

Developing the Inner Life and Changing the World



**The Spiritual Care and Guidance
and Community Involvement Service**
A Complementary Educational Service

Ministerial Framework



Québec 



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and Community Involvement Service**
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■ TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES	5
REVISED AND IMPROVED VERSION	5
CONTENT	5
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6
TARGET AUDIENCE	6

Part 1 DEFINITION OF THE SERVICE

1.1 RELEVANCE OF THE SERVICE	8
1.2 NATURE OF THE SERVICE	9
1.2.1 A Non-Confessional School Service	9
1.2.2 Spiritual Life and Community Involvement	10
1.2.3 Complementary Educational Service	11
1.2.4 A Laboratory for Living	12
1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE	13
1.4 A SERVICE ANCHORED IN THE REALITY OF THE SCHOOL.....	14
1.4.1 The Link With the School's Mission	14
1.4.2 The Link With the Québec Education Program.....	14
1.4.3 The Link With the Educational Project and the Success Plan.....	16
1.4.4 The Link With Complementary Educational Services.....	16
1.4.5 The Link With the School Team and Its Partners	18

Part 2 ORGANIZATION OF THE SERVICE

2.1 PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS	20
2.1.1 The Role of the Animator	20
2.1.2 Respect for Students	20
2.1.3 Approach Centred on Action	21
2.1.4 Activities	24
2.2 PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	28
2.2.1 Upstanding and Credible Individuals.....	28
2.2.2 Qualities	29
2.2.3 Training	29

2.3	QUALITY CONDITIONS.....	29
2.3.1	Human Resources.....	29
2.3.2	Concerted Effort Between Elementary and Secondary Levels.....	30
2.3.3	Role of the School Administrators and of the School Board	30
2.3.4	Sites and Budgets	30

Part 3 THE MEANINGS OF THE WORDS

3.1	THE EXPRESSION “SPIRITUAL LIFE”	32
3.2	THE EXPRESSION “COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT”	34

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX 1: PARTICULARITIES OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.....	41
APPENDIX 2: PARTICULARITIES OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	43

■ INTRODUCTION

The government guidelines on the place of religion in school, made public by the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec¹ in May 2000, stipulated that a Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement complementary educational service for students would be set up in elementary and secondary public schools to replace the Catholic pastoral animation and Protestant religious animation services. The guidelines also stated that the service would be defined within “Québec-wide frameworks” and would be funded by the government. This document details various aspects of this service, and thereby constitutes a **ministerial framework** intended to define and organize it.

■ GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES

The government guidelines stated that the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service **would be offered to all students**,² regardless of their religious affiliations, and would not be affiliated with any particular denomination. It is perceived as a service that takes into account the trends and influences that shape the lives of young people, and it will use all the resources that the school and community can offer to promote their human and spiritual growth, while respecting their freedom. Under these government guidelines, the activities of the service may be humanitarian, spiritual, interfaith or religious and may focus on:

- young people’s search for meaning
- the development of social conscience
- the humanization of the environment
- community involvement
- students’ needs with regard to their own religious affiliation

The government guidelines were used as a primary reference in devising this ministerial framework.

■ REVISED AND IMPROVED VERSION

An initial version of this ministerial framework was published as a working document in March 2001. It was produced from a review of the literature on the two main components of the service, its spiritual and community aspects, with the active participation of an advisory committee. It was then delivered to the school system as a reference document for organizing the service, with the first year of its existence being considered a start-up year, at the end of which the ministerial framework could be adjusted.

Since 2001, numerous information and in-service training sessions have been held throughout Québec and pilot projects have been organized in some 30 elementary schools. As well, pedagogical exploration workshops have enlisted the help of school staff and specialists. These workshops have been used to shed light on aspects that were less well understood, namely, ways of exploring spiritual life and community involvement with students, and of “reviewing” activities proposed to them. All these activities have shown that **the orientations given to the service within the ministerial framework were favourably received**—subject, however, to a few clarifications that were included in this document.

■ CONTENT

This ministerial framework consists of three parts. The first part deals with the definition of the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service. It also explains the relevance of the service and its nature, presents its aim and objectives and details its implementation in the school. The second part deals with the organization of the service. It offers various considerations on the pedagogical aspects of the service, describes the type of training and skills required for those involved and presents some conditions that would guarantee its quality. The third part discusses the meanings attributed to the expressions “spiritual life” and “community involvement.” Appendixes 1 and 2 present figures reviewing these two terms.

1. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec's Public Schools: Responding to the Diversity of Moral and Religious Expectations* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2000).

2. *Ibid.*, 14 and 15.

Those individuals accustomed to the previous version of the ministerial framework will easily get their bearings. It may, however, be useful to draw their attention to the main changes made here.

- **Part I: Definition of the Service**

The sections on the relevance of the service, its nature, and its aim and objectives have not been changed significantly. However, the section on a service anchored in the reality of the school has been further modified, primarily to bring it into line with the new ministerial guidelines provided for complementary educational services and the changes in work regarding the Québec Education Program.

- **Part II: Organization of the Service**

The most reworked section deals with pedagogical considerations, especially the comments on the approach centred on action and activities. The changes made incorporate the results of the pedagogical exploration workshops conducted on the subject and the comments gathered during in-service training sessions.

- **Part III: Meanings of the Words**

The definition of the terms has not changed.

■ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

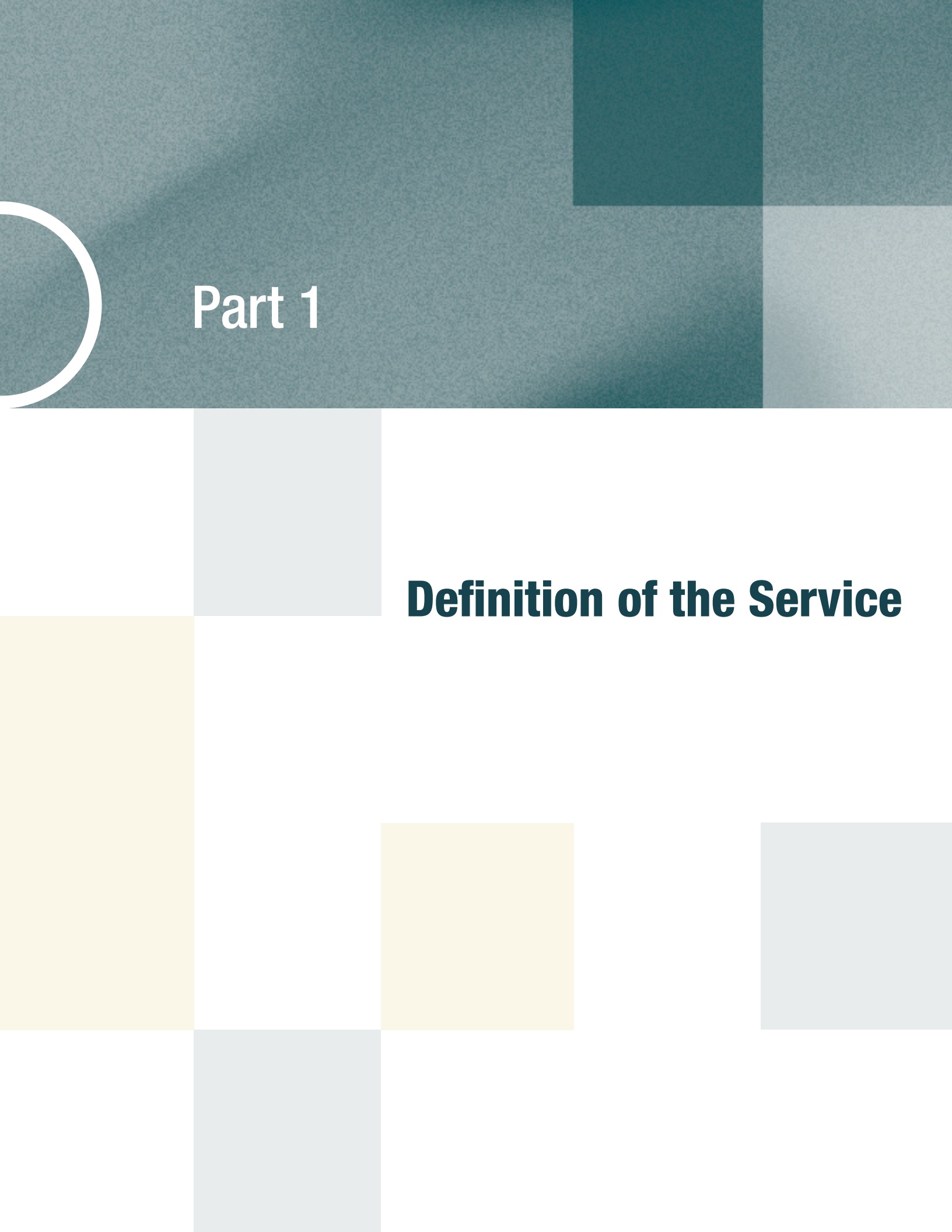
At the different stages of preparing this guide, the Ministère sought the **expertise of various people**, all of whom have some interest in this service. Note the substantial contribution of an advisory committee, whose members were from elementary and secondary schools, from rural and urban areas, from English- and French-speaking sectors and from small or larger schools of different spiritual orientations. It should also be added that numerous individuals participated in various consultative meetings; and in particular in associations representing various levels of the school system, parents, professional groups and unions, universities, specialists in spiritual and community matters, and students.

The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport extends its thanks to all contributors whose comments and work made the publication of this document possible.

■ TARGET AUDIENCE

This document is intended for the staff in the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service in public elementary and secondary schools, for members of school teams, school board administrators and other persons in charge who play a role in implementing the service, as well as parents. It will enable all these people to better understand the government guidelines related to the service and to implement them in their respective settings.





Part 1

Definition of the Service

1.1 RELEVANCE OF THE SERVICE

“It [the school] must also offer students various activities—cultural, sports, science, social, etc.—to round out and enhance their education. These activities should include spiritual support and community involvement.”³

This point of view, expressed in the government guidelines on the place of religion in school, reflects the **general consensus** that emerged from the hearings on this issue that were held by the Parliamentary Committee on Education in the autumn of 1999. The importance of such a service was also recognized in the report of the Task Force on the Place of Religion in Schools, published earlier that same year.⁴ There is therefore a significant **social expectation** in this regard. Why is there such a consensus on the need to set up this service? What, in fact, is expected of it?

