


EDUCATION ACT

THE NEW PROVISIONS OF THE EDUCATION ACT



Québec 

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The following organizations helped prepare this document:

Association of Administrators of English Schools of Québec
Association des directeurs généraux des commissions scolaires
Association of Directors General of English School Boards of Québec
Association montréalaise des directions d'établissement scolaire
Association québécoise du personnel de direction des écoles
Centrale des syndicats du Québec
Fédération des comités de parents du Québec
Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec
Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement
Fédération québécoise des directeurs et directrices d'établissement d'enseignement
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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

The National Assembly of Québec passed a bill on December 13, 2002, to amend the *Education Act*. The new provisions state that the educational project of a school must be implemented by means of a success plan. Vocational training centres and adult education centres are subject to a similar requirement. Meanwhile, school boards are obliged to develop a strategic plan. School boards and the governing boards of schools and centres must also include new provisions on providing information and accountability to the population.

We wished to ensure the continuity of the success plans that have rallied the efforts of all players in education over the last two years. The success of Québec students is of great importance to all of us. The amendments to the Act are meant both to provide tangible support for the great efforts made every day to reach this objective and to show that the success of all students is more than just a concern—it is at the heart of the kind of society that we would like to build in Québec and is a priority for our government.

The document entitled *The New Provisions of the Education Act* is being made public to better explain the amendments to the Act and to ensure that everyone has a similar interpretation. Its aim is to guide school boards, governing boards, and the principals and staff of schools and centres in fulfilling their new responsibilities.

I would like to underline the exceptional participation of the educational partners in the preparation of this document. I view this as the beginning of a movement to mobilize all members of the educational community.

Sylvain Simard

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Simard'.

Minister of State for
Education and Employment

The *Education Act* was amended in December 2002 in order to better mobilize all players with a view to ensuring student success. This means that it supports the school's three-fold mission—to **educate**, **socialize** and **qualify** students—while respecting the principle of equal opportunity. The amendments made to the Act expand upon those made in 1997, which, in an attempt to narrow the gap between decision and action, created the governing boards and took the first steps in making schools accountable to the public.

To support the different players in education, the new legislative amendments expressly state that schools' educational projects and centres' policies must be implemented by means of a success plan and that school boards must establish a strategic plan. They also address the issue of accountability.

What will the new Act change in our schools, centres and school boards?

SCHOOLS

Educational project

Important changes have been made to the educational project. It must now be based on an analysis of the situation prevailing at the school, principally the needs of the students, the challenges tied to student success and the characteristics and expectations of the community served by the school (s. 74, para. 1). For the purposes of this analysis, the governing board will seek the collaboration of persons having an interest in the school (s. 74, para. 2), under the coordination of the school principal (s. 96.13, para. 1). The educational project will also be based on the school board's strategic plan (s. 74, para. 1).



The educational project will set out the specific aims and objectives of the school in order to improve student success (s. 37, para. 1). It must be evaluated periodically (s. 36.1). The objectives will therefore have to be determined in such a way as to allow for the evaluation of their implementation. The educational project may also include actions promoting these aims and their integration into the life of the school (s. 37, para. 1).

The governing board will therefore continue to fulfill the important function of adopting the educational project (s. 74, para. 1). Every governing board will have to review its educational project in light of the new provisions of the *Education Act*. The exercise will be based on greater familiarity with the school's environment and will undoubtedly be more demanding for all parties involved.

Success plan

To ensure the implementation of the aims and objectives defined in the educational project, the principal (s. 96.13, para. 1.1) and his or her team (s. 77) will develop the school's success plan, which will then be submitted for approval to the governing board (s. 75). The plan will contain measures to be taken, in particular those relating to the supervision [*encadrement*] of students, and methods for evaluating the implementation of the success plan (s. 37.1). This evaluation exercise will ensure the school's ongoing adaptation and improvement.

