



PROGRAM TO SUPPORT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Projects to foster pedagogical development and the acquisition of expertise in information and communications technologies (ICT)

Action research projects to test innovative initiatives in special education, in conjunction with the research community

The Policy on Special Education highlights the importance of improving knowledge with respect to actions to be favoured to help students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities to succeed in the context of the numerous changes brought about by the education reform.

The Plan of Action accompanying the policy clearly states the commitment of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) to support research and development in special education and to foster the acquisition of new expertise in conjunction with its partners.

School Year
2007-2008

Éducation,
Loisir et Sport

Québec 

Call for Projects

The Program to Support Research and Development in Special Education encourages innovation and the improvement of interventions on behalf of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities. The Program includes two components:

- One deals specifically with **pedagogical development and the acquisition of expertise in information and communications technologies (ICT)**.
- The other concerns **action research projects to test innovative initiatives in special education, in conjunction with the research community**.

What is the purpose of the Program to Support Research and Development in Special Education?

This program is intended to provide financial support for the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of innovative projects in special education. Its goal is to promote new educational practices, and to do so, it requires the collaboration of educators, researchers and other partners with expertise in this field.

The program's objectives are:

- to support the schools in their renewal of educational practices
- to facilitate the development of new approaches or practices in special education
- to foster collaboration among educators, partners who have developed expertise in competency development through technology integration (RÉCIT or other resources), and the research community (action-research projects), to devise, carry out and evaluate projects
- to promote schools' initiatives by making projects public (MELS Web site, symposiums, conferences, publications, etc.).

What is the procedure for submitting a project proposal?

School or school board personnel who would like to carry out an action research or pedagogical development project in ICT should contact the person or body the school board has designated to receive project proposals and determine which of them best meet the program requirements. This person, who is generally the special education coordinator with the school board, can foster inter-school collaboration in carrying out these projects. The objective is to ensure that the most relevant projects are submitted, and that they meet all the eligibility criteria.

School boards are limited to a certain number of submissions. A person designated by the board sends paper versions of project proposals to the person responsible for special education in the MELS regional office, who then forwards the proposals to the Ministère's Direction de l'adaptation scolaire, adding comments, as required. Depending on arrangements at the regional level, project proposals may be brought before a regional coordinating body, which would then decide which projects are to be submitted to the MELS for analysis and selection.

What is meant by "projects to foster pedagogical development and the acquisition of expertise in information and communications technologies (ICT)"?

These are projects designed to promote competency development by students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities and to help teachers, nonteaching professionals and technical staff make better use of ICT in the classroom.

The projects involve a rigorous and structured process of setting objectives, evaluating the extent to which they are attained and indicating the benefits for the schools. These projects are designed in conjunction with partners like the Réseau pour le développement des Compétences par l'Intégration des Technologies (RÉCIT) or with regional resource persons and consultants. They are carried out by personnel from schools, school boards or regional coordinating bodies.

Each project must involve the participation of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities (SHSMLD) and improve their competencies. Projects must clearly show how ICT are integrated into the teaching-learning process, that is, be implemented in class, rather than focusing exclusively on the upgrading of ICT tools. A project must also be carried out in such a way that it can be disseminated and reproduced in other environments.

Applicants must use the official form to submit a project. This form can be found on the MELS Web site at www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/das/index.html. A description of the project must accompany each application, which must also include the required signatures. If the collaboration of external partners is required, this must be indicated.

What is meant by "action research projects to test innovative initiatives in special education?"

Action research projects are intended to encourage educators to test new intervention methods or new ways of organizing services in order to better meet the needs of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities, in collaboration with the research community. Although collaboration with the research community is necessary, other collaborative efforts are also possible and, indeed, are encouraged. For example, regional resource persons or healthcare resources can be called upon.

Action research takes place in the real world, in the field, with all the advantages and adjustments that this involves. It must be directly connected to the educational project and in line with the actions of the school. In this way, action research is directly linked to the concerns of educators, who can benefit from the researchers' expertise and knowledge in order to improve their actions. Working together, these partners develop a dynamic interaction that serves the interests of both parties.

The research is intended to update practices by targeting competency development. It involves a rigorous and structured process of setting objectives, evaluating the extent to which they are attained and indicating the conditions in which the expected results may be obtained. It must be carried out in such a way that both the process and the results can be re-created in other situations, with a view to the transfer of knowledge. The researcher must support the schools in their efforts to design and test the project in order to ensure its accuracy.

Applicants must use the official form to submit a project. This form can be found on the MELS Web site at www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/das/index.html. A description of the project must accompany each application, which must also include the required signatures. If the collaboration of external partners is required, this must be indicated.

What are the eligibility criteria?

Given the funds available, only some projects will obtain financial support under this program. Projects must first meet certain eligibility criteria. Then, those that are eligible will be subject to a selection process to choose the most relevant projects. This selection process is described below.

Eligibility criteria for each project

- It must comply with the Policy on Special Education and the Québec Education Program.
- It must not require funding exceeding \$50 000 (in the case of an action research project) or \$25 000 \$ (in the case of an ICT project)*.
 - * In exceptional circumstances, projects extending over two years may receive maximum funding in the amount of \$25 000 for the second year.
- It must specify how the school or school board, whose financial contribution is mandatory, will contribute to the project concretely, through the allocation of human resources (education consultants, teachers, nonteaching professionals or technical personnel, etc.) and material resources (reference works, computer equipment, rooms, etc.). The schools will also facilitate distribution logistics (computerized support for the creation of a Web site, conference fees, etc.).
- This is its only funding request (it is not already receiving funding from other sources).
- It is designed purely as a not-for-profit project, given that the resulting products (computer equipment, software, publications, etc.) will not be sold.