Students in elementary and secondary school are not only students. They are first and foremost **girls and boys in a period of intensive** physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social and psychological **growth**. The dynamism of young people, developed to different degrees depending on their age, manifests itself in a variety of ways, including a sense of wonder and curiosity, openness to the inner life, group spirit, and the desire to assert themselves and go beyond their limitations. They consciously or unconsciously use these strengths to gradually construct their personal identities and integrate into society. They strive to get to know themselves and others; their preferences and interests are shaped through multiple activities and commitments; they are concerned about their future and gradually find their place in life. As they develop their personalities, young people want to talk about what they are thinking and feeling, express themselves, and be recognized and loved. Young people want us to provide them with enthusiastic guidance while respecting their abilities and their learning pace.

On the other hand, during this growth, young people **often have to deal with major difficulties**. Some of these are associated with physical, intellectual, psychological or social problems including, for example, bodily handicaps, learning difficulties or academic failures, the separation of parents, unhappy love affairs and rejection by others. Additional difficulties may stem from their environment. The latter might include, for example, conflicts related to the coexistence of different cultures, the loss of moral guidelines due to a plurality of value systems, the pain of living, as revealed by the high suicide rate, societal calamities, violence, social exclusion and unemployment that often create economic problems. These realities have an impact on the meaning and value that young people attribute to life, and in particular to their own lives. For them, this all constitutes significant **challenges to personal growth**. For the people who deal with them, these realities pose serious **educational challenges** that call for considerable guidance, unconditional acceptance, active listening and constant support.

Parents are cognizant of their children’s dynamism and difficulties. They would like the best for their children. They want them to have high self-esteem, to have confidence in themselves and in others, to have a taste for life, to achieve their full potential, to carve out a place for themselves in life and to become active players in society. In short, they want their children to become **fully independent and happy men and women**.

On the other hand, **society** expects all its members to do their best and utmost to further its development. It wants to see people realize their potential, establish harmonious and supportive relationships with one another, and fully and democratically contribute to the evolution of society. In short, society hopes that they will become **effective and involved citizens**.

3. Québec, Ministère de l’Éducation, *Québec’s Public Schools: Responding to the Diversity of Moral and Religious Expectations* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2000), 14.

4. Québec, Ministère de l’Éducation, *Religion in Secular Schools: A New Perspective for Québec*. Report of the Task Force on the Place of Religion in Schools in Québec (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1999), 220.

The aspirations of young people, as well as the expectations of their parents and society, are convergent and complementary. **Effort and perseverance on the part of everyone involved** are needed to meet these aspirations and expectations. Insofar as **the school is concerned with ensuring that students experience genuine and complete success**, it assumes very specific responsibilities and duties in this regard because “education . . . plays a crucial role in the development of individuals and of Québec society as a whole.”⁵

Setting up a Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service becomes **an ideal way for the school to contribute to young people’s overall development**. This service is particularly helpful due to its **integrative approach** because, as it has been said earlier, it is in tune with the students’ desire to be successful on both a personal and social level.

This service is designed as a **resource that students can use** in their search for identity, meaning and wholeness, their need for recognition and belonging, their efforts to be open to difference and plurality, and their desire to understand one another, play a role in their community and help others. It may also serve to offset feelings of emptiness and despondency, and to leave magical thinking behind. It can help them to consider the effects of their actions on others, break out of their isolation and go beyond an exploitive view of others. To sum up, the service provides students with an opportunity to **take steps** along the difficult but necessary path of wholeness and humanization, with all its ups and downs.

1.2 NATURE OF THE SERVICE

The Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service is a complementary educational service that is, in a sense, a laboratory of life that allows students to develop their spiritual life and become involved in society through reflection and practical experience.

1.2.1 A Non-Confessional School Service

The Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service is a **school service**, which means that it is **delivered in a way that takes into account everything that characterizes the school**, be it the school’s mission, procedures, strengths or limitations.

The school where this service is provided is:

- **common**, because it serves all the students in a given area
- **inclusive**, because it welcomes all students regardless of their talents, limitations, social, cultural or religious backgrounds, etc
- **democratic**, because it teaches civic values like respect for rights and freedoms and, participation in making decisions that affect society as a whole
- **open**, because it gives students access to the world of knowledge and a vast culture rooted in the community it serves, with all its social, cultural, religious and other diversities

Like a good number of other services provided in school, the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service deals with issues of concern to family, political, community or religious

5. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Statement in Support of Efforts to Promote Education and Educational Success* (joint commitment by the major partners in education) (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2000). According to a *Léger Marketing* survey conducted in August 2003, 36% of Quebecers want school staff to focus primarily on developing students’ self-fulfilment.

institutions **without, however, replacing these institutions.** In fact, this service complements those institutions by offering students activities that **prepare them for life and help them integrate into society** as women or men and as citizens.

The Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service is **non-confessional**. This means two things:

- 1) It is **not intended to carry out the specific mission of the Churches or religious groups**, or to serve their interests.
- 2) Regardless of their religious beliefs, **those who provide this service will not act on behalf of Churches or religious groups.** They are not entitled to promote either the perspectives or the rituals of any Church or religious group.

1.2.2 Spiritual Life and Community Involvement

To provide a better understanding of the nature of the service, we will define what we mean by “spiritual life” and “community involvement” and explain how the two concepts are related. **Instead of providing an all-encompassing definition of these terms, the Ministère has tailored them to the school context.** Thus, while the definitions it gives are broad and unifying, they do not necessarily include all the particularities or nuances that individuals and various social or religious groups may attribute to the terms.

Spiritual Life

Spiritual life is understood and experienced differently by different individuals at different places and times. It is often associated with expressions such as “inner life,” “belief,” “religion,” “philosophy of life,” “transcendence,” “God,” etc. Moreover, it frequently finds expression in quests, doubts and a wide range of attitudes and behaviours that **always relate to the fundamental questions of life**, namely, its origin, value, purpose and ultimate outcome. Many points of view today converge on the following idea:

Spiritual life is **an individual quest within the context of a community**, a quest focused on the fundamental questions of the **meaning of life** and tending toward the construction of a **consistent, motivating and continually evolving vision of existence.**

Community Involvement

The widely accepted meaning of community involvement is that of “improving the world in which we live,” or “doing something for others.” This is a simple and sound way of seeing community involvement, but is not sufficient to reveal all aspects of the concept. Upon further reflection, we could define community involvement as follows:

A **contribution of the individual to community life** based on the **recognition of the value and dignity of human beings** and oriented toward the construction of a **more harmonious and supportive society.**

Each component of the definitions given here will be discussed in Part 3 of this document, “The Meanings of the Words.” In Part 2, under the heading “Areas of Operation,” a certain number of characteristic aspects of spiritual life and community involvement as they apply to schools, will also be addressed.

The Relationship Between Spiritual Life and Community Involvement

Spiritual life and community involvement are **distinct, yet interrelated**, notions. It cannot be otherwise, because human beings are complete individuals.

Early in their spiritual lives, individuals realize that we are all human. Their efforts to understand and live their lives make them realize that they are independent and interdependent at the same time, and that life is often harsh. **They may therefore come to feel responsible, along with other people, for the betterment and the future of other human beings**

and of society in general. They may become so concerned about others that engaging in common activities with others and for others becomes a necessity. For many people, spiritual life may lead “to a transcendence of personality” whereby they feel compelled to treat “all . . . beings . . . with the same compassion and disinterested goodwill.”⁶ All major religious and philosophical texts, and modern-day UNESCO, consider the love of others to be a “golden rule”: **treat others the way you would like them to treat you.** UNESCO even regards the spiritual choices of individuals as one of the sources of inspiration for global ethics.⁷

Then again, community involvement may help individuals to develop their self-esteem, a sense of belonging and the conviction that their actions can make a difference. These are important, positive outcomes that, in turn, affect their spiritual lives, in as much as it helps to **shape their personal identities and give them a more solid grounding in society and in their lives.** Community involvement, on the other hand, often exposes the individual to a number of human miseries: loneliness, psychological distress, school problems, parental separation, unemployment, destitution, suicide, homelessness, the exploitation of peoples, natural and ecological disasters, etc. Contact with these harsh realities of life raises fundamental questions: Why all this? Where will it lead? Is there any better future? Is life worth living? If God exists, what is He doing? As a result, individuals find themselves in a situation that might cause them to **question their beliefs, their religion or their philosophy.** When this happens, they once again become immersed in their spiritual lives.

Individuals develop a vision of existence that explains why and how they have decided to contribute to social life. Conversely, their involvement in society enriches and transforms their spiritual life. As a result, a person’s spiritual life and community involvement are symbiotically related.

1.2.3 Complementary Educational Service

The Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service is one of the **complementary educational services.** Therefore, in its own way, it works toward the same goal, which is to encourage students’ progress in their diverse learning. It is both a complement to the instructional services they receive and a response to their need for an overall education. It is a **right** to which preschool, elementary and secondary level students are **entitled by the Education Act.** The school board must ensure that the school offers this service.⁸

Later in this document, when a service anchored in the reality of the school is discussed, certain aspects of complementary educational services will be outlined to establish their links with the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service. To obtain more information on these services, refer to the reference framework for complementary educational services entitled *Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success*.⁹

6. Huxley, Aldous, *The Perennial Philosophy* (London: Triad Grafton, 1985), 68.

7. UNESCO, World Commission on Culture and Development, *Our Creative Diversity*, [online] (November 1995), <http://www.unesco.org/culture/policies/ocd/html_eng/chapter1/shtml>.

8. Québec, *Education Act*: RSQ, c.I-13.3, updated to June 16, 2000, [Québec], Éditeur officiel du Québec, c2000, c. 1, s. 6 and c. 5, s. 226. (Section 6 gives students the right to the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service, while section 226 requires school boards to ensure that the schools under their jurisdiction offer this service.)

9. Québec, Ministère de l’Éducation. *Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success*, Direction de l’adaptation scolaire et des services complémentaires (Québec : Gouvernement du Québec, 2002).

1.2.4 A Laboratory for Living

The Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service may be compared to a laboratory, a place where something is in preparation, is being developed. Within the school, it is a place devoted to research and experimentation, where **student researchers** can ask themselves questions, advance hypotheses and carry out practical experiments on everything concerning the meaning of life and community involvement. For the students, the service is **a place where meaning and a sense of solidarity are developed**. It is a place of **discovery** and creation, where they learn to **express themselves** and **think critically** and where **concrete action is paramount**. It allows students to **interpret** their personal history and to link it to that of the community.

