

SCHOOLS CAPES

WORKING TOGETHER
TO INSTRUCT, SOCIALIZE AND PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS

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The Ministère's Policy on the Evaluation of Learning describes evaluation as one of the factors in achieving the objective of success for all students. Indeed, it represents a means of promoting students' intellectual, affective and social development, in keeping with the mission of Québec's schools and the aims of the Québec Education Program. It is important that the people in Québec's education system share this vision of evaluation. The training session for resource persons on March 14 and 15, 2006, allowed participants to exchange ideas and reflect on this theme, which is so essential to the implementation of the education reform. *Schoolscapes* was at this two-day event, covering the various activities on the program.

Complementary educational services are another important element of the reform. The MP3 project at Polyvalente Benoît-Vachon draws on the resources of both the guidance oriented approach and spiritual care and guidance and community involvement services. Seven students explain what the project is all about.

Integrating the cultural dimension in schools is a major component of the reform, whether it involves learning and teaching, the curriculum, or measures introduced by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport in collaboration with other ministries and cultural partners of the school. Twice a year for the last two years, *Schoolscapes* has included a feature on arts and culture in the schools. In this issue, two educators reaffirm the determining role of culture in young people's schooling.

Finally, new literary camps will be offered this summer under the action plan on reading entitled, *And what are you reading?* A journalist from *Schoolscapes* met with the people responsible for the camps.

And now, the entire *Schoolscapes* team would like to wish you a wonderful summer vacation. We hope that you will be there with us again next fall.

Colette Boucher

Marie-Josée Lépine

APPLICATION OF THE QUÉBEC EDUCATION PROGRAM

Jean-Marc Fournier, Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports, mandated the steering committee (made up of the Ministère's major partners, i.e. school boards, private schools, the Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement, the Fédération des comités de parents, and universities) to develop mechanisms for evaluating and monitoring changes made at the elementary level. Its analysis focuses mainly on the implementation of the QEP.

A detailed study of the implementation of the QEP took place from March 13 to 31. A representative sample of elementary school teachers was selected to fill out a questionnaire. Homeroom teachers, specialists and special education teachers gave their opinion on the degree of application of the QEP, the difficulties encountered and the program's impact on students.

Education consultants and administrators were also asked for their opinion on the implementation of the QEP via an on-line questionnaire.

This study is one of the first steps in monitoring the implementation of the QEP. Later on, a sample of students' responses on compulsory examinations held at the end of Cycle Three in Français langue d'enseignement, English language arts and mathematics will be analyzed. Teachers will also be asked for their opinions on these programs. 📄

RENEWING THE EVALUATION OF LEARNING: QUITE THE CHALLENGE!

To the media and the public at large, evaluation means report cards. But the subject of evaluation is much more complex, as Pierre Bergevin, Assistant Deputy Minister for preschool, elementary and secondary education, pointed out in his opening address at the latest training session for resource persons, held in Québec City on March 14 and 15. The development of competencies takes time, and so does the renewal of evaluation practices. Since this training session, however, there are now 600 more people qualified to provide information about the new evaluation practices.

Find out more about the conference on pages 17 to 19.

SCHOOLSCAPES

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From left to right:
Brigitte Pilon, evaluation coordinator for French,
elementary level, and
Esther Blais, project coordinator at the
Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport



Marie-Josée Lépine

Learning and Evaluation Tools: Coming Soon

In order to help educators understand and assimilate the QEP and evaluate competencies, sample scales of competency levels for elementary school and learning and evaluation situations for elementary and secondary school will be made available to every school board and private school in Québec.

Esther Blais, project coordinator at the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, explains that these samples will help elementary school teachers use the scales of competency levels, and that the learning and evaluation situations will help teachers understand and assimilate the QEP and adopt the appropriate evaluation practices.


These materials are based on the philosophy that evaluation is an integral part of learning. According to Brigitte Pilon, evaluation coordinator for French at the elementary level, "they are intended to illustrate the levels in order to help teachers gain a clear understanding of evaluation tools."

The materials are being developed in close cooperation with the schools. For example, planning activities and gathering, analyzing and selecting samples require the participation of several working groups. Materials for competencies in the languages subject area will

be available on CD-ROM so that teachers can select print, visual or audio documents.

The samples illustrate competencies in elementary-level Français, langue d'enseignement (*Écrire des textes variés* and *Apprécier des œuvres littéraires*), Français, langue seconde (*Produire des textes variés*), English language arts (*Writes self-expressive, narrative and information-based texts*) and English as a second language (*Writes texts* and *Interacts orally in English*).

