drawing on Bristol board, they must create their own village, exploring some of the issues and scenarios faced by early civilizations.

"We're looking at a Neolithic society of 7,000 to 10,000 years ago," said Jenkins. "Students compare what people had then to what we have now, and think about what was important then and what became important later."

Ultimately, the goal is for students to learn how societies develop economic systems and institutions to allocate resources; how major decision-making units function; and how a society develops citizen participation through these structures.

To start, students are divided into groups of four. They decide on a name for their group based on early civilizations (Sumerians, Assyrians, etc.)

and elect a leader. The leader's role is to keep the group on task and make some of the early decisions, although all members of the group participate in creating and structuring the village.

In the first stage, students write their explanations on one side of the board and draw a map and physical features of the village on the other. "Bristol board and markers is a low-budget option, but you could also use clay or papier maché," Jenkins noted.

Once the village has been "built," stage two begins, as students are given a new problem: the village is growing faster than their ability to feed the people. What should they do? Set aside more land for farming? Raid other villages? Offer sacrifices to a god? Also, how can power be more equitably shared? Students must discuss solutions and come up with a societal structure that reflects these needs. They also explore what characteristics make a good leader.

In the third stage, the village is thriving; people are well fed and have plenty of goods. But they seem to be lacking regulation. What can be done to maintain the peace? Students brainstorm about rules in present society and learn about ancient laws, such as Hammurabi's Code. After exploring issues such as who creates laws and who should govern, they design laws for their society.

Each stage of the project is supported by class discussions, stencils, charts and rubrics. Students are required to explain their choices, and are evaluated both on the visual and the oral presentation.

"It's a group activity, where students really feed off each other through discussions and sharing—as we do in society," Jenkins concluded. After all, the evolution of society is what the lesson is all about. 🗨️

Blue Metropolis Student Literary Programme

The Student Literary Programme is a partnership aimed particularly at rural school boards which allows students and their teachers to come to Montreal during the Blue Metropolis International Literary Festival and work with famous writers. This year's star-studded line-up featured, among others, Yann Martel, Endre Farkas, Catherine Kidd, Claire Rothman, Julie Keith, Taiiaka Alfred, C.J. Taylor and Robyn Sarah.

Participants in this year's programme included students and their teachers from Western Québec, Littoral, and Eastern Townships rural school boards, as well as Lester B. Pearson and Sir Wilfred Laurier school boards. Other years, students from Eastern Shores School Board have also participated.

This event has grown by leaps and bounds since its creation five years ago. Due to overflow attendance, it has expanded from one to two days, and now includes teachers and students from the French sector as well. For information regarding next year's event, please contact the Blue Metropolis Foundation at (514) 932-1112.

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND COMPLEMENTARY EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

By Francine Payette (Translation)

Individualized Education Plans: Helping Students Achieve Success

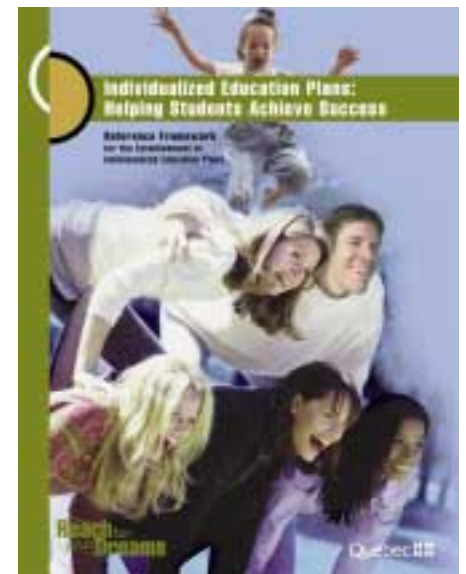
Launch of the Reference Framework

On March 29, Robert Bisailon, Assistant Deputy Minister for preschool, elementary and secondary education, launched the *Reference Framework for the Establishment of Individualized Education Plans*. The event took place at the Palais des congrès de Montréal, as part of a one-day conference under the *Supporting Montreal Schools* program and the *New Approaches, New Solutions* strategy, Montreal region. More than 4,000 teachers, education consultants and other school stakeholders attended the event.