The service is a place

- where meaning and a sense of solidarity are developed
 - of discovery
 - to learn to express oneself and think critically
-

Various members of the school team can contribute to the activities of this laboratory, which are supervised by a **person in charge**. This person, that is to say the service animator, plays a threefold role in relation to the students: he or she **provides opportunities, helps them examine and support them**. This role, as we will see later, is one of guidance.

In the course of their research and experiments, students talk among themselves and with the animator, sharing their questions, discoveries, achievements and failures, their ways of doing things, of living and of being. The laboratory therefore becomes a place of **dialogue** between people of various origins and with different points of view. It is a place of **cooperation**, where the students' lives are enriched by the experience of others and where they place their own quest at the service of others. This is especially true, since the students are, in a sense, the object and the subject of the activities conducted in the laboratory.

The analogy of a “laboratory” is in keeping with the basic principle of the Québec Education Program, according to which the lives of students and the school are a starting point for learning, and teachers act as resource persons.

A Laboratory That Yields Results

Research and experimentation yield results that either validate or invalidate intuitions, expectations or assumptions. They also sometimes lead to the unexpected. And while they can be satisfactory and encouraging or disappointing and discouraging, **such results are not predetermined**.

Sometimes, such results can provide students with a better knowledge of themselves and greater self-esteem, as well as a better understanding of the meaning of their lives and of life in general, and a stronger sense of identity. They may encourage students to pursue their spiritual quest and to improve their community and society. They can thus motivate students and give them satisfaction.

But results may also create doubt and uncertainty, lower students' self-esteem, undermine their confidence in themselves and others, make it difficult for them to find meaning in their lives and cause them to lose the incentive to honour their commitments. Such results may also lead to disappointment and waning motivation. In such cases, the animator plays a key role in helping students understand what is happening to them and maintain their enthusiasm to persevere and progress.

Whatever the nature of the results achieved, they must be viewed as a **springboard for students' continued research and experimentation**. As in any laboratory setting, the process is just as important as the results. The effectiveness of students' research and experimentation is measured primarily by their **efforts and perseverance** in their quest for an autonomous and responsible spiritual life and by their commitment to the development of a more harmonious and supportive society.

The analogy of a “laboratory” highlights the idea that **the service is not a spiritual or ideological training ground** as, for instance, a Church, a spiritual group or social movement may be. In the spirit of complementary educational services, it is, rather, a place where **students can explore**, by experiencing and reflecting on various situations, the different facets of spiritual life and community involvement without, however, being required to act in predetermined ways or to follow standard instructions. The service therefore **encourages** students to develop their own visions of life and social conscience but **without imposing any belief system or cause** on them. It is, therefore, consistent with the aim and objectives of the service, to be discussed later. Moreover, in keeping with the spirit of exploration, animators may, depending on the circumstances and the students, share their own world-view and explain what motivates them to act in society, in the process applying basic pedagogical principles tempered by diplomacy, transparency and restraint.

As with any **analogy**, the parallel between this service and a laboratory involves both strengths and limitations. It is up to each animator to make appropriate improvements and adjustments.

In any event, one thing is certain: each individual activity considered separately does not, in and of itself, constitute a laboratory; rather, it represents but one step or aspect. The laboratory for living includes the environment that the animator manages to create or foster, as well as the entire range of collective and individual activities carried out with or for the students. The personal commitment of the students and the animator to the laboratory also determines its essential nature.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE

Although an integral part of the complementary educational services programs, the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service has its own specific aim, which is to:

foster the **development of an autonomous and responsible spiritual life** among students and their contribution to the **building of a harmonious and supportive society**.

The objectives of the service proposed to the students are:

- to reflect and experiment in situations designed to help them progress freely in their spiritual lives, with a view to **unifying their being in a vision of existence**
- to undertake individual and group projects likely to improve their community and the society around them, with a view to **developing a social conscience**
- to build links between their spiritual life and community involvement, with a view to **developing greater personal unity and social coherence**



1.4 A SERVICE ANCHORED IN THE REALITY OF THE SCHOOL

The Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service will be anchored in the school through many links, which are outlined below.

1.4.1 The Link with the School's Mission

Québec schools today have a mandate to provide educational services to all young people, to take into account the diversity of their situations and to provide them with the tools necessary to achieve their social and intellectual potential in both their personal and working lives. This means that schools must play a multidimensional role in the lives of young people.¹⁰

With this in mind, the school's mission was enshrined in the *Education Act* to impart knowledge to students, foster their social development and give them qualifications with a view to their educational success.¹¹ The Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service is an integral part of this mission.

The mission to provide instruction is achieved primarily by exploring the various aspects of spiritual life and community involvement that expose students to **human experiences and universal truths that form a particularly rich world of knowledge to be acquired and constitute a veritable training ground for the mind**. The service probably contributes more to the mission to socialize, because it **promotes the development of a true social conscience**. It helps students learn to live in community with others and

fosters a feeling of belonging to a community. It affords opportunities to **assimilate the fundamental values required for living in a society and a democracy**. It prepares students to become autonomous and responsible citizens, and reduces the risks of exclusion. It contributes to self-fulfillment and to the establishment of a supportive society. The mission to provide qualifications is achieved in particular by **offering all students** the service regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, cultural or other situations, and by opening their minds to dimensions of their lives that will continue to be central, even if they do not often have the opportunity to explore these through the other activities at school. In so doing, students can develop as individuals and in the community in a manner commensurate with their own situation and skills and acquire the tools needed to deal with life's unavoidable constraints.¹²

The prospect of “multidimensional” action, as previously mentioned, is also found in section 36 of the *Education Act*: “A school shall, in particular, facilitate the spiritual development of students so as to promote self-fulfillment.” The service animator, by the very nature of his or her work, is in a good position to **work together with the other members of the school team** to implement this aspect associated to the school's mission.

1.4.2 The Link With the Québec Education Program

The school's mission is fulfilled mainly through the Québec Education Program. It defines the learning essential for young people in terms of three aims: the construction of their world-view, the construction of their identity and empowerment.¹³ These aims “provide a common direction for all educational measures and

10. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Education Program, Secondary School Education, Cycle One* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2004), 5.

11. Québec, *Education Act*, s. 36.

12. Paragraph based on the *Québec Education Program, Preschool Education and Elementary Education*, Ministère de l'Éducation. Québec, 2001, 3; and the *Québec Education Program, Secondary School Education, Cycle One* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2004), 5.

13. Even though only one aim (construction of a world-view) is associated with the *Québec Education Program, Preschool Education and Elementary Education*, the other two aims (construction of identity and empowerment) can also apply to preschool and elementary school students.

convey the sense that schools do more than give students academic tools; they also enable them to set goals for their lives and prepare them to contribute to society.”¹⁴

The Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service is particularly anchored in these three aims. It contributes to their achievement by helping students **mobilize their various competencies in order to discover and recognize their inner sense of being, and to adopt it and make it a well-spring of growth and a basis for self fulfillment for both themselves and the community.**

It provides opportunities for them to realize what constitutes their world-view, to use their strengths and talents for their own personal development and that of the community, to develop a sense of belonging and broaden their horizons. By an approach centred on action, which will be explained later, this service helps students advance to the stage of “knowing what action to take in response to the complexity of current issues or how to confront major ethical and existential questions.”¹⁵

The three aims of the Québec Education Program are achieved through the learning of subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies and are reflected in the educational aims of the broad areas of learning.

By enabling students to explore different realities associated with spiritual life and community involvement, the service provides them with countless opportunities for making **connections with the five subject areas**. Through its animation activities, the service also assists students in **developing various cross-curricular competencies**, thus helping to equip them with the right tools to adapt to various complex situations throughout their lives. Lastly, note that the service by its very nature addresses “issues that confront young people”¹⁶ namely the **broad areas of learning**. The animator, in conjunction with other members of the school team, uses these areas as focal points to ensure the continuity of the students’ learning process. By taking part in the activities of the service, students are provided with another opportunity to integrate and transfer their learning in the various areas.

Finally, the idea of a laboratory, which is central to the definition of the service, as well as the relationship between the students and the animator, which will be explained later in the “Pedagogical Considerations” section, demonstrate in another way how the service can be anchored in the reality of the school.

The following table highlights points shared by the Québec Education Program and the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service.



14. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Education Program, Secondary School Education, Cycle One* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2004), 6.

15. *Idem*.

16. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Education Program, Preschool Education and Elementary Education* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2001), 42.

Québec Education Program	Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service
Program aims: • Construction of world-view • Construction of identity • Empowerment	Service aims: • Unify their being in a vision of existence • Develop a social conscience • Develop personal unity and social coherence
Pedagogical aspects: • The school is a learning community. • Students are involved and proactive in their learning process. • Students are the principal agents of their learning. • The teacher is a resource person who provides support to students in the development of competencies.	Pedagogical aspects: • The Service is compared to a laboratory for living, a place of sharing and mutual assistance centred on action. • Students are researchers. • Students are both the creators and beneficiaries of their learning experience. • The animator has a guidance role to play with students in developing their spiritual life and social conscience.

1.4.3 The Link With the Educational Project and the Success Plan

A school pursues its mission within the framework of an **educational project** implemented by means of a **success plan**.¹⁷

Under the responsibility of the governing board, the educational project consists of the aims and objectives to be achieved in the school by all those involved in the school system, who promote these aims and objectives to ensure students' educational success. The school's success plan provides the measures to be taken based on the aims and objectives of the educational project. It is intended to make the project more tangible, rally the dynamic forces in the school and promote the emergence of a culture of success for all students.

The service animator must **work together** with the other members of the school team **to develop and implement the educational project and the success plan**, and draw upon them when **planning** his or her activities.

1.4.4 The Link With Complementary Educational Services

According to the Québec Education Program, all those involved in the school system must be concerned with the students' educational success. It is from this perspective that the 12 complementary educational services provided for in the *Basic school regulation*¹⁸ are integrated into four programs so as to foster the cooperation and collaboration of the entire school team around common objectives. Even if the particularities of each service are important and necessary, **the various specialists must put their particular expertise to work for the students and the adults in the system through a concerted and integrated approach**. This concerted approach also applies to the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service.

The following examples show how the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service can contribute to the four complementary educational

17. Québec, *Education Act*, s. 36.

18. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Basic School Regulation for Preschool, Elementary and Secondary School Education*, *Gazette officielle du Québec*, Order in Council 651-2000, June 14, 2000, ss. 4 and 5.

service programs that must be developed by the school board:¹⁹

- 1) **Support services** designed to provide students with conditions that are conducive to learning:

The service animator contributes to this program by sharing information and expertise with students and the school staff.

