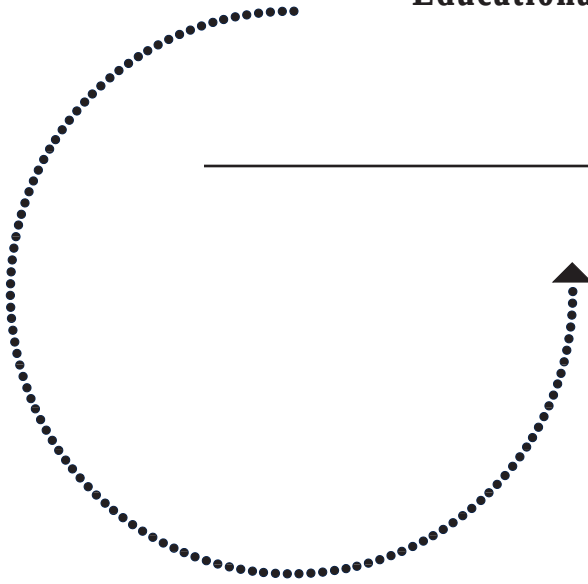


UÉBEC SCHOOLS ON COURSE

Educational Policy Statement



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It is with much pleasure and a great deal of hope that I present this policy statement to our partners in the education community and to the public at large. It explains the changes planned for elementary and secondary schools in Québec over the next few years in order to steer our education system in a new direction.

This long-awaited change of direction involves a shift from the goal of access to education for as many as possible to that of educational success for as many as possible. We have set ambitious objectives in this respect and must begin working now to achieve them. The time has come to decide what Québec's children need to learn in order to face the challenges of the new century, and this brings us to the main focus of the reform: the programs, the educational options or paths offered to students, the organization of teaching, in other words, the curriculum in its broadest sense.

I am thoroughly convinced that the choices expressed in this policy statement reflect what Quebecers expect from their schools. These choices are the outcome of a long process which has included public consultation, debate, and in-depth study of the issues by the Task Force on Curriculum Reform, whose recently published report, *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools*, provided a source of inspiration for this educational policy. Moreover, these choices, which are largely consistent with those being made in most Western countries with respect to the curriculum, also take into account the particular cultural context of Québec.

What reasons motivated these choices and compelled us to redefine the mission of our schools and to revise the curriculum? First, knowledge plays and will continue to play a central role in our society. Students must be given the opportunity to master essential, even complex learning, but first and foremost basic skills and knowledge, at the appropriate time in their schooling. Second, students must be prepared to assume their role as responsible citizens by learning and sharing common values. Finally, students must be made aware of the global challenges which have an impact on all societies by gradually developing their ability to think and act in a manner that transcends current trends and personal interests. It is primarily by achieving these standards that schools provide equal opportunity and help students to integrate into society.

However, a certain number of conditions must exist in order for these changes to improve the quality of education. We must foster a learning culture where intellectual rigour, high standards and hard work are valued, and organize our schools in a way that will support students and guide them as they progress.

The course I have charted for the students and schools of Québec is a challenging one. Teachers are crucial to the success of the changes we wish to implement, as are principals, who will be asked to play a greater leadership role. I am soliciting their cooperation and the support of parents and the entire community so that, together, we can carry out these changes in each and every school.

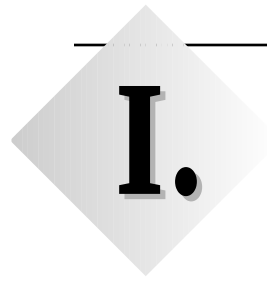


Pauline Marois

Minister of Education

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OUR SCHOOLS' MISSION

To guide students to success, our schools must have the support of all Quebecers, young and old. They will obtain this support only if the mission entrusted to them is generally known and agreed upon. Without a consensus, ambiguity will persist and our schools will continue to attend to demands which are likely to distract them from their purpose. We must therefore better define our schools' sphere of activity.

***PROVIDE INSTRUCTION,
with renewed conviction***

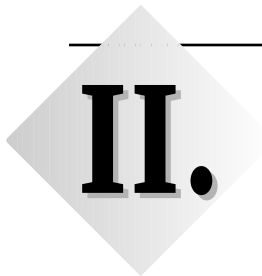
Schools play a vital role in the transmission of knowledge. To reaffirm this purpose, we must recognize the importance of students' intellectual development and mastery of knowledge. In today's knowledge-based society, the development of students' minds must be a priority for all schools.

***SOCIALIZE,
in order to learn how to live together better***

In a pluralistic society such as ours, schools bring people together. Our schools must not only help students develop a feeling of belonging to the community but also teach them how to "live together." In doing this, they must pay attention to students' concerns about the meaning of life. They must promote the fundamental values of democracy and prepare our youth for their role as responsible citizens. They must likewise prevent exclusion, a phenomenon which jeopardizes the future of too many young people.

***PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS,
through a variety of options***

Schools are responsible for enabling all students to undertake and successfully complete studies or to integrate into society after having mastered occupational skills. For this purpose to be fulfilled, the State must set the standard basic curriculum and educational institutions must diversify their offerings to suit the interests and abilities of students, particularly beyond the compulsory basic portion of their education. The time has come to pay closer attention to student guidance and counselling, and to reinstate vocational education as a valid educational option.



II.

CHANGES TO THE CURRICULUM

- ✓ Changes to the educational environment
- ✓ Changes to the content of the curriculum
 - Fields of study
 - Cross-curricular learning
- ✓ Changes to the organization of teaching
- ✓ Changes to the programs of study

In order to allow the planned changes to improve the quality of students' education, we must first alter the educational environment within which they are to take place. Once the desired educational environment has been established, we must then enrich the content of the curriculum, identify fundamental learning, identify cross-curricular learning, i.e., learning that cuts across all subjects in the curriculum, improve the organization of teaching, streamline and clarify the content of the programs of study, and review the process by which programs are developed.

THE DESIRED EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The changes made to the content and organization of the education offered in our schools must be based on principles and aimed at promoting the success of all students. To achieve this, certain conditions must be satisfied.

Focus on Essential Learning

In order to keep and consolidate essential learning, we must remove from the programs of study all of the accessory elements that have been added on over the years. Students' success hinges on what we refer to as essential learning, which includes mastery of the language of instruction and of the second language, mastery of the fundamentals of mathematics, knowledge of their own history, basic knowledge of the principal means of artistic expression, knowledge of the fundamentals of science and the development of work methods. This fundamental knowledge and these methodological and intellectual skills must be the foremost priority of our schools starting at the elementary level. Other skills and behaviours related to personal development and living in society are also essential and will be taught either as a part of specific programs of study or across the curriculum and in day-to-day school life.

Improve the Cultural Content of the Programs of Study

The cultural aspect of the curriculum must be enhanced. This will be accomplished in three ways. First, more emphasis will be placed on the subjects traditionally associated with culture, such as languages, arts education, and history. Second, these subjects will be taught from a cultural perspective. This means, for example, that language learning will include the study of literature and of literary history; that arts education will bring students into contact with drama, music, painting, dance or the visual arts in order to give them new perspectives on reality; that history will introduce students to the achievements, lifestyles and institutions associated with a given period. Likewise, relevant cultural achievements will also be studied in other subject areas. And third, to ensure that the teaching of cultural content is not left solely to teachers, it will be set out explicitly in the revised programs of study.

Introduce More Rigorous Standards in School

Schools must set high standards if they are to guide students to success. These standards must be understood and accepted by students, teachers and parents, and attained by an ever higher number of students. Each school must therefore provide for the weaker, slower students and for those students who learn differently by offering learning strategies adapted to their needs and appropriate assistance and support measures.

These standards must also be reflected in the main components of the standard curriculum.

- *Subject-time allocation.* Students must understand the intent of the courses and activities set before them, and realize that what they will be learning is useful and meaningful.
- *Programs of study.* Objectives must be clear and standards must be explicit, as must be the progression from one grade or cycle to the next and the connections between a given subject and others in the curriculum. Appropriate sequences will be established in all subject areas to show the progression of the learning content and to avoid redundancy, but especially to promote coherent, integrated learning.
- *Evaluation methods.* Schools must regularly evaluate students' progress, and the means used to carry out evaluation (assignments, examinations, tests) and to communicate results (progress reports, report cards, statements of marks) must be fair, accurate and easy to understand for students and parents.
- *Teaching materials.* Textbooks and other materials that are made available to students must be authoritative and suggest learning activities that stimulate students' curiosity and love of learning.

These standards must also extend to schoolwork, homework and individual study.

Give Individual Attention to Students

Schools must do everything in their power to prevent students from failing. Universal access to education is no longer sufficient. Schools must now provide all students with the best possible education and guide them throughout their school years. School staff must share the conviction that all children can learn if they are given the necessary means and that they are capable of acquiring much more complex knowledge than we often give them credit for. Accordingly, schools will offer students with difficulties or handicaps every opportunity to develop their talents and abilities to the fullest extent possible. Consistent and appropriate attention to the needs of these students will prevent their being left out.

Prepare Students for Lifelong Learning

An inevitable reality must be taken into account in the curriculum: knowledge is evolving at an unprecedented rate. Schools must prepare students, right from the start, to meet the requirement of lifelong learning by teaching them those rudiments and methods that will allow them to continue their learning while giving them the motivation to do so. The reform of the curriculum must therefore be guided by the following concerns:

- promoting the development of the mind through teaching that is organized in such a way that students, rather than simply receiving knowledge, are actively involved in its discovery and construction;
- arousing the intellectual curiosity of students, teaching them to ask questions, getting them to compare their ideas with those of their peers and their teachers; and
- paying attention to the integration of knowledge, i.e., the ability to make connections between fields of knowledge and to reorganize them.

