

The Education
Reform
What It's All
About

offering our children
offering our children
the very best
the very best

A Word from the Minister



September 2000 will mark the launch of a major reform of elementary and secondary education. While reform efforts in the sixties, responding to the demands of the time, were designed to make education accessible to greater numbers of Quebecers, today's reform must focus on helping all our young people achieve success, in keeping with their own choices and ambitions.

This reform is the result of lengthy reflection and public consultations spanning several years. It is based on the many pilot projects

conducted in Québec schools in recent years and takes into account the numerous proposals made during the Estates General on Education.

It is with confidence that all of us—education partners, teachers, school personnel and parents—must embrace this reform and do everything we can to ensure its success. I am aware that every reform has its requirements, but building our children's future is, in my opinion, one of the most exciting challenges imaginable.

I believe that this reform is warranted and that we need to go ahead with it. It is my strong conviction that, with the commitment of all those involved in education, this reform will meet Quebecers' expectations of their schools and, above all, offer our children the very best and prepare them to take their place as full-fledged members of society.

François Legault
Minister of State for Education and Youth

SUCCESS, THE HEART OF THE REFORM

Québec's education system is one of the best in the world and those who make it work can be commended for their professionalism and commitment. If the system now needs improvement, it is because the world as experienced by today's youth, and as it will be by coming generations, is far different from the one their parents and grandparents knew.

Things have changed, Québec society has evolved and new expectations have emerged. All partners in Québec's education system agree on the importance of making our schools more responsive to the needs of our young people and better able to promote their success.

This new reality and the latest research in the field of education have led the Ministère de l'Éducation to develop the *Québec Education Program*, which will become an invaluable handbook for schools as they phase in the reform at the preschool, elementary and secondary levels.

The principles of the reform, although they are not entirely new, are, according to those who developed the Program and to observers, the best way of preparing our children for the challenges ahead. The reform calls for a change in our vision, our attitudes and our practices. For Québec schools, September 2000 is the starting point of the reform rather than its culmination. It should be understood that we are embarking on a long journey and that the proposed changes will take place gradually.

Through this stimulating project, the government and its partners aim to give all young people the chance to become autonomous citizens who are able to help bring about a fairer, more democratic, more egalitarian society. We must therefore act now for our education system to allow all students to achieve their full potential.



BECAUSE EACH STUDENT IS IMPORTANT

The goal of the reform is, above all, to promote student success by providing instruction that is better adapted to each child. Sixteen schools across Québec, including three English schools and two private schools, are currently field-testing the main components of the reform in kindergarten and Cycle One (i.e. the first two years) of elementary school, with very good results so far. School personnel are enthusiastic and students, more motivated. This confirms that the principles underlying the reform are valid and should be applied in schools throughout Québec.

WHY IS A REFORM NEEDED?

TO GO BACK TO THE BASICS

The consultations conducted by the Ministère have highlighted the need to change the learning environment and to refocus programs of study on essential learnings such as reading, writing and math while allowing students to acquire, early on in their schooling, a grounding in history and science.

All students will therefore take a basic common core of subjects from kindergarten until the end of Cycle Four (the third year of secondary school). In Cycle Five (the fourth and fifth years of secondary school), they will both reinforce their learning in the basic subjects and explore other areas according to their interests. In other words, they will be able to choose courses in different fields such as math, science and technology, modern languages, arts education, social sciences or personal development, or go into a vocational education program.

There will be changes not only in the content to be taught in each subject area but also in the teaching and learning methods used and the time allotted for each subject. For example, more time will be devoted to the language of instruction and mathematics.



The New Program for Elementary School

As of **Fall 2000**, students in **Elementary Cycle One** (grades 1 and 2) will take the following subjects:

- French, in French schools
- math
- moral education, Catholic religious and moral instruction or Protestant moral and religious education
- French and English, in English schools
- arts education (music, visual arts, drama or dance)
- physical education and health

As of **Fall 2001**, students in **Elementary Cycle Two** (grades 3 and 4) will take the following subjects, in addition to the above:

- science and technology
- geography, history and citizenship education
- English, in French schools

The new program for **Elementary Cycle Three** (grades 5 and 6), featuring the same subjects as that for Elementary Cycle Two, will be introduced in **Fall 2002**.

TO GIVE STUDENTS A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THEIR LEARNING

The new teaching/learning methods are based on competencies, i.e. knowledge, skills and attitudes, to be developed by students. This is a key concept of the reform.

It is now known that students learn better when they are actively involved in their own learning. They must also make meaningful connections between the different subject areas and see how they can use what they learn in class in their everyday lives. Instead of passively listening to teachers, students will take part in active, hands-on learning. They will spend more time working on projects, doing research and solving problems based on their areas of interest and their concerns. They will more often take part in workshops or team learning to develop a broad range of competencies.

Let's say, for example, that a group of students has a special interest in birds. They can search the Internet for information on birds, learn some facts about geography to find out where birds live, write a letter to a birdwatching club for further information, calculate how long different bird species stay in their area, or work in teams to put together what they have learned. This illustrates how a teacher can harness students' curiosity about birds to foster the development of a full spectrum of essential competencies.