For instance, the animator can inform students of the opportunities provided by the school and the community to develop their inner life and community involvement. Information can also be provided to parents and partners in the community to raise their awareness of how to bridge the gap to help young people explore their inner life and community involvement.

The animator can also heighten school staff's awareness of the various expressions of spirituality in a person's life and help them deal with these manifestations of spirituality when they occur. The animator can offer them his or her expertise based on knowledge of the moral, spiritual and social dimensions of students' lives, and learn from the school staff's experience and knowledge in these areas.

The animator cooperates with other teachers so that the students' subject-specific learning can be enhanced by what they have learned in developing their spiritual and community life. From this perspective, special collaborative relationships can be established with all subjects, and not only with those in the area of personal development, as is often considered to be the case.

- 2) **Student life services** designed to foster students' autonomy and sense of responsibility, their spiritual and moral dimensions, their interpersonal and community relationships, as well as their feeling of belonging to the school:

Student life services are a special focus of the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service, given its role as a "care and guidance" service. The service animator contributes to student life services through cooperation with other school team members, offering students activities that gradually enable them to take control of their personal and social lives.

These activities provide opportunities for students to look for their own answers to fundamental questions they may have, and to find solutions to life's difficulties and challenges. Students explore the world of the prime universal values and develop the ability to understand, and unify their being. Through these activities, they learn to maintain and improve their interpersonal relations, starting with the people in their school and their family. These activities teach students that humans are interdependent and that, by taking action for the benefit of others, they can help improve the well-being of the community and society. This kind of involvement allows students to develop an autonomous and responsible inner life, and to build an increasingly harmonious and supportive society.

- 3) **Counselling services** designed to help students, throughout their studies, with their academic and career choices and with any difficulties they encounter:

The service animator contributes to counselling services by offering individual and group care and guidance activities that help students to better understand particular issues concerning spiritual life and community involvement they are concerned with or that help them to overcome difficulties they may encounter.

19. Under section 224 of the *Education Act*, school boards are required to develop such programs.

The animator can work with students and the school staff to help them realize that the activities that promote the development of a vision of existence and a social conscience can affect motivation and scholastic perseverance.

4) **Promotion and prevention services** designed to provide students with an environment conducive to the development of a healthy lifestyle and of skills that are beneficial to their health and well-being:

The animator can contribute to promotion and prevention services, in particular by creating opportunities for students to stop and define what is important to them in their life, to examine their values and those of society and make choices in keeping with their vision of existence.

The animator can cooperate with other school team members in organizing and conducting joint activities (e.g. a non-violence week, peer mutual assistance, suicide prevention camp) that will help students better understand who they are and what they want to be and by giving them an opportunity to improve their community and society. Students will thus be able to develop their ability to make choices that are beneficial to their health and well-being.

1.4.5 The Link With the School Team and Its Partners

The School Administration

The service animator must set up a **close link with the school administration**. This will consist in providing the administration with information and guidance with respect to students' needs in terms of spiritual life and community involvement. As part of this link, the administration will be asked to give its opinions on various aspects of the service or school life.

In addition, the school principal helps the animator become part of the school team and participate in shared projects.

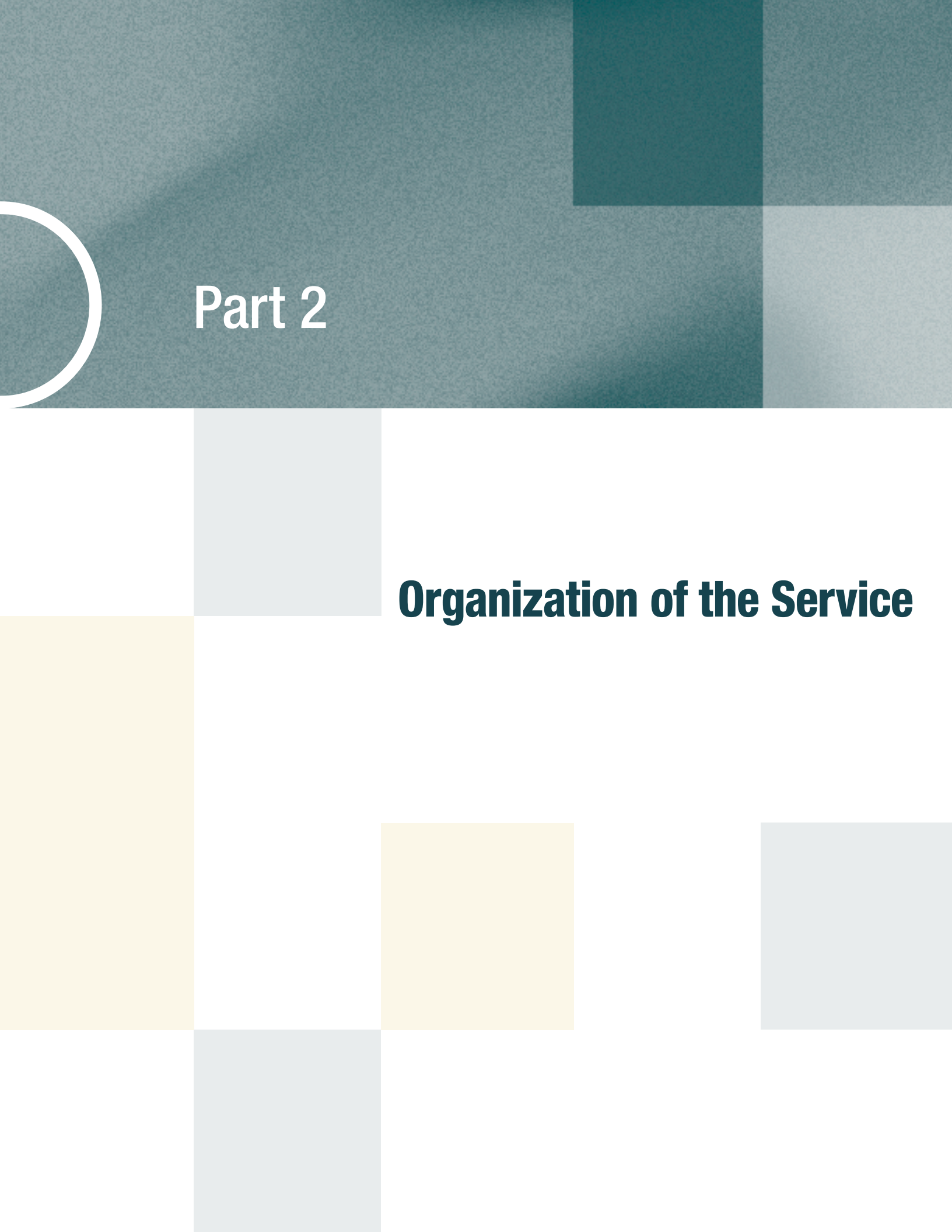
Staff Members, Partners and Parents

Spiritual care and guidance and community involvement are rooted in a very specific context, namely the school, which constitutes the daily environment where students live their personal and social lives. It is essential that the animator work in conjunction **with the main players in the school and community: teachers and other staff, parents, and the various organizations and groups** in the area served by the school (social movements, youth centres, health and social service centres [CSSS], community or religious groups, etc.).

These links form **networks for the exchange of information and dialogue**. They allow all the partners to come to know each other, develop a trusting relationship and **work together** on projects defined on the basis of common priorities, in which students can develop competencies related to spirituality and community life.

Finally, if students wish to do so, they can use these networks to continue developing their spiritual lives and community involvement.





Part 2

Organization of the Service

2.1 PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.1.1 The Role of the Animator

Since animators of the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service must take into account the “trends and influences that mark young people’s lives,”²⁰ they must be aware of **the situations young people face**, i.e. what they are experiencing, what motivates them or what bothers them on personal and social levels.

The animator’s role is to help students explore the world of the inner life and community involvement. The training and professional skills that animators are expected to have in these areas must enable them to **provide guidance** to students.

Providing guidance involves:

- **creating conditions and offering activities** conducive to students’ research and exploration of spiritual life and community involvement
- **using forms of pedagogy that are adapted** to the stages of psychological and intellectual development of the students and their learning pace
- **having confidence in the students, instilling confidence in them** and being open to who they are and what they are experiencing. It also involves paying respectful attention to their questions
- **believing that students are the prime agents of their progress**, and being convinced that they possess within themselves and in their social environment a huge potential for developing an autonomous and responsible spiritual life and for building a more harmonious and supportive society
- being aware that student guidance can provide an **opportunity for animators to explore their own spiritual life and develop their own social conscience**. In short, it means agreeing to travel

together on the road of humanity while realizing each starts out from different life experiences

2.1.2 Respect for Students

The one professional attitude that the animator must constantly show is **respect for students**.

Respect for students involves:

- **taking account of their knowledge and experience** of spiritual life and community involvement, which comes to them from their families and their cultural environment
- **recognizing the students’ right to freedom of conscience and religion**, while refusing to impose any specific ways of thinking, acting or living on them with respect to spiritual life or community involvement, and by allowing them to freely express their own convictions, while showing respect for those of others
- **demonstrating consistency** between words and actions, or knowing that “the medium is the message,” as Marshall McLuhan would say. Like all school staff members, the animator must be “aware that students look to them as role models (often without their knowledge).”²¹

The animator must avoid placing elementary school students, particularly the youngest of them, in situations where they feel cut off from their family and cultural heritage, i.e. where they completely lose their bearings in relation to the convictions, values and beliefs that they have received at home. One can and must encourage such students to develop an open attitude toward difference, notably with regard to social or spiritual alternatives, but this must be done **carefully and gradually**.

20. Québec, Ministère de l’Éducation, *Québec’s Public Schools: Responding to the Diversity of Moral and Religious Expectations* (Gouvernement du Québec, 2000), 15.

21. Québec, Ministère de l’Éducation, *Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success*, op. cit., 25.

2.1.3 Approach Centred on Action

The Service has been compared to a laboratory in order to emphasize that the type of learning it offers is **centred on action**. The approach presented here, which conveys this intention, can inspire the animator. It consists of three phases: **acting, reviewing and renewing**. The respective roles of the animator and students change with each phase.

“Acting” Phase

This phase consists in **concretely experiencing different facets** of spiritual life and community involvement through various activities that involve thinking and acting in ways that reflect the realities facing the students and the school.