The learning and evaluation situations will include one situation in Français, langue d'enseignement (end of Secondary Cycle One) and two situations in English as a second language: basic and enriched (Secondary Cycle One).

Different materials will accompany each of these situations: an introductory document, student's guides and teacher's guides. Evaluation rubrics will be provided for several situations in the teacher's guides. 



EXEMPLARS FOR ELA

A CD-ROM developed for the anglophone sector will include seven examples of student work that demonstrate performance levels for English language arts (ELA) at the Elementary level. The examples on this particular CD illustrate end-of-cycle outcomes for ELA competencies for Cycle One and Cycle Three. They include examples for end-of-Cycle-One outcomes in the reading and writing competencies as well as examples for the oral-language competency for end-of-cycle outcomes at Cycle Three. “We are hoping these examples will help teachers to see what end-of-cycle performance levels might look like,” explained Karen McDonald, an educator who worked on the Cycle One examples.

The Cycle One examples were chosen from student work drawn from a Learning and Evaluation Situation entitled “Choosing a Pet.” Their work was used as exemplars to demonstrate different levels of performance in the Reading and Writing competencies. The Cycle Three oral-language exemplars, created by Donna Sinclair, were taken from the 2005 English Language Arts End-of-Cycle Assessment tool.

One of the language arts competencies is the use of language to learn and communicate, explained Anne Doucet, coordinator of evaluation in English language arts. As part of the work done during the end-of-cycle learning and evaluation situation in June 2005, a group of students were filmed as they engaged in the tasks designed to use talk for learning. “This exemplar can be used to show teachers how students engage in learning through talk,” Doucet said. “We have always used talk in the classroom, but now we are looking at the role it plays in developing other competencies.”

However, McDonald pointed out that competency can be demonstrated in more than one way. “Students can express themselves in very different ways but still demonstrate competency,” she said. Donna Sinclair, who prepared the Cycle Three exemplars, agreed. “The trick for teachers is that two situations don’t look the same. It’s not like a cookie cutter!”



Donna Sinclair

IDC Symposium: Finding the Missing “Think” in Planning, Learning and Evaluating

Teachers cannot control how a child learns, but they can influence learning by controlling what they do as teachers, Dr. Barrie Bennett told his audience during his keynote speech on “The Missing ‘Think’ in Planning, Learning and Evaluating.” He made the presentation during the second day of the Implementation Design Committee Leadership Symposium in Montréal on February 14, 2006. “Part of the missing ‘think’ is what can we do with what we have,” he said.

Barrie Bennett is an associate professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. He currently has a cross appointment to the undergraduate and graduate programs. His research focuses primarily on the design of powerful learning environments for students and teachers through the process of systemic change.

He argued that educators do not deeply grasp the meaning of educational outcomes—not even those who design them. As a result, planning, learning, and evaluating become moot. When looking at outcome statements, educators need to grasp the different levels within each one, he said. There are four questions they need to ask.

For example, what level of thinking is explicit (that is, the level at which the student is to be assessed)? What level of thinking is implicit (the level at which a teacher must provide instruction)? What type of thinking is required to meet the objective? How can teachers match their knowledge of the level and type of thinking with their instructional methods?

“Every day, 30 kids walk into the classroom with variables you can’t control,” Bennett said. For example, one in five children is at risk, students have different learning styles and disabilities. Educators need to be aware of instructional concepts, skills, tactics, strategies and organizers.

This calls for teachers to assess curriculum outcomes. “We don’t assess instruction,” he pointed out. “We never apply it to ourselves. There’s a difference between covering the curriculum and taking kids along for the journey. The next question is to ask what instructional methods would bring this out.”

A challenge facing educators is how to initiate, implement and sustain change in their schools. According to Bennett, 90 per cent of people who attend workshops and conferences understand the information and knowledge that presenters share, but only 10 per cent integrate it into their work. Whether educators are able to transfer the knowledge from the conference to the classroom often depends on being able to work with others to make changes collectively.

What is important is not to effect change in one person, Bennett said, but rather how an organization can apply and implement it. "If you come [to a conference] as a team and go back to a supportive environment, you hit a blip which is just a toboggan ride." The critical issue is the ability and willingness to collectively act on current information. "Failing to act on what we know is like not knowing," he said.