TO ACCOMMODATE ALL STUDENTS

As part of the reform, elementary school will now be organized into three two-year cycles. Elementary school will still last six years, of course, but students will have two years to develop the competencies set out in the program for each cycle. This type of structure is more in keeping with the stages of child development and the psychology of children. It gives students more time to master the basics and tackle more complex tasks. It should also give teachers more leeway to work together to monitor students' progress and develop new approaches. With this new system, having a student repeat a grade will become an altogether exceptional measure.

The new program clearly sets out which competencies are to be developed in elementary school. The program is also designed in such a way as to allow teachers to provide enrichment on certain topics for the stronger students, if necessary, and spend more time on the basics with students who are having problems. It will therefore be easier for teachers to adapt their teaching to students' individual needs and rate of learning.

TO BETTER FOLLOW EACH CHILD

The report card—parents' main means of keeping track of how their child is doing in school—will be adapted to reflect this new organization into cycles. At least four report cards will be issued during the school year and their design will make it easier for parents to follow their child's progress.

Evaluation will focus not only on what students learned but also on how they went about learning it. Schools may also, in collaboration with teachers and parents, decide on other ways of keeping parents informed of their child's progress. The class newspaper, the logbook or the portfolio are other instruments that may be proposed to parents.

Reform Implementation Calendar

September 2000: Kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2

The new programs will be introduced gradually, starting with **preschool education** and **Elementary Cycle One** in 2000-2001, and so on until 2006.

Elementary School

Grades 1 and 2 will become **Cycle One**.

Grades 3 and 4 will become **Cycle Two**.

Grades 5 and 6 will become **Cycle Three**.

Year of Implementation

2000-2001

2001-2002

2002-2003

Secondary School

Secondary I, II and III will become **Cycle Four**.

Secondary IV and V will become **Cycle Five**.

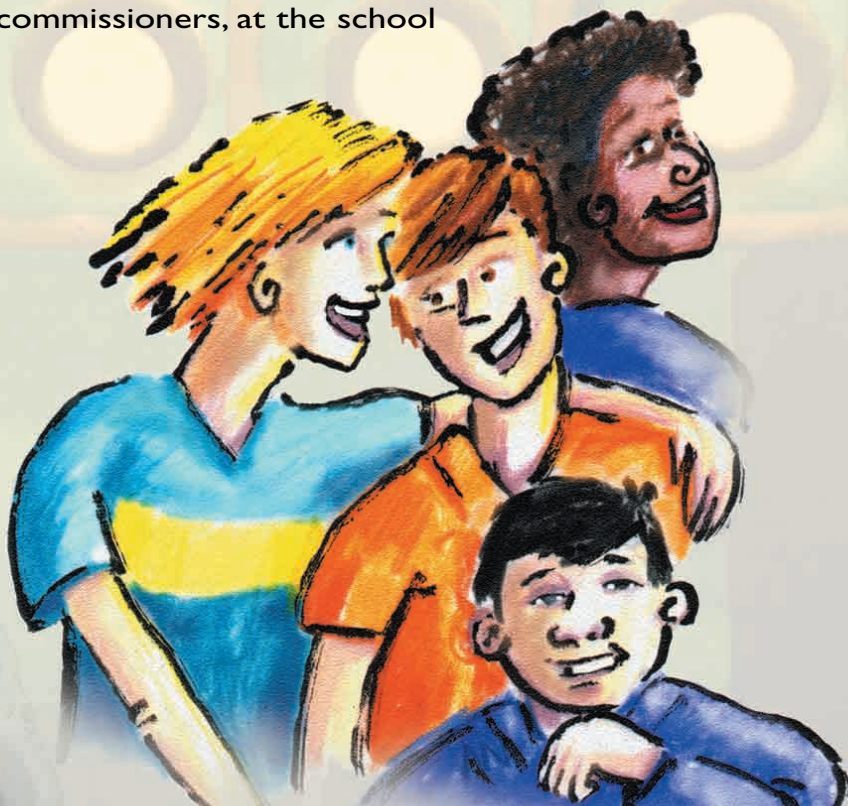
2003-2004

2004-2006

SUCCESS IS EVERYONE'S CONCERN

The success of the reform is everyone's concern. It depends on teachers and school administrators but on parents as well. Parents are, in fact, key players in the reform. It is first and foremost their responsibility to create a family setting where education is important.

There are many ways in which parents can have a say in decisions about the educational services offered at their child's school. They can vote or run in elections to select parents' representatives on the school governing board. They can get involved in the parents' committee, the parent participation organization (PPO) at their child's school, or the council of commissioners, at the school board level.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information on the education reform in Québec schools is available from:

- * your child's school
- * the closest regional office of the Ministère de l'Éducation
- * the Web site of the Ministère, at <www.meq.gouv.qc.ca>, under "Virage" (click on "Schoolscapes" for the English version of the education reform newsletter)
- * the Web site of the Québec English Schools Network, at <www.qesn.meq.gouv.qc.ca>, under "New Directions for Success"

You may also write or call the Fédération des comités de parents or visit its Web site:

**389, boulevard Rochette
Beauport (Québec) G1C 1A4
Telephone: (418) 667-6713 or 1-800-463-7268
<www.fcppq.qc.ca>**

Québec 
Ministère
de l'Éducation

EDUCATION
Now you're talking!