Placing Schools at the Service of Students

The various components of the curriculum must be structured in such a manner as to give teachers full scope for independent action and allow them to make pedagogical decisions on the basis of students' interests. For this reason, the format and content of the programs of study and of evaluation instruments, the rules and practices relating to the certification of studies and report cards, and professional development activities must allow teachers the leeway they need to act as professionals and use their judgment. In the same vein, the way in which students' timetables are structured and the way in which school time is used must be based on the learning to be achieved by students, not on standard norms.

CURRICULUM CONTENT

Essential learning is intended to ensure that all students master basic knowledge and skills. It is inexcusable that students still be unable to read or write upon completion of their basic schooling.

Essential learning relates to fields of study and cross-curricular learning.

FIELDS OF STUDY

It is important to identify the fields of study to be included in the curriculum and the general directions to be pursued in each of them in order to set guidelines for the revision of programs. There are five fields of study: languages; technology, science and mathematics; social sciences; arts education; and personal development.

— Languages

It is vital that students master their **first language** (or the language of instruction) and for this reason, it must be the top priority of our schools. We study our first language in order to communicate, but also because it is a major part of our heritage. Language is the stepping stone to all other types of learning. Reading, for example, provides access to the world of literature.

Emphasis will also be placed on the acquisition of a **second language** and a **third language** given the linguistic context of North America and the globalization of economic activity and communications. Moreover, there is increasing recognition that young children have the least difficulty learning other languages and that learning other languages promotes proficiency in one's own language because of the comparisons that are inevitably made with the mother tongue.

— Technology, Science and Mathematics

Technology refers to the range of means used by humankind to produce what it needs for survival and comfort. Technology is everywhere and students must be introduced to it at an early age in order to understand the world in which they live.

One of the most significant outputs of human culture has been the development of **science**. It is therefore necessary to introduce students to the work methods that are specific to science: investigation, methodical observation, experimentation, verification, and the construction of models. Without turning science classes into history classes, teachers must use historical examples to show the background against which scientific advances were made. Finally, students must gain an understanding of the ethical problems raised by scientific progress.

Were it not for **mathematics**, entire aspects of the world we live in would become unintelligible. Students must be familiar with and able to use methods of calculation since we use mathematics regularly in our day-to-day lives. We calculate, measure, estimate and solve problems daily. Some mathematical knowledge is basic knowledge, on a level with reading and writing. Understanding a graph or statistics, however, involves knowing how to locate and interpret many different forms of quantitative data. The study of mathematics must also cover its cultural aspect.

— **Social Sciences**

Schools must prepare students to take their place in a society where human relations are more complex than ever. The rapid evolution of society during this last half century has resulted in increasingly complex forms of social organization with increasingly complex ways of functioning.

History, citizenship education, geography and economics must allow students to understand institutions, to be aware of and understand humans as social beings, and to trace the roots of present-day society. These subjects must also introduce students to world history, financial markets, and industrial and commercial activity. Social studies must provide an open window onto other societies and place appropriate emphasis on the growing interdependence of nations around the world. Students must have a thorough knowledge of the main events of our own and of world history and of the main space-time reference points. This means they must commit them to memory. Their knowledge of these events must be evaluated periodically. In Québec, the teaching of history is of particular significance, given our need to open ourselves up to other cultures and to confront various interpretations of our past.

— **Arts Education**

Arts education has a specific role to play in the development of each student's sensibility and intelligence, and in students' cultural and social education. Through contact with the world of artistic expression and works of art in all of their various forms, students open their minds to other dimensions of reality. However, to be effective, arts education must:

- introduce students to the various languages and theories that will help them develop their creativity, and give them the knowledge they need to apply what they learn as well as the opportunity to do so;
- bring students into contact with and help them to understand works of art from their own artistic and cultural environment by providing opportunities to visit cultural venues and meet with artists;
- bring students into contact with works of art that are part of the cultural heritage of humanity and of their own country, and give them the knowledge they need to interpret and understand these works.

Arts education must cover all forms of artistic expression. However, the basic common core should generally consist of the **visual arts** and **music**, which should be studied primarily as universal languages, but also as means of creating.

— **Personal Development**

All the activities in which students take part in school contribute to their personal development. Values, however, are essentially explored in certain subjects, namely, **moral education** and **religious education**. Moral education must include the study of religion as a permanent phenomenon so that students who do not take religious education will have some knowledge of one of the major aspects of human civilization. This is not to say that value-related issues are confined to these subjects. They come up in other areas, such as literature, science, technology, and social studies, and are also part of the cross-curricular learning to be addressed in other disciplines or through school activities. School life and extracurricular activities, for example, provide tremendous opportunities to teach and learn values.