The reference framework sets out guidelines for drawing up and applying individualized education plans, and provides support for staff in schools and school boards as they reflect on how best to proceed. It highlights some of the most promising methods used to help students achieve success.

The process of drawing up and applying individualized education plans requires the participation of both the student and his or her parents. It puts forth a positive approach for helping students, while ensuring that the student plays an active part and that his or her situation is analyzed within a more global perspective, focusing on the student's strengths and successes, rather than just on his or her difficulties.

The reference framework repositions the individualized education plan in terms of responding to the student's particular needs, rather than according to categories of students or administrative procedures. In the context of the education reform and the *Policy on Special Education*—where expectations for student success are increasingly high—the plan is a favoured tool, a springboard for finding solutions to assist students who need special support in order to progress and succeed in school. ☑



The framework was distributed to elementary and secondary schools in April.
It can also be viewed on the MEQ Web site, in English and French.
<<http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/dassc/cadreplan/cadreplan.htm>>

EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING

By Eve Krakow

Policy on the Evaluation of Learning

At the March 23-24 province-wide training session for resource persons, Laila Valin, director of evaluation at the MEQ, presented the main elements of the *Implementation Plan for the Policy on the Evaluation of Learning*.

“The *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning* is the reflection of a wide consensus,” said Laila Valin, director of evaluation at the MEQ. Following a second consultation process before organizations representing teachers, school administrators, school boards, special education, parents and higher education, the policy was unveiled in October 2003. “It has been generally well received by the education community and its partners,” she said.

The policy presents a unified approach for evaluating learning in all three sectors—general education for youth, general education for adults and vocational education—and is based on the underlying principles of the new curriculum. Its accompanying *Implementation Plan* outlines the MEQ’s commitments in terms of providing support for the policy’s application. Valin explained the main points of the implementation plan, focusing on those pertaining to the youth sector:

“This plan was developed in response to the needs expressed by the school community during the consultation process,” she began. “Some of these actions are already underway, while others are slated for implementation.” The plan contains seven strategies.

1. Provide information and professional development

“The MEQ will organize provincial and regional information activities on a variety of themes,” Valin explained. Schools and school boards will also receive support in organizing professional development activities to help them implement the policy. However, “schools and school boards have the primary responsibility for ensuring the professional development of their staff,” she noted.

2. Support schools and school boards in the production of instruments

Reference documents and instruments appropriate for applying the policy will be made available to schools and school boards. “The MEQ will continue to produce instruments for evaluation activities under ministerial responsibility, such as the uniform examinations.”

3. Conduct research activities and encourage innovation

Action research will be conducted in partnership with universities and the school community. “Innovation will be encouraged through the support and sharing of innovative projects carried out in schools.”

4. Ensure conformity between the policy and the regulatory framework

“Changes will be made to the basic school regulations for the youth, adult and vocational education sectors,” she explained. Consultation on these changes is in progress.

5. Adapt the rules for the certification of studies to the policy’s orientations

This involves defining new rules for managing the certification of studies “or for the introduction of a statement of competencies, for example.”

6. Ensure that the MEQ’s partners take the policy into account

In addition to presenting the changes to partners, universities will be encouraged to take measures to integrate evaluation practices more fully in their teacher training programs.

7. Monitor the implementation of the policy

The MEQ will monitor, evaluate and update the implementation plan in collaboration with the school community. 📌

The complete *Implementation Plan for the Policy on the Evaluation of Learning* can be consulted online, in English and French, at the following address: <www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/dgjf/de/politique.htm>

Evaluation materials in development

1. Reference framework for evaluation in secondary school
2. Competency levels for Secondary Cycle One
3. Uniform examinations for Elementary Cycle Three in language of instruction and mathematics
4. Evaluation situations in various subjects, for elementary school and Secondary Cycle One

INFORMATION

NEWS FROM THE DGFJ

Reviewing the Basic School Regulation

In March, the Ministère de l'Éducation began a tour of all Québec regions to present the proposed amendments to the Basic School Regulation for Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Education. Stakeholders were invited to give their opinions on the proposed changes.