Animator

The **animator’s** role is to create an environment and introduce activities conducive to action. The animator’s main concern is to provide students with **opportunities to experience** different things, to stimulate them and heighten their awareness. He or she makes sure that students are prepared to act, and that they fully understand the why and how of their actions.

Students

When participating in proposed “acting” activities, **students** observe, become aware, explore, discover, take action and experiment. They are in a position to **experiment** various facets of spiritual life and community involvement.

“Reviewing” Phase

This phase consists in **looking back over one’s experience** of spiritual life and community involvement. It is primarily an evaluation of the essence of what was learned in the “acting” phase (its value, meaning, relevance, consequences, etc²²). Aspects of spiritual life and community involvement present in the “acting” phase (values, concepts, etc.) can thus be explored in an organized manner to determine their meaning and scope for oneself, others and society. An evaluation also allows links to be made between the two aspects of the service. Each review thus becomes a **possible contribution** to the work done by students to unify their sense of being and develop their social conscience.

Animator

The **animator’s** role is to give students opportunities to reflect, ask themselves questions and call themselves into question. Her or his main concern is to **help students examine** their experience in the acting phase. She or he gets students to consider their reasons for living, their own world-view and their motivations for involvement with others. She or he improves students’ self-esteem and confirms their approach.

Students

Students take the time to examine and better understand how their spiritual life and community involvement has evolved. They also take time to analyze their *acting*, in order to determine the value and consequences of their actions. This is an opportunity for them to use their best judgment, to make connections and synthesize, to see where they stand and to **reconsider their actions** or experience and what inspires them.

22. A functional evaluation of an activity (quality of premises, financial and organizational aspects, etc.) may not constitute a “reviewing” phase, even if it may be associated with it. The same applies to an evaluation that would be limited to expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction with an activity.

The “reviewing” phase is the **most crucial** in achieving the objectives of the service, and may involve three steps: observation, deepening and follow-up. These are outlined in the table below. The importance attributed to each step will vary according to the scope to be given to review.²³

Observation	Gives students an opportunity to identify elements of spiritual life and community involvement that have been explored in, or were part of, the “acting” phase.
Deepening	Gives students an opportunity to examine the observations made and their repercussions on their spiritual life and community involvement in light of their past experiences, comments by others, universal knowledge, human wisdom, etc.
Follow-up	Gives students an opportunity to anticipate the changes they will make or the actions they will undertake in light of their new awareness and, occasionally, to become conscious of their reviewing process and to judge its value for them and their interest in using it again.

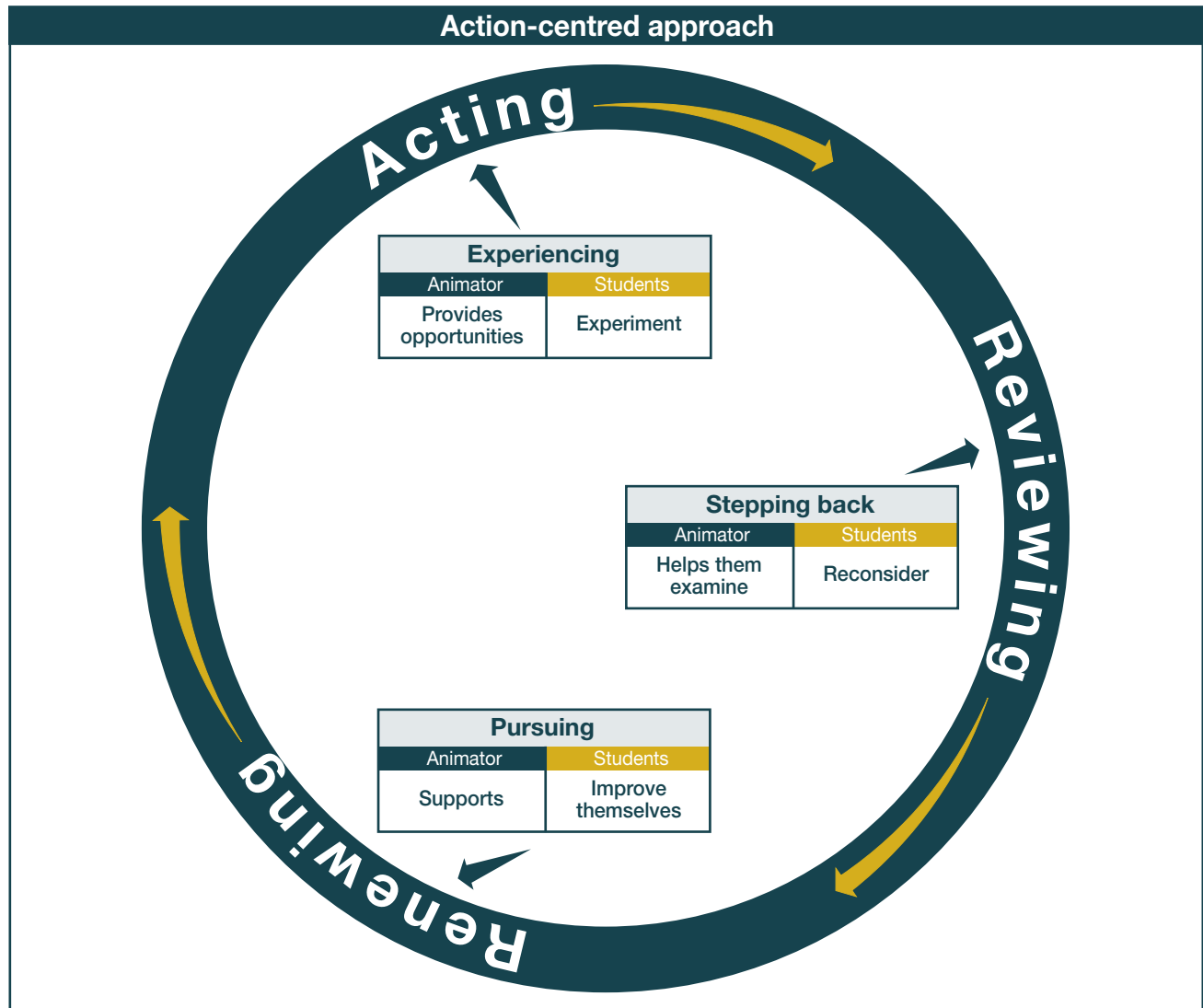
“Renewing” Phase

This phase allows students to find **new ways of pursuing** research and experimentation in the area of spiritual life and community involvement. To a certain degree, it is like an extended acting phase to which value has been added.

Animator	The animator’s role is to encourage students to pursue an increasingly autonomous and responsible spiritual life and to get involved in society in a more harmonious and supportive fashion. Her or his paramount concern is to give students support by organizing or proposing activities that encourage them to continue taking more and more meaningful action, aware however that the scope and quality of the renewing phase realized by the students cannot be completely controlled.
Students	Students engage in new types of research and experimentation. Whether at the suggestion of the animator, or on students’ personal initiative, the renewing phase provides them with an opportunity to improve themselves by defining and consolidating their vision of life and their social conscience. They understand better, embark on new avenues, take up new challenges and ask themselves new questions, or approach familiar questions in a different manner.

23. More information on the three steps of the reviewing process can be found on the Web site of the Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (“Coordination des services complémentaires”) at <<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca>>.

The figure below illustrates the three phases based on an action-centred approach, as described previously:



For these activities to be fully educational and beneficial to students, **the three phases must be implemented**. To do this, the animator may team up with other persons or groups, such as school team members, parents or community organizations. An “acting” activity organized by a school committee could thus be reviewed by the animator in the same way as any other “acting” activity organized by the animator could be reviewed in conjunction with a teacher.

The three phases constitute a dynamic process that maximizes students’ potential for real progress.

However, it is not necessary or necessarily appropriate to include them in each activity. For instance, the “reviewing” phase could be included, at least partially, in the “acting” phase, or the “acting” phase could even be spread over a number of activities before the “reviewing” phase.

2.1.4 Activities

As its name indicates, the service offers activities related to “spiritual life” and “community involvement.” It is **essential that both types of activities be offered**, since they correspond to the two major components of the students’ lives, namely, their personal lives and their life in society.

Approaches for Exploring Spiritual Life and Community Involvement

Activities related to spiritual life and community involvement contribute to the long process that students undertake, depending on their individual situations and options, to **unify their being** in a vision of existence, to develop a **social conscience**, and to develop greater **personal unity and social coherence**. The activities, which can take a multitude of forms, are designed to help the students progress in line with the service’s goals. Various approaches to exploring spiritual life and community involvement have been grouped into the 10 categories below:

- Allegories, tales and stories
- Discussions and debates
- Enquiries and surveys
- Experiments with nature and the arts
- Groups and committees
- Games, simulation exercises and role-playing
- Group events
- Symbols, analogies, rituals and celebrations
- Personal accounts
- Visits

The categories listed are not unique to the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service. In fact, other members of the school staff and people in other circumstances could use these

approaches depending on their goals. The wide-ranging nature of the approaches opens up a **variety of possibilities for** collaboration between the school team and the service animator.

Note that the approaches listed can be used at all teaching levels. It is up to the animator to diversify the action taken and to adapt it based on students’ psychological, social, cultural and intellectual characteristics.

If the approaches cited above are not specific to the Service, it must be acknowledged that the latter has given them its own unique stamp in determining **why** an approach is used, **how** it is used or even **what** an activity consists of. Thus, for an approach to further the Service’s objectives, **it must be related to the characteristic facets and areas of operation of** spiritual life and community involvement.

Areas of Operation

The areas of operations are **avenues** or **facets** to explore and to experiment with as well as **sources of inspiration** for determining **themes** or **target activities**. They are the **components** of spiritual life or community involvement that reflect the meaning given to these terms at the end of this document. They can be regarded as **specific examples of spiritual life or community involvement** in the school environment and provide **valuable insight into the type of “laboratory” that can be offered** to students to have them explore the world of spiritual life and community involvement.

The table below presents a number of areas of operation related to the two components of the service. Since they are broad areas, they include any number of variations that the animator may select based on student needs, the realities of the community in which the animator works and his or her own personality. It should be noted that the combination of two areas

often leads to other variations that can prove to be very relevant. In addition, the areas of operation selected are not exhaustive. By drawing upon what is said in this document about the nature of the service and the meaning of its two components, further areas can be added.