Physical education and **health education** also lie in the realm of personal development. Students will increase their chances of keeping fit throughout their lives if they integrate personal hygiene, sports, knowledge of human physiology, healthy eating habits and a balance between work and leisure into their lifestyle at an early age. This too is part of the basic knowledge that should be of concern to the entire school community.

CROSS-CURRICULAR LEARNING

Schools must also encourage the development of skills, and of attitudes in certain cases, that do not fall exclusively within a given subject area or group of subject areas and so must be included in all of the educational activities held in a school. Because these skills and attitudes cut across the curriculum, they are part of what we refer to as **cross-curricular learning** and are grouped into four categories.

- *Intellectual* skills. Schools must better equip students to carry out intellectual work. This can be achieved by having them exercise their memory, undertake projects and follow them through to completion, develop their critical sense and learn to communicate.
- *Methodological* skills. All teachers must ensure that students learn to organize their work and to collaborate with others. All students must develop their capacity to use appropriate methods to process information, especially those methods offered by new information and communications technologies.
- *Attitudes and behaviours*. Our schools must also teach students how to live in society by providing intercultural education (with emphasis on respect for differences), entrepreneurship education, environmental education, media education and health education.
- *Language* skills. Mastery of language skills must be a concern in all subjects and for all teachers.

This cross-curricular learning will be introduced into the curriculum in two ways.

- Some cross-curricular learning relates to specific subjects and will therefore be addressed in the appropriate **programs of study**.
- Other cross-curricular learning relates to all of the subjects in the curriculum. It will be set out in separate booklets for each of the elementary and secondary levels. Each booklet, called the “**program of programs**,” will be designed for teachers and other school professionals with student-related responsibilities.

THE ORGANIZATION OF TEACHING

Compulsory schooling comprises two distinct stages: *common-core basic education*, from the first year of elementary school to the end of the first cycle of secondary school, followed by *diversification* in the second cycle of secondary school.

These two stages are reflected in the standard curriculum.

COMMON-CORE BASIC EDUCATION

Common-core basic education extends from the first year of elementary school to the end of the first cycle of secondary school, namely, Secondary III. It now also includes *preschool education*, or kindergarten, which is offered on a full-day basis to all five-year-olds to promote their overall development and to make sure they start elementary school with the same chances for success.

Elementary School

The goals of elementary school. Elementary school must allow all students to acquire the basic knowledge and skills that will help them to develop their ability to think for themselves and to assimilate the content they will be covering in secondary school. As they acquire essential basic knowledge, students must start formally learning the work methods they will need at higher levels of study. They must also familiarize themselves with other learning content and with the main characteristics of society and the values to be promoted within society.

The cycles. The elementary level will be reorganized into three two-year cycles in order to:

- redistribute content into multiyear stages that are more compatible with the psychological profile and stages in development of elementary school children;
- allow for a pattern to be established where new learning is introduced in the first year and consolidated in the second; facilitate earlier end-of-cycle evaluation in order to increase the effectiveness of remedial measures designed to keep students from repeating a grade; develop alternatives to grade repetition, a practice which induces a feeling of failure without addressing the underlying problem;
- promote and encourage the creation of small teams of teachers who would follow the same students throughout a two-year period, or who would at least team teach the two years together.

Emphasis. The relative importance of certain subjects in the overall curriculum will be modified in order to emphasize specific learning content.

- In the first cycle of elementary school, greater emphasis will be placed on the **language of instruction** (particularly reading and writing) and **mathematics**.

- **French as a second language** will continue to be taught as of Grade 1. Schools will be encouraged to continue to use the immersion approach which many of them have already adopted. A French immersion program will be developed and provided for in the Basic School Regulation for Preschool and Elementary School Education, which will be amended accordingly.
- Students will start taking **English as a second language** sooner, more specifically, in Grade 3. The ministère de l'Éducation and the school communities are invited to explore different types of organizational approaches for the teaching of English as a second language and to adopt innovative teaching methods so that courses better meet public expectations.
- From Grade 3 onwards, new emphasis will be placed on the teaching of **history**, which will include **citizenship education**.
- **Arts education** will continue to be a compulsory subject as of Grade 1 and courses will focus mainly on music and the visual arts. This decision is not intended to prevent schools with an established tradition of teaching dance or drama from continuing to do so if they so desire. All schools are strongly encouraged to offer extracurricular activities in all of the artistic disciplines.

The programs of study will be updated so as to clearly identify ESSENTIAL CONTENT and will include enrichment content. Schools that choose to teach enrichment content in a subject area will have the flexibility to increase the time allotted for that particular subject area.