"The Basic School Regulation is one of the keystones of the curriculum reform, because it sets the guidelines for the services that students will receive in schools," said Margaret Rioux-Dolan, Director of the Direction générale de la formation des jeunes. Already in 2000, the Basic School Regulation underwent a first series of changes, laying the groundwork for the application of the reform. Now, with work on the program for Secondary Cycle Two underway, additional changes are required.

The two main elements to be modified concern student paths in Secondary Cycle Two, as well as evaluation and certification of studies.

The six-week consultation, which took place from March until May, is to be followed by a period of synthesis, adjustment, validation and approval. The goal is to begin the regulatory process in early fall, so that the amendments can be adopted in winter 2004. The new Basic School Regulation is expected to come into effect in July 2005.

NEWS FROM

By Eve Krakow

Laurier MacDonald High School

WHISPERING DREAMS: AN INTEGRATED, CROSS-CURRICULAR PROJECT

It began small. Many years ago, Frank Tiseo had his students find an old family photo, and glue it on a page with the date and location. Now, Secondary IV students at Laurier MacDonald High School publish a thick, glossy book featuring restored family photos and their accompanying stories, "footprints" and reflections. The latest project is called *Whispering Dreams*.

The project embodies many of the QEP's basic principles: it incorporates Language Arts, Technology, Social Studies and Science; it involves individual and group work; and it is rooted in real-life experience. In questioning their families about the photos they find, students learn about their own heritage and identity. "The appeal of the family photo is that the student has control over what he or she selects, and there's a personal connection," said Tiseo. "This creates commitment."

Carried out over 10 months, the project has many stages. Students begin by choosing a family photograph and conducting research on the year and place the photograph was taken. Sources include family members, artifacts, libraries and the Internet. Next, students write a first draft of their story. They receive teacher and peer feedback, edit the story and format the final draft. They also write a "footprint"—a historical or geographical vignette that relates to the period or place in which the story is set.

In addition to the photo, students choose an artifact (e.g. a marriage certificate or an ID card). They scan these items and retouch the photo using computer software. At this point students reflect on what they discovered about their family and themselves during the process of researching and writing the story. Finally, they arrange all these elements—photo, artifact, story, footprint and reflection—using desktop publishing software.

The collaborative tasks relate to the production of the book itself. Students work as project managers, editors, file managers, digital restoration managers, graphic designers and research coordinators. "The students own the project and make all the decisions," said Tiseo.

"Not everyone's work goes into the book. A certain level of mastery has to be met," noted Winston Emery, a professor from McGill University who is also involved in the project. However, students are evaluated on much more than the final product. "There are a lot of built-in checks and forms of evaluation at each stage of the process."

Titles from previous years are *Rainbow of Dreams* (2000), *Memories in Black and White* (2001) and *Once Upon a Journey* (2002). There's also *Once Upon a Journey for Teachers*, a teacher's guide that includes assignment sheets, rubrics, notes to teachers and interviews with Tiseo and fellow teacher Leon Llewellyn on the project's organization.

According to Emery, the project can be carried out at any level, and doesn't have to be as elaborate. "I think there are two important elements to a project like this. First, it is focused on the student—who he or she is. Second, it has a real-world consequence or outcome—in this case, a book. That's what creates the motivation," he concluded.



HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

SCHOOLSCAPES
WORKING TOGETHER TO INSTRUCT, SOCIALIZE AND PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS

Schoolscapes is under the responsibility of the Secteur de l'éducation préscolaire, de l'enseignement primaire et secondaire

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