Areas of Operation Related to Spiritual Life	Areas of Operation Related to Community Involvement
• To find one's inner source, the thirst for life • To compare and contrast one's discoveries and beliefs with those of others • To reflect on meaning and on the importance of existence • To define and adopt a coherent and stimulating vision of existence • To be familiar with symbols (religious or not) from the local and other cultures • To seek the "existential" fruits of the cultural and religious history of Québec and of humanity • To situate one's life in relation to time, space and the absolute • To enter into the universe of celebrations and rituals • To learn to take up the limitations and vulnerability of one's own life and life in general • To appreciate the grandeur and mystery of life • To become familiar with interiority, silence and meditation • To be aware of one's inner life, one's spiritual dimension • To seek the meaning of life through others, in happy and sad times, and through nature, science, etc. • To become attentive to various ways of looking at the world and ways of life different from one's own • To deal with the fundamental questions of life • To give oneself reasons for living	• To be aware of the importance of commitment and service to others • To help others and give freely of one's time • To reflect on meaning and on the importance of life in society • To develop a sense of belonging to the community (one's class, school, village, city, country, the world) • To be aware of one's own responsibilities and those of others • To maintain friendly and fruitful relationships • To take a stand against poverty and exploitation • To resolve conflicts harmoniously • To build a just and inclusive world • To participate in democratic life • To become attentive to the living conditions of others and become supportive • To review the repercussions of one's choices and actions • To see reality from other points of view, to appreciate differences • To improve the conditions in which others may live • To discover interdependence of people, nations and the universe • To find meaning in one's commitments

Examples

Below are examples of approaches to exploring spiritual life, community involvement or the links between these two components of the service. These approaches have been associated with the areas of operation indicated in italics to show how they can be linked with the particularities of the service. The animator could obviously make interconnections with other areas, or more than one area, depending on the actual situation experienced by students and within the school and based on the animator's own professional skills.²⁴

Approaches to exploring spiritual life

- An enquiry within the school about how various people see certain events (war, birth, conflict, encounters, etc.) to *seek the meaning of life through others, in happy and sad times, and through nature, science, etc.*
- A guided walk in the forest, sometimes remaining silent to *appreciate the grandeur and the mystery of life*
- A grief counselling group to *learn to take up the limitations and vulnerability of one's own life and life in general*
- Theme days or weeks (friendship, life and family week, etc.) to *become attentive to various ways of looking at the world and ways of life different from one's own*
- A reflection based on an allegory that focuses on difficult experiences such as suffering, illness and death to *deal with the fundamental questions of life*
- Various exercises (mandala, guided meditation, mental imagery, etc.) to *become aware of one's inner life, one's spiritual dimension*
- A visit to various religious buildings (churches, mosques, monasteries, synagogues, etc.) to *become familiar with symbols (religious or not) from the local and other cultures*
- A debate about the existence of God, the origin of life, the Big Bang or the evolution of the cosmos to *compare and contrast one's discoveries and beliefs with those of others*

Approaches to exploring community involvement

- A reflection based on a story on social problems to *develop an awareness of the living conditions of others and become supportive*
- A debate about ethical issues to *review the repercussions of their choices and actions*
- An enquiry within the school about how various people see certain events (war, birth, conflict, etc.) to *discover the interdependence of people, nations and the universe*
- An international solidarity club to *improve the conditions in which others may live*
- Games based on the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* and on children's rights to *reflect on the meaning and importance of life in society*
- Theme days or weeks (friendship week, intercultural day, Earth day, etc.) to *develop a sense of belonging to a group*
- A celebration (multicultural, honouring, recognition, etc.) to *maintain friendly and rewarding relationships*
- A personal account from an adult or student involved in an environmental cause, explaining the reasons behind his or her commitment to *become aware of the importance of commitment and service to others*
- A visit to a community centre to *lend a hand and give freely of one's time*



24. On the Web site of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (Coordination des services complémentaires), there are numerous examples of approaches associated with the various areas of operation, which are the results of pedagogical workshops organized by the Ministère: <<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca>>.

Approaches to exploring links between spiritual life and community involvement

- A discussion with people who see and live life in a different way (vegetarians, people practising voluntary simplicity, those with a different sexual orientation, etc.) *to define a coherent and stimulating vision of existence and to see reality from different points of view, to appreciate differences*
- Holding an art contest based on a spiritual or community theme *to reflect on the meaning and importance of existence or to reflect on the meaning and importance of life in society*
- A support group for an international cause *to be aware of one's responsibilities and those of others and to deal with the fundamental questions of life*
- A multi-denominational service, to mark a celebration or a sorrowful event within the school *to enter into the universe of celebrations and rituals and to develop a sense of belonging to a group*

Guidelines for Organizing Religious or Interfaith Activities

As stated in the government orientations regarding the place of religion in the school, some religious or interfaith activities may be organized. Thus, the question arises as to the place of religious celebrations. The organization of such activities **must necessarily take into account certain perspectives**; otherwise the service will run the risk of losing its non-confessional character. The guidelines provided below can help the animator and school team in their decision-making. Each school may draw upon them, taking into account its actual situation and demonstrating good judgment.

- **Exceptional and circumstantial nature of these activities**
Religious or interfaith activities are not organized very often and are held when special situations within the school so warrant.
- **Educational usefulness of conducting these activities at school rather than in churches**
These activities are in line with educational objectives that are compatible with the aim of the service and the schools' mission and are included

in the planning of the service. Otherwise, such activities can be taken over by the churches, which in so doing will act as educational relay points.

- **Respect for the freedom of conscience and religion**

These activities do not impose ideas and practices on students that are contrary to their beliefs or convictions. They do not present any particular belief as being superior to another or necessary for self-fulfilment.

- **Fair and equal treatment of students**

These activities do not prevent certain students from obtaining a service comparable to that received by others.

- **Focus on dialogue and ease of understanding among the various religious affiliations**

These activities emphasize what unites rather than what separates various beliefs, promoting an open attitude and mutual understanding.

- **No structured program whose specific goal is to develop a faith**

These activities do not form part of a package or strategy aimed at bringing students to commit to a particular group or be better religious followers even if, from a student's viewpoint, any activity (even non-religious) may have repercussions on his or her beliefs.

In the case of **unforeseen events** such as, for example, the death of a student, the decision whether to organize this type of activity in the school must be taken in conjunction with the principal.

Moreover, churches or religious groups may make **individual requests** for confessional activities or religious celebrations. These may, for example, involve the use of the premises for worship-related activities outside of school hours, or students' participation in obligatory religious practices. **Such requests do not directly concern the Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service.** Accordingly, **they must be dealt with by the school**, and not by the animator of this service. If, however, the animator's opinion might be useful

in the decision-making process, the issue must be taken up by the governing board.²⁵

Specific Guidance

Animators may also organize individual or group meetings to help students **gain a deeper understanding of particular issues** they are concerned with in the realm of spiritual life or community involvement, or to **help them solve related problems**.

These activities must fit into the support services program that the school board must develop and can be carried out with the help of the school's internal and external resources. Under certain circumstances necessitating a specialized follow-up, for example, problems that require therapy, students must be referred to the appropriate resource persons.



2.2 PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

2.2.1 Upstanding and Credible Individuals

The research carried out to prepare this ministerial framework as well as consultation on the subject have shown that the issues related to spiritual life and community involvement are often delicate and complex. In addition, because of their relation to conscience and religious and political convictions, there is a **risk of ideological drift and of failure to respect freedom of conscience and religion** that could have serious consequences for students and schools' life. Hence it is important to assign individuals to the service who can:

- offer students educational guidance as a bulwark against indoctrination and fundamentalist thinking (access to specialized knowledge, assimilation of this knowledge, the development of skills associated with intellectual rigour, etc.)
- demonstrate openness and comfort in dealing with pluralism and diverse (or even divergent) spiritual and social options
- interact on equal terms with other members of the school team and integrate their actions into general education perspectives
- command parents' trust by inspiring confidence in the quality of the service provided to their children

Basically, school boards should look for individuals who can offer **the best possible service** and who will be perceived as **credible** by the students, school team and parents, regardless of their religious beliefs or political views.

In this case, special care should therefore be taken in selecting and supervising animators.

25. A document of the Comité sur les affaires religieuses (CAR) (*Religious Rites and Symbols in the Schools: The Educational Challenges of Diversity*. Brief to the Minister of Education, 2003) may also be used to explore this issue. It may also be useful to consult *A School for the Future: A Policy Statement on Educational Integration and Intercultural Education* published in 1998 by the Ministère de l'Éducation.

■ 2.2.2 Qualities

Individuals who become animators of spiritual life and community involvement must:

- **be open-minded**, in other words, they must be good listeners, in addition to being adept at discussion, welcoming others and showing respect for them while taking their uniqueness and diversity into account, particularly on the cultural and religious levels
- **have a positive personal view** of spiritual life and community involvement, in other words, they must show interest in these two aspects, which they consider important, recognizing that they themselves are developing these aspects in their own way
- **have pedagogical skills**, in other words, they must be able to animate, create, work in groups, cooperate and consult
- **have critical thinking skills**, in other words, an ability to challenge, to be able to step back from things and to gauge their true value, while showing objectivity and good judgement
- **have organizational skills**, in other words, they must have an ability to plan, work independently and show initiative

■ 2.2.3 Training

The training expected of individuals assigned to the service is described in the school boards' *Classification Plan for Professional Personnel*²⁶ in relation to the "Spiritual Care and Guidance, and Community Involvement Animator" position. This document stipulates that providers of this service must hold an **undergraduate university degree** in an appropriate specialty **that consists mainly of courses** in the following areas:

- spiritual or religious life
- social life

They must also have successfully completed courses on the main religions, beliefs or trends of secular thought, the place of religion in the lives of individuals and social groups, social practices and contemporary social concerns, animation techniques, child and adolescent psycho-pedagogy, helping relationships and the ethics of intervention, as well as personal and professional integration seminars and observation and animation training sessions.

Adequate in-service training, or even a refresher course, could be provided for individuals assigned to the service who do not have all the required training.

In addition to the initial training required, animators must take care to **keep abreast of new work-related knowledge and practices**. Study sessions, university courses, conferences, congresses, sharing of experiences with colleagues, etc. are ideal opportunities for keeping up-to-date.

■ 2.3 QUALITY CONDITIONS

■ 2.3.1 Human Resources

Each school board in concert with each school has the responsibility to determine the number of staff and the amount of time required for its schools to offer a quality service. **A sufficient amount of time must be allotted to the service** so that students can make real strides in learning. A single rule will not necessarily apply to all schools, given their particularities.

26. Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Fédérations des commissions scolaires du Québec, *Classification Plan for Professional Personnel* (Québec : Gouvernement du Québec, May 15, 1987).

To determine the number of animators required, each school must therefore **take various factors into account**:

- the number of students to be served
- the number of schools to be visited
- the size of the territory to be covered
- the extent of its cultural and religious diversity
- the time and continuity required by a learning approach centred on action (acting, reviewing and renewing)
- special requirements of a school system that emphasizes consultation and cooperation, etc.

Two of the abovementioned factors, namely, the number of schools to be visited and the size of the territory to be covered, specifically concern elementary schools. When deciding on the number of staff required to provide the service in its schools, the school board will have to pay particular attention to these factors.

In addition, all the onus of the service cannot be placed solely on the shoulders of the persons assigned to it. In the spirit of educational reform and complementary educational services, **the entire school team is asked to work together with the animator** to promote student learning in the area of spiritual care and guidance and community involvement.

2.3.2 Concerted Effort Between Elementary and Secondary Levels

Even if the service can vary from an educational, and sometimes, organizational standpoint in elementary and secondary schools, its general perspectives are nonetheless the same on both educational levels, thus highlighting **the importance of a concerted effort among the animators** of elementary and secondary schools **to ensure, in particular, that students acquire a variety of concepts and skills**. This also suggests a tremendous potential for cooperation and mutual assistance that could prove to be beneficial for both the students and animators.

2.3.3 Role of the School Administrators and of the School Board

School administrators play a **decisive** role in the **successful implementation** of the service. Principals must be highly familiar with the nature of the service and with the animator's role in order to convey, in particular, its utility to students and the school. Their **interest** in the service and their **positive view** help the service become implemented more quickly within the school, and hence make it more efficient. In addition to ensuring that all students benefit from the service, the administrators' role may consist in informing the school team and the governing board of the service's nature and activities, facilitating the work of the people in charge of the service, promoting cooperation between the animator and the other staff members regarding the planning and animation of activities, particularly in implementing complementary educational service programs.

School boards, for their part, must establish complementary educational service programs prescribed by the *Basic school regulation* by including goals and activities in the area of spiritual life and community involvement. They must ensure that there is a service, as well as its quality, in all schools, by allocating resources equitably. They must **facilitate the understanding and organization of the service**, especially by having animators and the school team benefit from ongoing guidance by a person who fully understands the nature and role of the persons assigned to the service.

2.3.4 Sites and Budgets

In order for animators to effectively meet students' needs, it is essential that the service have **adequate financial and material resources**. Although it is difficult to set a standard that could apply equally to all schools, the latter must ensure that sites are available for individual and group activities, and that a sufficient annual budget is allocated for planned activities



Part 3

The Meanings of the Words

The Spiritual Care and Guidance and Community Involvement Service will not be well understood unless the constituent concepts of “spiritual life” and “community involvement,” as indicated in its name, are clarified.

3.1 THE EXPRESSION “SPIRITUAL LIFE”

Etymologically, the word “spiritual” comes from Latin and translates a Greek word that means “breath.” It relates to the idea of “wind” or “air.” It also means “spirit,” “soul” and even “emotions.” In any event, regardless of language and tradition and despite some differences in meaning, this word refers to a reality that transcends human beings, to a vital force that is intimately connected with their day-to-day existence yet opens them to something beyond themselves.

Most people acknowledge that they have a “spiritual life,” as defined earlier in this document (i.e. **an individual quest within the context of a community**, a quest focused on the fundamental questions of the **meaning of life**, and tending toward the construction of a **consistent, motivating and continually evolving vision of existence**). Let us go over the main components of this definition in order to obtain a more precise grasp of its meaning.

An individual quest within the context of a community

Spiritual life is a “quest” in that it takes us along a certain path, requiring us to follow a certain route or **itinerary** involving questions, searching, reflection, experiments, listening to one’s inner voice, delving more deeply into certain issues, etc. Spiritual life leads the individual to understand his or her true and deep-rooted nature. This route **is not linear or quick, or free of pitfalls; nor is everything mapped out in advance**. It is made up of doubts, suffering, discoveries, despair, hope, prospects, acceptance, rejections and setbacks. It is “to be discovered, or rather to be welcomed when you become aware of it

in your own way.”²⁷ In fact, it is a *path* that can be both fascinating and disconcerting, and that takes various shapes over the years.

This quest is said to be “individual” because each individual must assume responsibility for his or her own itinerary. Individuals are not isolated or left to themselves, since their paths take them through the community. They are nurtured and influenced by others on the same existential road (parents, friends), or by society (culture, religion, etc.). **Others and society are even indispensable** because they represent points of contact that provide meaning, inspiration, challenges, approval and support. It cannot be

Spiritual life is a “quest” in that
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otherwise, since human beings are essentially social. Despite this, **at the end of this road, every individual must make his or her own choices**, since he or she is “the only discoverer of his or her kingdom”.²⁸ It is up to individuals to accept or refuse offers made to them, and to shape their own itinerary and develop their own sense of integrity in a thoughtful and serious fashion, while showing good judgement and respect for others. Each person must dare to be free, which, in the final analysis, is an eminently individual act.

The meaning of life

In essence, our spiritual life focuses on **the big questions of existence** that nobody can escape: where do I come from? who am I? where am I going? why do I have to live, suffer and die? All these questions refer to the very value of individuals, to their dignity and self-esteem, their perception of themselves and of others, their anchorage in life, their sense of time,

27. Légaut, Marcel, *Vie spirituelle et modernité* (Paris: Centurion - Duclot), 235. [Free translation].

28. René Barbier quoted by Jean Lecanu, “Spiritualité et attitude éducative : l’école dans la relation éducative,” *3^e Millénaire*, No. 49 (1998), 80. [Free Translation].

and so on. These questions also lead to the discovery of transcendence, of the absolute, the source in itself or something “more than oneself”; and they can all be asked from the perspective of “ourselves” since each and all of us share the same basic human condition. In fact, the meaning of one’s own life is closely connected with that of other people’s lives, and of life in the most general sense of the word.

Sometimes we approach these questions for themselves, out of purely intellectual considerations, as is usually the case during a lecture, discussion or reading. More often than not, however, **they arise in happy or unhappy life situations**, but always in very concrete situations. For example, they can arise from contact with nature, deep human relationships, artistic experiences or scientific discoveries. They also very often emerge when individuals or communities must face difficulties such as failure, constraints, losses or breakdowns, unpleasant life situations (e.g. injustice, violence, poverty, discrimination, war), moral or physical suffering, and death. Such moments, which are invariably intense, create a void that gives rise to questions about the meaning of things. In the process, a whole world of fundamental values comes under review: love, hope, confidence, faith, perseverance, courage, setting new targets for oneself, the inner world, dignity, happiness, wisdom, solidarity, altruism, truth, etc.

Vision of existence can be built around what is religious, around a cause like justice or the environment, or around both at once

A consistent and motivating vision of existence

The path through the world of meaning gradually leads the individual to **a global understanding of his or her life and of life in general**, one that brings with it answers to the big questions of life mentioned above, and does so in a unified and coherent manner. This search for a “unifying pole”²⁹ varies with each individual and culture. The desire to understand all the aspects of one’s life (personal, social, universal, cosmic) and to harmonize these components is specifically human. Individuals strive tirelessly to come to know who they are, to uncover their personal mystery and to live in accordance with what they have discovered about themselves.

For centuries, humans have sought and found answers to the great existential questions. This has given birth to beliefs, philosophies and religions that offer unified and coherent systems of meaning, which are the fruits of human experience down through time. A large number of these creeds are still very much alive today, while others arose more recently; but all of them can serve as springboards, reference points and destinations on one’s spiritual journey.

Every individual is profoundly influenced by a belief, philosophy or religion that comes from his or her family or culture. After a rather long and complex journey, many people make these the central elements of their “vision” of existence, of their “spirituality,” although they do so to different degrees. Others reject these received visions and develop different principles that draw on various traditions and currents of thought. Whatever people decide, their vision of existence can be built around **what is religious, around a cause** like justice or the environment, or **around both at once**. However, regardless of the exact nature of this vision, **it is always defined in relation to that which is not only us, to what is “beyond ourselves.”** For most people,

29. Breton, Jean-Claude, *Approche contemporaine de la vie spirituelle* (Québec: Éditions Bellarmin, 1990), 17.

this takes the shape of an absolute Being, a God, an Intelligence, an Energy, etc. For some, the “beyond myself” is nothing less than the universe and the human being in themselves (i.e. reality in all its material splendour and greatness).

The vision of existence that individuals adopt for themselves (and their spiritual quest) provides them with **a basis for self-fulfilment and progress in life**. Far from being static, this vision is motivating: it energizes, mobilizes, anchors, transforms and strengthens individuals. It enables them to define their relationships with others and the world, and opens them up to others and the world so thoroughly as to result in different types of commitments. In short, this vision provides the individual with greater well-being on every level.

Continually evolving

The preceding discussion suggests that spiritual life develops gradually as a result of experiences, encounters and the times we live in. Spiritual life is actually characterized by **ongoing development** and **continual evolution**. Its richness depends on its ever-evolving nature.

Framing a vision of existence does not bring the spiritual quest to an end. Even though an individual's beliefs, philosophy or religion may tend to become more solid and lasting over time, they often prove to be incomplete and temporary because **there can be no final answers to the fundamental questions of life**. In fact, spiritual life “... is a very challenging question ... It forces you to take nothing for granted—neither good nor evil, neither life nor death, neither human beings nor God.”³⁰ Spiritual life takes us “on an endless adventure”.³¹

Indeed, each person's situation (age, experience, achievements, problems, suffering, etc.) and social environment (plurality of opinions and of ways of living, poverty, wealth, realized or unrealized aspirations, social crises and tragedies, injustice,

war, etc.) have an impact on that individual's spiritual life. These factors can foster or hinder it, strengthen or undermine it, clarify or confuse it, speed it up or slow it down. It should also be pointed out that one's vision of existence itself evolves and calls other ideas into question. All of these change the perspective of the fundamental questions and create new ones,

Framing a vision of existence does not bring the spiritual quest to an end

and do so to such an extent that what was formerly seen as settled and permanent **continues to evolve**, and, if necessary, gives a new impetus to the spiritual “quest.” We must inevitably give our spiritual lives new momentum, and this leads us to change our vision of existence.

3.2 THE EXPRESSION “COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT”

At the beginning of this document, community involvement is introduced as a **contribution of the individual to community life** based on the **recognition of the value and dignity of human beings** and oriented toward the construction of a **more harmonious and supportive society**.