Subject-Time Allocation in Elementary School

FIRST CYCLE Grades 1 and 2		SECOND CYCLE Grades 3 and 4		THIRD CYCLE Grades 5 and 6	
Subjects	Time	Subjects	Time	Subjects	Time
Language of instruction	9 h	Language of instruction	7 h	Language of instruction	7 h
Mathematics	7 h	Mathematics	5 h	Mathematics	5 h
	16 h		12 h		12 h
Religious education/ Moral education	2 h	Religious education/ Moral education	2 h	Religious education/ Moral education	2 h
	Prescribed		Prescribed		Prescribed
Other subjects		Other subjects		Other subjects	
French as a second language		Second language (French or English)		Second language (French or English)	
Arts education		Arts education		Arts education	
Physical education and health education		Physical education and health education		Physical education and health education	
		History — Geography — Citizenship education		History — Geography — Citizenship education	
		Science and technology		Science and technology	
Unallotted time	5.5 h	Unallotted time	9.5 h	Unallotted time	9.5 h
Total	23.5 h	Total	23.5 h	Total	23.5 h

Unallotted time and the organization of teaching. The prescribed subjects must be offered at all grade levels. By the end of each cycle, students must have learned the essential content of the program in each subject. Schools may organize their time and teaching to spend more or less than the allotted time on a given subject, to offer a locally developed program, to carry out a special project or to provide for activities related to student services.

Prescribed time. The time to be spent on confessional religious education at each grade level is prescribed by the regulations of the Protestant and Catholic committees of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation.

Compared time. Choices relating to the essential subjects were made in consideration of the teaching time currently available at the elementary level. Less time is available in Québec than in several Canadian provinces and in other countries. The discrepancy is not as significant at the secondary level.

PROVINCE OR COUNTRY	TEACHING TIME PER WEEK	PROVINCE OR COUNTRY	TEACHING TIME PER WEEK
NEW BRUNSWICK Grades 1 and 2 Grades 3 and 6 Source: New Brunswick Department of Education	22.5 hours at the most 27.5 hours at the most	GREAT BRITAIN Grades 1 to 5 Source: <i>Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators</i> , 1996	25 hours
ONTARIO Source: Education Improvement Commission, <i>The Road Ahead: A Report on Learning Time, Class Size and Staffing</i> , August 1997	25 hours	FRANCE Elementary Source: Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, elementary school programs, 1995	26 hours

The First Cycle of Secondary School

The goals of the first cycle of secondary school. The first cycle, or first three years, of secondary school will be same for all students since they will be completing the common-core basic education. This period of in-depth study will provide more formal learning in the various subject areas in order to gradually prepare students for the second cycle.

Emphasis. Major changes will be made with respect to the subject-time allocation and the emphasis given to certain subjects.

- More time will be devoted to **French as the language of instruction**. French teachers will consequently have fewer students and will therefore be able to provide a greater number of writing activities and to supervise students' work more closely.
- The number of credits allotted for **French as a second language** will increase from four to six at each grade level of the first cycle.
- The number of credits allotted for **mathematics** in Secondary III will increase from four to six.
- Greater emphasis will be placed on **history**, which will be taught at each grade level and will include citizenship education.
- A new series of **science** courses will be introduced for the three grade levels of the first cycle. These courses will include technology-related content.
- A **third language** will be formally introduced as an optional subject starting in Secondary III. However, students who satisfy the certification requirements for the second language earlier than is required will be allowed to take a third language course as of Secondary I or II.
- The number of credits allotted for optional subjects in Secondary III will increase from four to six. Students may choose their optional courses in no more than two of the following categories: arts education, technology, modern languages or a locally developed program.

Subject-Time Allocation in the First Cycle of Secondary School

SECONDARY I		SECONDARY II		SECONDARY III	
Subjects	Credits ¹	Subjects	Credits ¹	Subjects	Credits ¹
French (language of instruction)	8	French (language of instruction)	8	French (language of instruction)	8
English as a second language	4	English as a second language	4	English as a second language	4
English (language of instruction)	6	English (language of instruction)	6	English (language of instruction)	6
French as a second language	6	French as a second language	6	French as a second language	6
Mathematics	6	Mathematics	6	Mathematics	6
History and citizenship education	3	History and citizenship education	3	History and citizenship education	4
Geography	3	Geography	3		
Science and technology	4	Science and technology	4	Science and technology	4
Physical education and health education	2	Physical education and health education	2	Physical education and health education	2
Religious education/ Moral education	2	Religious education/ Moral education	2	Religious education/ Moral education	2
Arts education	4	Arts education	4		
				OPTIONAL	6
				Arts education or technology or modern languages or a locally developed program	
Total	36	Total	36	Total	36

¹ One credit is equivalent to approximately 25 hours of teaching over the school year.