Working with teachers, students and parents, educators at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School in the Western Québec School Board have developed evaluation tools to assess Québec Education Program competencies. During a workshop on assessing QEP competencies presented the afternoon of the symposium's second day, a team from the school shared how they developed and use the electronic report cards and student-led conferences they developed.

A *lead* school, it began its journey with the QEP six years ago. Teacher Brenda Moore explained the school needed to develop a user-friendly reporting system that parents and teachers could understand, so the staff created its own version of a QEP report card.

One of the biggest challenges continues to be trying to understand that students' competencies are assessed over a 20-month period rather than a shorter time frame, Moore said. "You're no longer reporting on a snapshot in time. You're not reporting on how Suzie did on her test last week. You're talking about where she sits

academically in a 20-month period." The evaluation period was broken down into periods of 20 months to show that the assessment is not term related. "Also, that you're not comparing little Janey to little Johnny. Now you're comparing little Janey to little Janey."

Since the report cards show where students are in their learning continuum and don't assess students' performance using grades, the school also needed to work with parents to help them understand the assessment of their child's competencies. "We don't have grades on our report cards so parents had to wrap their heads around that," principal Marian Lothian explained.

First helping students understand the assessment process can then make it easier for parents to grasp it. "Teach your kids to be advocates," Moore said of the report cards and assessments. "Once they understand it, they can go home and explain it to their parents when they get the report card and don't understand it."

As part of the process of explaining to students how their skills and competencies would be assessed, Moore used the drawing of a series of teeter-totters. As they walk along one teeter-totter, it moves forward and then they can climb on to the next one. One student drew a large figure high up on a teeter-totter and a small one lower down to show that he feels he is strong in math but not so in language arts.

Once a year, the school holds student-led conferences that are built around the use and

evaluation of student portfolios. Conferencing can last 20-45 minutes and several of them are held simultaneously. Students sit with their invited guest, such as a parent, grandparent or babysitter and present their work. Parents will ask questions and make comments. The teacher is there to provide help if it's needed. The school sends home handouts to parents ahead of time outlining what to expect and some dos and don'ts. Initially, 70 per cent of parents attended the conferences. Last year, the figure rose to 95 per cent.

Teacher Wendy Hamilton explained that she helps students prepare for the conferences by going through their work with them to decide what they want to include in their portfolio. They also hold a practice session where students pair up to role-play with one being the child presenting and the other one acting as the invited guest. Sometimes a student from a younger grade will be paired up with an older child because the latter has already experienced the process of conferencing.

The school is moving away from showcase portfolios of students' favourite pieces and towards assessment portfolios that show pieces that illustrate a student's progression over time. "It's always easy to present the best pieces, but sometimes the ones you've struggled with are worth including," Hamilton explained. "It's no longer time to shine. It's time to reflect on where you've gone and where you need to go." 🐦



"What is important is not to effect change in one person, but rather how an organization can apply and implement it."

Barrie Bennett is an associate professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

On Leadership: Vision, Belief and Attitude Create Action

Vision, belief and attitude took centre stage at Leadership Symposium 2006. The Implementation Design Committee's 7th annual conference ran from February 13 to 15 at the Sheraton Laval Hotel and Convention Centre.

Education reform expert Connie Kamm introduced a "seeing, believing, and being" mode of making things happen in her keynote speech. She then expanded upon the notion during a follow-up interactive session. Jean Fillatre, from Centennial Academy, and Carolyn Sturge Sparkes, from the Riverside School Board, raised the same themes in their joint workshop about becoming a learning-oriented leader.

All three experts led exercises that encouraged conference participants to become strong leaders. Kamm began with an exercise emphasizing a common vision. She then encouraged the use of research, student-centred accountability and success stories to accomplish it. Fillatre and Sturge Sparkes took participants on personal journeys towards becoming learning-oriented leaders with several inward-looking exercises.

Kamm's vision exercise began with a story about a faltering kingdom turned wealthy with the help of a visitor's magic spy glass. She then asked: "If you looked in a magic spyglass, what would you see in your schools?"

After several minutes of discussion, Kamm asked whether we saw: "a school where every child is challenged to learn, given the opportunity to explore and create, and is supported with the resources to be successful in the 21st century." Several people raised their hands.

Did we see: "a campus full of young people who care about their education, their futures and one another? An energetic, highly-qualified faculty and staff united with a common vision, a common goal and common successes? Engaged community support for the school?" Hands went up as she asked each question in turn.