An examination of the various components of this definition will give us a better understanding of this idea.

A contribution of the individual to community life

The Latin origin of the word “contribution” conveys the idea of “adding” and of “providing one's share.” It suggests that community “involvement” is a matter

30. Nouwen, Henri J.M., *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), 8.

31. Powell, Robert, “Où commencer dans la vie spirituelle,” *3^e Millénaire*, 41(1996), 6. [Free translation].

of participation, of input and action. It follows from this that, to contribute to something, to get involved in it, means to **feel concerned about it, to make choices and to assume responsibilities** with respect to it.

In this case, becoming involved means doing something for the benefit of community life. The keystone of such commitment is the individual as a citizen who feels part of a society in need of improvement, and who wishes to work toward this

Community action consists in a “shift of focus” away from oneself toward others, with a view to building a harmonious and supportive society

goal with other like-minded people. The underlying assumption here is that all human beings are interdependent. Their identities, self-fulfilment and personal and collective humanization are possible only in society, within a framework to which they feel they belong. Each person’s contribution is thus essential for the quality of life of the individual and of society as a whole. It is interesting to note that the word “life” in the expression “community life” conveys not only the idea of existence, but also that of “life span,” “means of existence,” “way of life” and even “humankind.” Thus, community life is a whole world of relationships with others that take us beyond mere coexistence toward sharing in a quality of “life together”.

In order to be fully educational, community involvement **must seek to ensure that the meaning of action is known and clear** to all involved and that its consequences are assessed. This is not only a matter of “doing,” but also of knowing the **underlying reasons for action**, as well as its **consequences**. If people are not aware of why they are involved in something, their involvement runs the risk of being sporadic or, what is worse, of perpetuating the unfortunate situations that sparked their initial involvement.

The recognition of the value and dignity of human beings

Central to the idea of community involvement is a conviction associated with all the major humanist schools of thought and major religions and the various modern charters of rights: that other people, without exception, have value and human dignity. It implies that the individual is not the be-all and end-all of everything, and that all those who constitute his or her environment merit the same type of consideration and the same chances to realize their potential. Those who are in some way excluded, deprived, marginalized or exploited should be the first to benefit from community involvement.

Community action consists in a **“shift of focus”** away from oneself **toward others**, with a view to building a harmonious and supportive society. Community involvement will be all the more beneficial if it helps make other people autonomous rather than dependent. It rests on the premise that what is done for others will be of benefit to the community as a whole, yet it can, at the time or after the fact, contribute to the fulfilment of the individual involved in community action. Extensive research has illustrated the psychological and physical benefits of community involvement.³² Many people also agree that it is a necessary condition for **the evolution of humanity toward complete fulfilment**, since human beings can be fully human only through action and service on behalf of others.

Today, the recognition of others is embodied in organizations, movements and in a wide variety of groups at all levels of society. These are all spurred on by **the “common good” in all its interpersonal and collective dimensions**. In other words, they promote and set up projects that improve the lot of others on the material, psychological, social and environmental planes—to take but a few examples. This type of work

32. Languirand, Jacques, *La voie, c’est les autres. (Coll. Par 4 chemins, spécial thématique)* (Boucherville: Éditions de Mortagne, 1990), 13-25.

is carried out, in large measure, through a multitude of associations or through local, regional, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which reflect on social issues and do a wide variety of things to “improve the social fabric and the quality of life of citizens by taking action in order to bring about social change.”³³ These community organizations are ideal places for both young people and adults to become familiar with and take part in democratic life.³⁴ Such work can also be carried out through international organizations set up by various countries or through agencies that they create in their own territory to secure fair and decent conditions for their citizens or for other peoples.

The recognition of others also extends to a **concern with the conditions in which others live**, in other words, to their quality of life in all its forms, including the fate of our planet. An excellent illustration of this aspect of community involvement is that it affects various fields, such as interpersonal and social relations, education, healthcare, democratic life and ecology. In fact, other people’s fulfilment encompasses all the aspects of their existence and is inseparable from their living conditions.

A more harmonious and supportive society

The cornerstone of community involvement is the construction of a more harmonious and supportive society. On one hand, this also means establishing **friendly and fruitful relationships** between individuals and groups; on the other hand, it refers to the establishment **of means to promote their self-fulfilment**. Community involvement deals with these two aspects. From this perspective, it is a major **effort at social transformation**, with the individual citizen working to develop basic values such as friendship, openness toward others, dialogue, respect, honesty, tolerance, responsibility, good will, loyalty, compassion,

service, sharing, democratic participation, equality, equity, peace, justice, freedom, etc.

If, as we established earlier, human beings are interdependent, the lot of others becomes as important as our own fate. This implies the development of a **true social and planetary conscience**, first among people themselves and then in relation to the planet and the universe. Within the framework of such a mentality, introducing the foregoing values will lead to **universal brotherhood**. Of course, brotherhood is an ideal, but it is also a potential that can provide community involvement with thrust and motivation. This ideal is an **unavoidable challenge of the current century**, because this is the “only realistic way for the survival of the species”³⁵ to which we all belong.

Human beings are interdependent,
the lot of others becomes as important
as our own fate

The construction of a harmonious and supportive society must target the whole human community in all its components and dimensions. In practical terms, this could mean one’s **immediate community**, such as the school, neighbourhood, village or city, or the **community in a broader sense**, such as the entire country, other countries, other cultures and the world. It confers on each of us the responsibility to live as a full citizen of one’s community and the world, by gradually or swiftly working on ourselves and others, with patience, courage, tenacity, respect and an appreciation of difference.

33. Québec, Comité aviseur de l’action communautaire autonome, “Déclaration des organismes d’action communautaire autonome”, Suppléments/Échos du Comité aviseur (online) (Québec: Assemblée extraordinaire du 18 avril 1998). <<http://www.cam.org/~comavis/docavis/DECLAR%DEI.PDF>> [Free Translation].

34. Québec, Conseil supérieur de l’éducation, *Éduquer à la citoyenneté. Rapport annuel 1997-1998* (Québec: Conseil supérieur de l’éducation, 1998), 82.

35. Attali, Jacques, *Fraternités, une nouvelle utopie* (Paris: Éditions Fayard, 1999), 226. [Free Translation].

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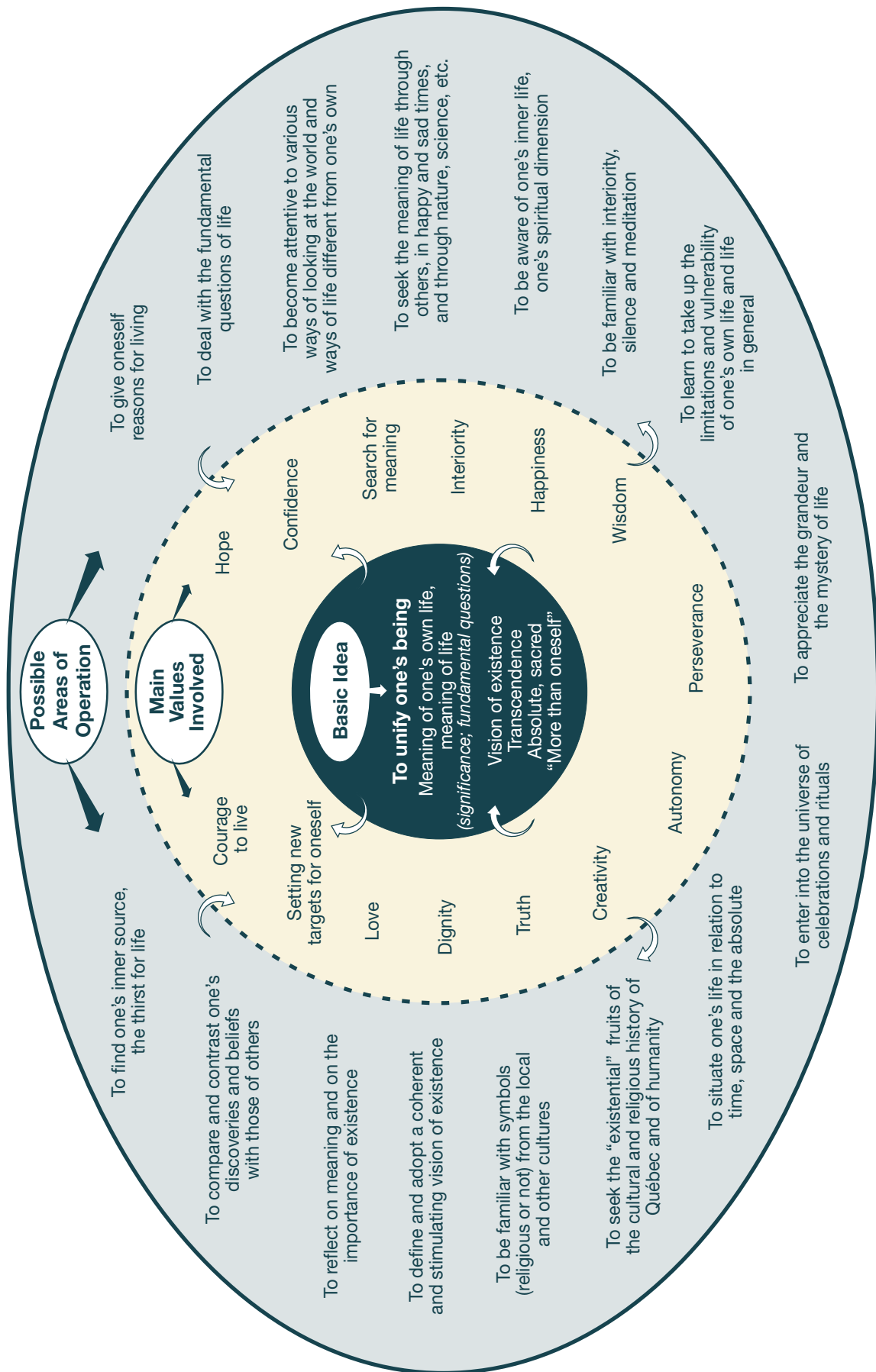
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Particularities of Spiritual Life

An individual quest within the context of a community, a quest focused on the fundamental questions of the meaning of life and tending toward the construction of a consistent, motivating and continually evolving vision of existence.



Particularities of Community Involvement

A contribution of the individual to community life based on the recognition of the value and dignity of human beings and oriented toward the construction of a more harmonious and supportive society.