DIVERSIFICATION: THE SECOND CYCLE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

The second cycle of secondary school extends over two years, Secondary IV and V.

The goals of the second cycle of secondary school. The two years of the second cycle are aimed at consolidating students' basic education through a common core of learning in the basic subjects, notably languages and mathematics, but also history and citizenship education, understanding the contemporary world, and science. The second cycle will also allow for some diversification in students' basic education and give those who wish to do so the opportunity to earn a first vocational qualification. Experimental diversification programs currently under way in a number of schools should be continued in order to determine the parameters according to which they might be implemented in all schools.

Emphasis. The second cycle of secondary school will allow for some diversification in both general and vocational education.

- The number of credits allotted for **optional subjects** will increase from 16 to 24. At each grade level, students will choose their optional subjects from no more than two of the following fields of study: languages; social sciences; science, mathematics and technology; arts education; personal development; and vocational education.
- As is currently the case in mathematics and science, programs at two levels of difficulty will be offered in both **French** and **English** as the language of instruction and as a second language. The higher number of credits for the advanced program will be taken from the credits allotted for optional subjects.
- In Secondary IV, the number of credits allotted for the basic **mathematics** program will be reduced from six to four in order to balance the secondary-level mathematics courses. A middle-stream program will be introduced in Secondary IV and V, and the prerequisites for certain college programs may be adjusted accordingly.
- In Secondary V, a new course entitled **Understanding the Contemporary World** will replace the current economics course. The purpose of this new course, which will include essential content in the field of economics, will be to correct the weaknesses often noted among secondary school graduates with respect to knowledge of geography and particularly of contemporary world history.
- The Basic School Regulation for Vocational Education will specify the conditions under which students will be allowed to take general education and vocational education courses concurrently, the requirements for obtaining a diploma and, where applicable, the requirements for admission to college-level programs.

Subject-Time Allocation in the Second Cycle of Secondary School

SUBJECTS	Secondary IV Credits	Secondary V Credits
COMMON-CORE		
Language of instruction	6	6
Second language	4	4
Mathematics	4	4
History and citizenship education	4	—
Understanding the contemporary world	—	4
Science and technology	4	—
Physical education and health education	2	2
Religious education/Moral education	2	2
OPTIONAL	10	14
Total	36	36

THE PROGRAMS OF STUDY

The program of study for each subject and the “program of programs” which identifies cross-curricular learning form the very core of the curriculum. They are the product of democratic choices as to what should be taught to all students in Québec but must nonetheless allow teachers greater flexibility in the classroom. There is also a need to introduce greater transparency into the program development process. In short, the programs must reconcile the standard curriculum, professional autonomy and collaboration with partners. The following decisions will serve as guidelines in this respect.

The Programs of Study

Most of the elementary and secondary school programs will be revised over the next few years, either to enrich them or to adjust them following changes to the subject-time allocation. The introduction of new subjects in the curriculum will result in the development of some new programs as well. In either case, the following orientations will apply. As regards *design*, the programs for both elementary school and the first cycle of secondary school will be reorganized by cycle; they will include the cultural aspect of the given subject; and they will incorporate new information and communications technologies. The concern for adapting content to the needs of students with handicaps or learning difficulties will be manifest from the very start of the design process. With respect to *professional autonomy*, the choice of teaching methods, strategies and approaches will be left to teachers’ discretion. Furthermore, programs will be designed to cover about 75 percent of the allotted time to give teachers the flexibility to enrich or adapt content according to students’ needs. As for *presentation*, the programs will include a limited number of learning objectives, and the knowledge and skills to be acquired will be clearly set out. They will be drafted in simple, straightforward language free of any technical jargon. Furthermore, programs will be drafted from two perspectives: a “vertical” perspective, to provide a grade-by-grade description of all the courses in a given subject and to show the progression in their content; and a “horizontal” perspective, to describe all of the learning content covered in a given year or cycle in order to show the connections and coherence between the various subjects. Finally, a simplified version of each program will be published for students, parents and the general public.

The “Program of Programs”

Cross-curricular learning will be described in a separate document addressed to all school staff with student-related responsibilities. All educators, to a varying degree according to their respective roles or the subject they teach, are responsible for helping students to develop the skills or attitudes identified in the “program of programs.” Essentially, the “program of programs” will outline the attitudes and skills to be acquired by students with respect to intellectual work and knowledge in general. It will also specify the learning to be acquired with respect to work methods, to attitudes and behaviours in private life and in society, and to language.

A Provincial Curriculum Board

We must stress the importance of renewing the programs of study by correcting observed and repeatedly denounced shortcomings: the insufficient involvement of the main partners of the education system; the lack of ongoing reflection on changes to the curriculum; the compartmentalization of the curriculum; and the excessive number of objectives included in the programs.