"If we share this vision, how do we make it so?"

Research

Begin by learning and understanding peer research. The most compelling research Kamm presented came from a unique segment of schools. These schools are called 90/90/90 schools because 90 per cent of their students come from minority groups and 90 per cent live in poverty, yet 90 per cent achieve test scores meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations.



Connie Kamm, education reform expert

"We have to pay attention to one another's best practices. Educators must tell their stories, including the extraordinary efforts they take on behalf of their kids."

Kamm said these schools share nine important characteristics:

- Teachers have time to collaborate.
- Parents get regular, timely and accurate feedback.
- Schedules are rearranged for maximum student learning.
- Research, action and frequent mid-course corrections occur.
- Teachers get jobs that meet their abilities and backgrounds.
- There is intensive focus on student data from multiple sources.
- Teachers conduct common assessments and regularly examine student work for proficiency.
- Every adult in the system takes on a leadership role and benefits from professional development opportunities.
- Cross-discipline integration occurs.

Explore student-centred accountability

After understanding the research, educators must test how it applies by creating “laboratories of learning” within every school.

Begin by defining your school, says Kamm. Are you **lucky** because your students succeed, but you don't understand why? Are you **losing** in that your students obtain low results but you don't understand why? Are you a **learning** school with low results but a good understanding of why? Or, are you a **leading** school with successful students and a good understanding of why?

Kamm also recommends that students be asked four questions after every school activity or

project. What are you learning? Why is it important to know this information? Is your work good? How do you know your work is good? These questions ensure that every action within a school system leads to constructive student learning.

Share success stories

To ensure that education functions well, stories about successes must be shared. Possible communication tools vary. Data walls, on which students publish their work and teachers publish statistics and other success stories, are popular. Trophy cases and walls of fame work well too. Some schools engage the community with hospitality nights, spaghetti dinners and student performances. One principal inspires staff by publishing an annual collection of successful case studies.

The most inspiring communication project featured students using art to describe school values. Six hundred people eagerly attended a presentation with dance, poetry, an art gallery, and song in a school that normally has to work very hard to encourage the community to attend any events, said Kamm. “The assembly we put together altered the way of thinking of every individual who had the opportunity to participate.”

Kamm's description of a murder mystery play written and performed by students inspired several participants to share their successes. One person described taking students out of the classroom for first-hand nature study. Another talked about a reading and writing literacy project that provided laptops to at-risk students who frequently lose papers. Someone else talked about creating links between adaptive

learning teachers. Someone else mentioned an annual memory book published and compiled by students. Last year, some of those students turned four of their memory stories into a film that was launched in the community.

Kamm asked participants to track and share such successes as widely as possible. “We have to pay attention to one another's best practices,” she said. “Educators must tell their stories, including the extraordinary efforts they take on behalf of their kids.”

To learn more, visit the Centre for Performance Assessment Web site at www.makingstandardswork.com.

Create other leaders

Researching, assessing student performance and communicating requires a commitment to learning at every level in the education system. The best way to achieve this, say Jean Fillatre and Carolyn Sturge Sparkes, is by getting educators to understand their roles as “learning-oriented” leaders.

Learning-oriented leaders:

- partner with colleagues, even when this requires discussing uncomfortable issues
- provide colleagues with leadership roles and encourage expert thinking
- engage in academic study to develop deeper understanding
- mentor others to foster critical thinking among their peers

Fillatre and Sturge Sparkes designed their workshop to take participants on personal journeys towards becoming learning-oriented leaders.



They began with a “four corners exercise.” Each corner of the room was identified as one of the following animals: a lion, a fox, a dove and a deer. Participants were first asked to go to the corner of the room representing the animal they identified with as newcomers to a group. Workshop participants moved to various corners. When asked to discuss why they chose particular animals, participants discussed qualities seen in each animal—brave, clever, peaceful and swift.

“Okay, now move to the corner of the room that represents the animal you are at work,” said Sturge Sparkes. All but four participants moved. This exercise, said Sturge Sparkes, clearly indicates how attitudes and beliefs lead to action. Who you are depends on how you see yourself.

Other exercises fell under three big questions. Where am I? Where can I go? How can I get there? Between the exercises, Sturge Sparkes and Fillatre described multiple tools available to those who wish to explore the learning-oriented leadership field. Workshop participants completed the session by sharing their goals and intended outcomes with partners.