The school principal will ensure that the governing board is provided all the necessary information before approving the success plan, as he or she will from now on for all proposals submitted for approval (s. 96.13, para. 2.1).

Accountability to parents and the community

Since 1997, the Act has required that the governing board inform the community of the services provided and report on the level of quality of such services. The recent amendments to the Act make a further effort to bring together parents, the community and the school.

The educational project and the success plan will be made public. The evaluation of the implementation of the success plan will be the subject of an annual report. In addition, a clear and accessible document explaining the educational project and reporting on the evaluation of the implementation of the success plan will be distributed to the parents and the school staff (s. 83).

CENTRES

Policies and objectives, success plan and accountability

The situation analysis, the success plan and accountability also apply to centres. However, centres have policies and objectives rather than educational projects (ss 97, 97.1, 109, 109.1, 110.3.1 and 110.10).



SCHOOL BOARDS

Strategic plan

The Act now requires that school boards adopt a strategic plan for the exercise of their functions and powers (s. 209.1, para. 1).

Under the *Public Administration Act*, the Ministère de l'Éducation, like all other government ministries and agencies, is already obliged to establish a multiyear strategic plan. The school boards' strategic plan transfers the strategic planning process to the school system.

The strategic plan describes the context in which the school board acts, particularly the needs of its schools and centres and the expectations of the community it serves, as well as the main challenges it faces, including success issues, in line with the national indicators established by the Minister after consultation of the school boards. The plan will then determine the strategic directions and objectives to be established by the

school board. In doing so, the school board must take into account the directions and objectives of the strategic plan established by the Ministère de l'Éducation. The plan will also include the lines of intervention, the results targeted and the methods for assessing the achievement of objectives (s. 209.1).

The strategic planning exercise presupposes consultation of interested parties. The Act identifies two parties by name: the parents' committee (s. 193, para. 1.1) and the principal of a school or centre (ss 96.25, 110.13 and 183). The parents' committee will be consulted about the school board's strategic plan, while the principal of the school or centre will participate in its development within the framework of the advisory committee on management.

Accountability

The school board must make public its strategic plan and, where applicable, its updated plan (s. 209.1, para. 3) and, in its annual report, give the population in its territory an account of its implementation (s. 220, para. 2). It must also inform the population of the educational and cultural services it offers and report on the level of quality of the services it provides to persons under its jurisdiction (s. 220, para. 1).

Since the purpose of the annual report has changed, its format must change as well. From now on, it will report on the implementation of the school board's strategic plan and the results obtained with regard to the directions and objectives of the strategic plan established by the Ministère de l'Éducation (s. 220, para. 3). A copy of the report will still be sent to the Minister of Education (s. 220, para. 4).

QUESTIONS

Who is responsible for spearheading the process: the Ministère de l'Éducation, the school board or the school or centre?

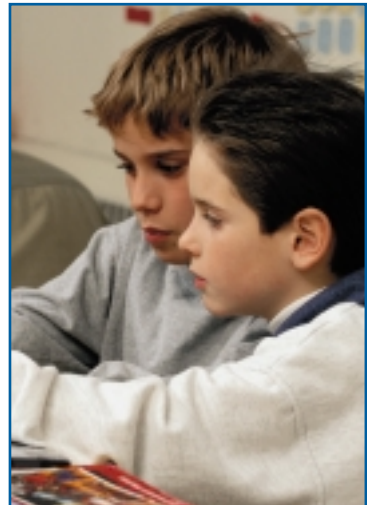
The Act specifies the responsibilities of each player in education, but each one is dependent on the others. The interdependence and complementarity of responsibilities will become apparent in the first year of this vast operation. The process must begin now at all levels.

The Ministère de l'Éducation has already sent school boards the national indicators. It recently announced that data broken down by school board will be available in April 2003. The strategic plan of the Ministère for 2003-2006 will be published shortly.

At this stage, schools and centres can begin analyzing their situation and school boards can begin studying the context in which they act and the main challenges they face. This step will be completed before the end of the current school year.