Criteria applying only to ICT projects

- The project promotes competency development by students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities, and aims at improving the ICT practices of teachers, nonteaching professionals and technical staff.
- The project is designed and carried out in collaboration with other resources such as RÉCIT.
- The project is designed in such a way as to permit the evaluation of benefits for schools, especially the development of students' competencies and the improvement of teachers' competencies.

Criteria applying only to action research projects

- The project is carried out with the collaboration of qualified researchers.
- The project is designed to evaluate the results obtained and the benefits observed regarding the development of innovative initiatives.

How are projects selected?

Projects are selected according to different evaluation criteria and the budget available. When required, the final decision may also take into account the diversity of the students targeted, and regional distribution. Schools and school boards are informed of the evaluation committee's decision in June. Composed of representatives from the MELS and the various partners involved (researchers, RÉCIT, etc.), the committee studies the eligible projects and chooses those to be funded.

Below, **in order of importance**, are the eligibility criteria for each of the program components. Please note that in the written form, it is essential to highlight the information that corresponds to each criterion in order to ensure that projects are uniformly evaluated.

Evaluation Criteria - ICT Projects

- Consistency with the Policy on Special Education

The project is specifically intended for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities.

- Connections with the Québec Education Program (QEP)

The project counts on the active participation of students in a concrete teaching-learning process. Basically, it must be a project that can be used in class, and not focus exclusively on the upgrading of ICT tools.

It is clearly shown how students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities acquire ICT and QEP competencies, and how teachers develop their ICT competencies.

- Innovative character of the project

The way in which students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities are led to participate and improve their QEP and ICT competencies must be innovative.

- Dissemination

Ways and means are planned to introduce the project to all educational stakeholders. At minimum, a project summary and description of its accomplishments should be presented on a Web site (preferably that of the school or school board). If applicable, the computer tools designed and the work accomplished can also be presented on this site. Participation in various publications (Vie pédagogique or Schoolsapes, for example) and the sharing of information (at conferences, seminars, etc.) is encouraged.

- Transferability to other schools

The process can be reproduced in other schools, which could then carry out the project with the resources normally available. Staff training must not be the primary activity of the project.

- Thoroughness of the process

The objectives and the targeted benefits or results for the school must be clearly defined.

- Feasibility

The project should not be overly ambitious. It should be based on the participation of those in the community who share responsibility for the project, work with it to the end, and ensure its follow-up. The process is clearly defined and involves a realistic number of goals, along with a schedule.

- Collaboration

Collaboration with RÉCIT leaders, regional resource persons offering support and expertise or other partners is expected. The role of each stakeholder is defined.

Evaluation Criteria - Action Research

- **Consistency with the Québec Education Program and the Policy on Special Education**

The project allows for the testing of new interventions or ways of organizing services stemming from the education reform and reflects concern for creating a "school adapted to the needs of all students." It must be closely in line with the educational project and in keeping with the steps already taken by the school.

- **Innovative character of the project**

The project leads to a renewal of intervention methods or ways of organizing school services.

- **Transferability to other schools**

The process can be reproduced in other schools which could then conduct the project with the resources normally available. Staff training must not be the primary activity of the project.

- **Methodological quality (scientific value)**

A minimal review of the literature has been carried out, objectives are observable and measurable, and the procedure for measuring results is outlined.

- **Contribution from the school and the research community**

There is true collaboration between the two sectors with regard to the design, implementation and analysis of the project. The role of each stakeholder is indicated.

- **Dissemination**

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- **Feasibility**

The project should not be overly ambitious. It should be based on the participation of those in the field who share responsibility for the project, work with it to the end, and ensure its follow-up. The process is clearly defined and involves a realistic number of goals, along with a schedule.

What expenses are allowable?

Allowable expenses are those that are directly linked to **staff** participation in the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of the project:

- Substitute-teaching costs related to the participation of teachers: meetings, training sessions and the production of scenarios, instructional material, summaries, reports and other work
- Some training and program support expenses, and consulting fees associated with the development and evaluation of the project
- Expenses related to the hiring of research assistants (action research). Note that researcher' salaries are not allowable when the research is an integral part of their duties, as professor-researcher. Replacement costs are allowable, however, provided they do not exceed the expenditure for one course per session per project-implementation year.
- Other expenses required to carry out the project, up to 5% of the total grant amount.

Please note that a 15% charge for administrative overhead must be included for all portions of grants disbursed for university research.

Grant allocation

The disbursement of grants to carry out projects that have been selected will be in two stages. The first allocation will be issued in September 2007, and will comprise two thirds of the total amount, to be used to conduct the project. The second and final payment will be issued conditional on submission of the project results. In the case of projects conducted over a two-year period, the second payment will be issued at the end of the first year, on submission of the preliminary findings.

When should project proposals be submitted?

The project submission and selection process extends throughout the year:

- **February 23, 2007:** Submission of project proposals to school boards
- **March 12, 2007:** Forwarding of projects to the MELS regional office
- **April 2, 2007:** Reception of projects by the MELS' Direction de l'adaptation scolaire
- **April and May 2007:** Project analysis and selection
- **June 2007:** Sending of decisions to the schools and school boards
- **September 2007 to May 2008:** Carrying out of projects
- **End of May 2008:** Submission of list of accomplishments and summaries to the MELS.

Questions?

For further information, please contact the school board's special education coordinator or the person responsible for special education at your MELS regional office.

IMPORTANT

Please note the deadline, and send your project proposal form to the special education coordinator at your school board, no later than **February 23, 2007**. This person will forward the school board's projects to the MELS regional office by **March 12, 2007**, at the latest.