A provincial curriculum board will be created for this purpose by an amendment to the Education Act. Its mandate will be to establish the general framework for the development and revision of the programs of study on the basis of the orientations announced in this policy statement, and to coordinate the program development and revision process. The board will advise the Minister and make recommendations on the general design of the curriculum. Its opinions and recommendations will be published. The Minister will continue to be responsible for approving the general orientations and content of each program, within the framework of a curriculum which will remain standard for all students in Québec. The provincial curriculum board will make recommendations on the development and revision of all programs, and on any issue related to curriculum content. It will examine the curriculum on an ongoing basis. The board will include experts in each of the curriculum areas, but many seats will be reserved for school personnel, particularly teachers.

III. NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS

- ✓ Evaluation and Certification
- ✓ Teaching Materials
- ✓ Initial Teacher Training and Professional Development

EVALUATION AND CERTIFICATION

Evaluation is a central component of the curriculum. If schools are to focus on the basics, introduce more rigorous standards, and promote the development of intellectual and methodological skills to a greater extent, we must correct certain evaluation practices. The diploma awarded at the end of secondary school must be valued and must be sought and obtained by the greatest possible number of students.

A NEW POLICY FOR THE EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING

The ministerial policy for the evaluation of student learning, established in 1981, will be updated on the basis of the following orientations.

- **The assessment of learning.** Schools must do everything in their power to prevent students from falling far behind in their studies. Severe academic delays too often result in students repeating a grade, failing to obtain a diploma and dropping out of school. Schools will therefore focus on the *assessment of learning* at the end of each cycle of elementary and secondary school, and provide remedial and support measures for those students who need them.
- **Evaluation at the end of the first cycle of secondary school.** At the end of the first cycle of secondary school, students have completed their compulsory basic schooling and are about to begin the second cycle, which features greater diversity and offers a wider range of choices. It is therefore important to make sure that they have thoroughly mastered the basic knowledge and skills. In light of this, a period of intensive evaluation will be introduced at the end of Secondary III to take stock of student achievement. It will focus mainly on learning in the fields of study and on cross-curricular learning (in the latter case, this may involve assessing examples of students' work).
- **The nature and form of evaluation instruments.** The criticism levelled at "objective" examinations is serious enough to warrant looking for a better balance between this type of examination and other types which require that students write, explain their ideas, justify their opinions, and demonstrate solutions to problems. These other types of examinations encourage the development of rigorous thinking and of intellectual skills in general, in addition to motivating students to develop good writing skills. The Ministère will pay closer attention to this question in setting its uniform examinations.
- **The evaluation of writing skills.** Examinations will serve as opportunities to encourage students to develop good writing skills. A certain percentage of marks on all examinations and written assignments will be reserved for the quality of student writing.

- **Report cards.** Report cards are the main means by which schools inform parents of their child's progress. The importance of report cards cannot be emphasized enough, given that parent involvement is one of the key factors in students' success in school. The orientations regarding report cards are as follows: a minimum of four report cards will be issued each year; their format will be simple, clear and easy to understand for parents and students; and schools, after consulting their partners, will determine other means of communicating with parents in addition to report cards. Furthermore, the updated policy on the evaluation of student learning will address issues relating to the way in which results on ministry examinations are processed, such as conversion and moderation.

CONSOLIDATED CERTIFICATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDIES

The certification of studies is the mechanism by which a state recognizes the schooling successfully completed by students by issuing an official document (attestation, certificate or diploma) to those who meet stated requirements. This official recognition is accorded a certain value by society, depending on the qualification. The various measures relating to the certification of studies are generally intended:

- to ensure that the official recognition is awarded according to the same requirements and standards across the province;
- to ensure that the courses prescribed by the State and the compulsory objectives of the programs of study are taught by all teachers and schools;
- to obtain quantitative and qualitative data on students' individual and collective achievement.

The New Rules for Awarding the Secondary School Diploma

The Basic School Regulation for Secondary School Education will be amended so that the Secondary School Diploma will henceforth be awarded to students who:

- have accumulated at least 60 credits for Secondary IV and V courses out of a minimum of 72, **including credits for the following:**
 - Secondary V language of instruction;
 - Secondary V second language;
 - Secondary V mathematics (or an equivalent Secondary IV course);
 - Secondary IV physical science;
 - Secondary IV history and citizenship education.

New Certification Practices

Uniform examinations will be administered by the ministère de l'Éducation in the following subjects: Secondary V written language of instruction; Secondary IV and V mathematics; Secondary IV physical science; Secondary IV history and citizenship education; Secondary V understanding the contemporary world; Secondary V chemistry and physics; Secondary V second language.

To emphasize the importance to be given to the language of instruction, the weighting assigned to the various aspects of language learning (reading, writing, and oral expression) will be revised and measures will be taken to ensure that students do not obtain a passing mark if they show unacceptable weaknesses in reading or writing.