Sturge Sparkes summarized the session with an inspiring closing comment. “We don’t tell other people how to learn,” she said. “We need to live as a community of learners.”

Evaluation Criteria Focus of Training Session

Discussions are under way to develop a natural gas pipeline through the Mackenzie Valley in the Northwest Territories. The proposed pipeline will provide energy to Canadians and others but must cross hundreds of kilometres of pristine land. Northern First Nations communities and herds of native wildlife line the proposed pipeline’s path and depend on the tundra’s existing ecosystems for survival. How can this Learning and Evaluation Situation (LES) be used in a Secondary Cycle One English Language Arts class to evaluate students’ competencies?

This was one of the scenarios that participants used in the workshop for the anglophone community during the Training Session for Resource Persons held in Québec City, March 14 and 15. Group activities focused on analyzing learning and evaluation situations, using evaluation criteria and tools to formulate observable indicators for evaluating competencies. As animator Anne Doucet

pointed out to participants: “What do we want kids to learn and how do we know they’ve learned it? These are two questions we ask.”

Scenarios were developed for Languages, Social Sciences, Arts Education, Personal Development or Mathematics, Science and Technology. Participants broke into groups to discuss which competencies they would develop and evaluate



within the context of the chosen scenario and subject area. "The idea that every competency has to be evaluated in one unit is not necessarily the case," Doucet pointed out.

She cautioned participants to ensure there is coherence between the task the student is performing, the evaluation criteria and the observable indicators. Using evaluation criteria, groups formulated observable indicators for evaluating those competencies and prepared a rubric. "We've gone beyond grades. We need words, we need qualifications, we need descriptions," she said.

The participants using the Mackenzie Valley pipeline learning context chose to work with the language arts competency "Represents her/his literacy in different media." They proposed that students make three two-minute videos each targeting different audiences (government, First Nations and the corporate sector). To show students' reflection process, each video would include a producer's cut that explained how it was developed and the choices they made.

Once the group chose the competency on which to focus, they selected observable indicators and then calibrated the evaluation markers to show the lowest level to highest level. The three criteria the Mackenzie Valley group chose were: (1) awareness of audience; (2) use of techniques to persuade intended audience; and in the producer's cut (3) articulation of strategies that were used to persuade the audience.

Observable indicators were chosen to evaluate whether the student was below competency, developing competency, achieving competency or exceeding competency. Observable indicators of awareness of audience ranged from "language used not adapted to specific audiences," to "language adapted appropriately for audiences" and "language adaptation is sophisticated in regards to appropriate audience."

The indicators of use of techniques to persuade intended audience ranged from "little or no evidence of use of techniques to persuade audience" and "attempts to use techniques to persuade audience" to "uses appropriate techniques to persuade audience" and "uses sophisticated techniques to persuade audience effectively." The observable indicators for the third criteria, articulation of strategies used to persuade audience (producer's cut), ranged from "students are able to identify strategies" and "students are able to explain some of the strategies" to "students are able to explain and justify their choice of strategies" and "students are able to justify and analyze their choice of strategies."

Doucet believes this evaluation method will be more motivating for students. "Research shows that if you incorporate more feedback and commentary and less grades into your teaching, you move the process along because students perform better," she said. "Evaluating students only on grades limits performance because the judgments are based only on marks." 🐦

Lorraine Desmarais

LEARNING AND EVALUATION SITUATIONS IN ARTS EDUCATION

For two years now, teams of arts education teachers have been developing situations intended primarily to assess competency development during and at the end of a cycle. They have been using a general approach that applies to all subject areas, while allowing for the specific aspects of each, in accordance with the QEP. The situations include a teacher's guide and a student's booklet. They are designed to help teachers understand and assimilate the QEP and to provide a model learning and evaluation situation. Those who use these situations will be better able to understand their importance in evaluating learning in a competency-based approach.

"The idea that every competency has to be evaluated in one unit is not necessarily the case."



Anne Doucet



From left to right: Louis Émond, Lorraine Desmarais, Suzanne Monast

Teams of teachers have been set up to develop and test situations in each of the arts education programs at both the elementary and secondary levels. They are working under the supervision of the arts education team and the Direction de l'évaluation. Suzanne Monast, a music specialist on loan from the Commission scolaire de Saint-Hyacinthe, has been accompanying and advising the teachers from the outset. François Monière, an education consultant on loan from the Commission scolaire au Coeur-des-Vallées, accompanied the teams of visual arts teachers during the first year of the project (2004-2005). Louis Émond, a teacher on loan from the Commission scolaire des Patriotes, joined the arts education team in 2005-2006 to produce the final version of the situations developed by the various teams.