Actions at all levels will be interdependent. Thus, toward the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year, every school board and institution will have all the elements necessary to complete and adopt its strategic plan, educational project or policies and objectives.

Later, the process will become more interactive: the multiyear strategic plans of the Ministère and the school boards will be known; the schools' educational projects and the centres' policies and objectives will have been revised. The success plans will be revised annually and updated if necessary. It will be a "natural," ongoing process.



Should the school board include all the directions and objectives of the Ministère's strategic plan in its own strategic plan?

The Ministère de l'Éducation will establish directions and objectives for the major challenges faced by Québec's education system. Not all of these directions and objectives will require the collaboration of the school boards, but school boards must take into account those that might in the development of their own strategic plan.

After having analyzed its context and defined the challenges it must face, the school board will determine where it stands with respect to the Ministère's directions and objectives and establish a strategy for participating in the achievement of the national objective.

It will establish its strategic plan for the exercise of its functions and powers. Indeed, the Act attributes functions and powers to each institution, and the school board's strategic plan, the school's educational project and the centre's policies and objectives must observe this division of responsibilities. For example, if a school board imposes specific objectives and methods on its schools in relation to the supervision of students—which is the school's responsibility—it could be in violation of the Act.

What approach should schools and centres take with respect to the school board's strategic directions and objectives?

Schools and centres must rely not only on the analysis of the situation of their community and students, but also on their school board's strategic plan. Not all of the directions in the school board's plan will affect the institutions, but some will.

In fact, the school board will not be able to single-handedly implement some of its strategic directions. In such cases, the school must step in with its own aims set out in its educational project. For example, a school board's direction concerning the success of students from disadvantaged areas will require the schools' support. However, not all institutions will necessarily be affected by this direction.

Let us illustrate the complementarity of a direction in a school board's strategic plan and an aim in the educational project of three schools, using a very simple example.

To respect a ministry objective to implement in school boards measures favouring the progress of students from disadvantaged areas to foster their success:

- **Mountain Heights School Board**

After having analyzed its context and defined the main challenges it faces, the school board observes that half of its schools, especially those in urban areas, receive a large number of students from disadvantaged areas every year, and that these students are experiencing difficulties, especially in core skills, even after having benefited from remedial services. It therefore decides to include a direction and an objective in its strategic plan.

- **Cliffside School**

The first school analyzes its situation. Every year, it receives between sixty and eighty students from disadvantaged areas, who benefit from remedial services. Generally speaking, the children participate positively in school life and are in regular classes. However, they experience certain difficulties in their core skills. The school, aware of the problem and basing its actions on the school board's direction, includes an aim and an objective in its educational project to help these students. In so doing, it implements the direction and objective in the school board's strategic plan.



- **Lighthouse School**

After having analyzed the situation in its school, the second school concludes that this school board orientation does not concern it. In fact, it receives very few students from disadvantaged areas, and their success rate is not a problem. The school's educational project does not contain a related aim.

- **Marshland School**

The third school is dealing with an entirely different situation. Every year, it receives about a hundred students from disadvantaged areas. The children have difficulty in their core skills and only the most serious cases receive remedial services. Despite this fact, the governing board decides not to include an aim in its educational project, deeming its other priorities more urgent, and to reexamine the issue the following year.

In so doing, the third school, in its educational project, fails to respect one of the directions of the school board's strategic plan and might be in violation of the Act.

How do actions included in the educational project to promote its aims and integrate them into the life of the school relate to the measures in the success plan?

First, the governing board is responsible for determining whether to include such actions in its school's educational project. These actions might be qualified as specific, and are not of the same order as the measures in the success plan and should not be substituted for them. They are not intended to implement the educational project, but to promote it.

For example, a fourth school in our fictional school board has established an educational project based on the arts. The region has several local painters. In order to encourage them, the governing board has decided to allow them to exhibit their paintings in the school corridors for two weekends every year. The school's educational project refers to this.