The **procedure for marking ministry examinations** will be revised to reinstate teachers' judgment as an important factor in the evaluation process.

TEACHING MATERIALS

Teaching materials, especially textbooks, play an important role in students' education. They largely determine what is taught and learned and serve as vehicles for imparting values. For this reason, Québec, like other provinces and countries, has its own system for evaluating and approving teaching materials in order to guarantee their compliance with programs of study and various social criteria. The current system, which has been in place for some twenty years, must be brought into line with new requirements that have arisen as a result of changes to the curriculum.

Because of the need to allow greater latitude to those who work with students and the fact that new information and communications technologies will soon call into question the current uses of teaching materials and particularly textbooks, certain practices with respect to teaching materials must be altered.

In an effort to streamline the **guidelines** governing the evaluation and approval of teaching materials, the Ministère will review:

- the definition of basic materials, to take account of the new media and of the context in which teachers practise their profession today;
- the pedagogical, publishing and social criteria on the basis of which textbooks are evaluated;
- the status of standard reference works such as grammars, dictionaries and atlases.

The Ministère will entrust an advisory committee made up of interested parties with the responsibility of guaranteeing the reliability and rigorousness of the process for evaluating teaching resources and of making recommendations to the Minister regarding their approval. The power to approve teaching materials will continue to lie with the Minister.

INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We cannot overemphasize the crucial role of teachers in implementing substantial changes to the curriculum. Some of the changes announced in this policy statement are far-reaching and will be carried out gradually over the years providing that certain conditions are met. Several of these conditions are related to the initial training and professional development of teachers.

Initial Teacher Training

On the whole, the orientations and elements presented in this policy statement are consistent with the fundamental goals of the teacher training reform launched a few years ago: integrated training, the importance of teachers' general education, and mastery of the teaching language. However, given that the new curriculum approach is based on fields of study and cross-curricular learning, the Ministère, together with its partners from the universities, will reexamine its policy framework for initial teacher training and will update it as required.

Given the planned changes to subject-time allocation at the secondary level, it is relevant to call into question part of the training of student teachers enrolled in some of the recently revised university programs. It will therefore be necessary to evaluate accredited teacher training programs in light of the decisions announced in this policy statement with respect to subject-time allocation at the secondary level. A provincial mechanism for the accreditation of teacher training programs is already in place for this purpose.

Professional Development

Professional development is one of the main responsibilities of educational organizations, which will have to take great care to provide teachers with the support they need to implement this reform. The main professional development needs relate to:

- upgrading in the fields of study as preparation to teach the modified programs of study;
- retraining for some teachers who teach subjects that have been significantly affected by changes in subject-time allocation at the secondary level; and
- training in cross-curricular learning, which is aimed at developing the ability to transfer knowledge acquired in a given context to different fields of activity.

The Ministère has already consulted its main partners and will announce new orientations with respect to the professional development of teachers. It should be noted that advising the Minister on these matters is the mandate of the Comité d'orientation et de la formation du personnel enseignant, which has been in existence for some time.



IV.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE REFORM

The reform of the programs of study will be implemented, not in a hasty manner, but certainly without delay, in order to implement the changes that are necessary to provide our young people with the education they will need in the new century. And we must resolve to not wait another twenty years before adjusting the curriculum to changes in society.

The new subject-time allocations will be implemented, in large part, as the new programs of study are implemented. The provincial curriculum board will be created this year and will shortly thereafter submit a calendar for the implementation of the new programs of study, which is expected to begin at the start of the 1999-2000 school year and to be completed by the end of the 2002-2003 school year at the elementary level, and by the end of the 2005-2006 school year at the secondary level.

The Ministère will also examine the possibility of moving deadlines up in certain cases, such as that of the teaching of history.

It will be necessary to closely monitor the various stages involved in implementing these changes and, as time goes on, to evaluate their impact on students' education and on the quality of student learning.

Over the next few months, the Ministère will propose different means of monitoring and evaluating the various stages of the reform on an ongoing basis in order to obtain regular updates on:

- the implementation of the components of the reform;
- the impact of the reform on students' education;
- necessary adjustments to components of the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Over the next few years, the orientations and decisions announced in this policy statement will considerably modify school culture, notably the quality of student learning, the standards to be attained, and the organization of teaching.

Certain regulations, and to a lesser extent, certain provisions of the Education Act will be amended in the short term as a result of these orientations and decisions. Several policies will be updated, as will most of the programs of study.

All of these changes will be introduced in as open a manner as possible and with every effort to include the public in the process and to allow educators to contribute, through their expertise and dedication, to shaping better schools fully geared to promoting students' success.

This is the new course we have charted for Québec schools. It is now up to us to move forward, for the sake of our children.