The Direction de l'évaluation intends to offer the evaluation situations in the spring and the fall. The first arts education situations will be made available in the fall of 2006. They will help equip teachers for the detailed and general planning of evaluation.

In conclusion, on behalf of the arts education team at the Direction de l'évaluation, I would like to thank the teachers on these committees for their conscientious participation. Their contribution, which added to their already full workload, is greatly appreciated. 🏠

Teams of teachers who worked on the development of learning and evaluation situations

Drama

Elementary education

Richard Dubé
Caroline Frenette
Guylaine Jacques
Marie Letendre

Commission scolaire de Montréal
Commission scolaire des Affluents
Commission scolaire des Affluents
Commission scolaire des Affluents

Secondary education

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Bruno Lauzon
Alexandre Pomerleau

Commission scolaire de la Rivière-du-Nord
Commission scolaire de Laval
Commission scolaire de la Rivière-du-Nord

Visual arts

Elementary education

Isabelle Camiré
Ann Girard
Sylvie Lachapelle
Annie Mirandette
Lucie Routhier
Claudine Trudel

Commission scolaire des Appalaches
Commission scolaire au Cœur-des-Vallées
Commission scolaire des Chênes
Commission scolaire des Chênes
Commission scolaire des Draveurs
Commission scolaire des Portages-de-l'Outaouais

Secondary education

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Cécile Brodeur
Nathalie Chabot
Sylvie Comeau
Johanne Marchand

Commission scolaire des Draveurs
Collège Saint-Maurice, St-Hyacinthe
Commission scolaire au Cœur-des-Vallées
Commission scolaire des Portages-de-l'Outaouais
Commission scolaire des Hauts-Cantons

Dance

Elementary education

Louis Bérubé
Jocelyne Lépine
Andrée Morin

Commission scolaire des Premières-Seigneuries
Commission scolaire des Premières-Seigneuries
Commission scolaire des Découvreurs

Secondary education

Sylvie Blanchet
Hélène Duval
Nancy Leclerc
Marie-Josée Rose

Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys
Collège Charles-Lemoyne, Longueuil
Collège Mont-Sacré-Cœur, Granby
Commission scolaire des Trois-Lacs

Music

Elementary education

Patrick Bernard
Céline Bilodeau
Sylvie Gourde
Lynda Poulin

Commission scolaire Harricana
Commission scolaire de Rouyn-Noranda
Commission scolaire de Rouyn-Noranda
Commission scolaire Harricana

Secondary education

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Karine Gamache
Yvon Goulet
Richard Goyette
Michel Laliberté
Guy Picard
Luc Trépanier

Commission scolaire du Val-des-Cerfs
Collège Charles-Lemoyne, Longueuil
Collège Charles-Lemoyne, Longueuil
Commission scolaire du Val-des-Cerfs
Commission scolaire de Saint-Hyacinthe
Commission scolaire de Saint-Hyacinthe
Commission scolaire de Saint-Hyacinthe

Integrating the Cultural Dimension in School

If there is one word with a broad meaning, *culture* is it! Ask the people around you what it means. You will find that everyone has a different definition. Some will mention its anthropological aspects, others its sociological aspects, and still others, history or the arts. Not to mention that culture can be either general or specific! There are any number of different definitions. Yet, in dealing with all of these dimensions, Québec schools must provide teachers and students with meaningful cultural references. *Schoolscapes* met with two educators who, in their own way, are working to integrate culture into their school's educational project, thereby enriching their students' general education.

Culture: Part and parcel of the QEP

Nicole Gagnon is responsible for cross-curricular learning at the Direction des programmes of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. She is coordinating the development of the introductory chapters of the QEP, in particular Chapter 1, which addresses the importance of the cultural dimension. "In fact, the entire QEP revolves around culture," says Gagnon, who believes that dealing with culture in this way is the result of an attitude of openness. Since we must prepare students to live in a multicultural world, every dimension of culture is an essential element. "It would have been a bad idea to think about culture once the QEP was finished! Culture is not the icing on the cake: it is an integral part of the program. Generally speaking, the program developers adopted a 'cultural attitude.' While it is important to enrich students' knowledge of great artistic, scientific and social accomplishments, it is more important still to improve their ability to understand the world and make connections between the diverse pieces of knowledge they have. Culture has 'infiltrated' every subject area. For example, certain mathematical concepts are more easily understood when placed in their historical context. For me, the QEP has a holographic dimension and needs to be viewed from different angles."

Culture is a means of gaining understanding of oneself and the world and, according to the QEP, the cultural approach "promotes a critical, ethical and aesthetic view of the world." This well thought-out cultural dimension does not, however, exclude students' contribution to culture. As has often been said, the aim is not to bombard students with concepts. Again according to the QEP, "since culture is a living reality to which every generation makes a contribution, schools should refer to the culture specific to young people to help them open their minds to some of the many other dimensions of human activity and express their creativity in all domains." Nicole Gagnon is very aware of the fact that the QEP will be developed and reinterpreted by the education community. "This will ensure that the historical and current dimensions of culture are taken into account." Better to make an effort to understand the world around us, with all the risks that entails, than to hide behind ready-made concepts.

The reference document for teachers entitled *Culture in the Schools: Integrating the Cultural Dimension Into School*, which every teacher should read, states that "it is illusory to think culture can be defined in a way that perfectly delineates the subject and is agreed on by everyone." While this is true, it hasn't prevented Nicole Gagnon and her team from clearing a path in the rich cultural soil.

Because teachers are also cultural brokers

For 10 years, France Grenier has taught visual arts at École Cœur-Soleil in the Commission scolaire de Laval, one of the too few schools focusing on arts education. There, she learned about the interdisciplinary and project-based approaches, the latter being one of the avenues proposed by the education reform. According to Grenier, who is trained in arts education, she intuitively chose this path long before the application of the reform. For four years she and Georges Bouchard, who is responsible for the arts education programs at the Ministère and for the agreement on culture and education, have been coordinating a committee to monitor elementary school arts education programs. One of the committee's tasks is developing workshops for resource persons in the school board. After designing various training sessions, including one on the evaluation of learning and another intended to help teachers understand elementary school arts education programs, the team, in collaboration with Raymond Breau, is now offering workshops on how to integrate the cultural dimension into school.

These efforts are very much in line with Nicole Gagnon's way of thinking. "The aim of the workshop is clear," explains France Grenier. "We need to help participants grasp the cultural aspects of the QEP, learn about the different programs and understand the measures included in the cultural action plan developed by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport and the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications based on collaboration between the education community and the community at large. In short, the idea is to make teachers aware of the important role they play as cultural brokers. It goes without saying that there is often a need to reflect on culture and discuss our perceptions of culture and the value of different cultural references. We need to tell teachers about existing resources so that they can do justice to the cultural dimension. We need to help them integrate culture into their daily teaching practices and share their cultural competencies with colleagues." Teachers are provided with tools, such as the *Culture in the*

Schools Program, the *Répertoire de ressources Culture-Éducation* and the agreement on culture and education. They are also made aware of school cultural committees, which can be very helpful in developing different projects.

France Grenier emphasizes the importance of "helping teachers develop the ability to appreciate works of art." To this end, participants are encouraged to work with students' contributions to Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools, held every February for the past 15 years. "First, we look at the production and identify the cultural references, the elements of the artistic language and the emotions they elicit. But it is very important to go beyond the 'I know what I like and what I don't like' stage. We need to associate the emotion with a formal aesthetic dimension, considering how it was conveyed and observing the formal procedures by which the creator managed to touch us. In this way, we avoid being too subjective and are able to enrich our judgment of students' productions."

Training in the integration of the cultural dimension could also be enriched to include fields other than arts education, in the manner of the extensive list of suggestions produced as part of Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools, the most recent version of which is entitled *Bright lights, big ideas*. This guide proposes a host of activities and ideas for carrying out cultural projects in the classroom. "Since it began dealing with every subject area two years ago, from physical education to science and technology and geography, it has become very popular," says France Grenier: "Everyone is going to keep on encouraging teachers to incorporate the role of cultural broker into their teaching. That's the first challenge!"



Elementary-level arts education committee
From left to right:
Marie Claude Vezeau, France Grenier, Caroline Raymond,
Raynald Lévesque (absent: Céline Chabot).





Marie-Josée Lépine

MP3s at School: Music to Students' Ears

For the past two years, a group of enthusiastic young volunteers have been promoting mutual assistance, joy, friendship and fun at Polyvalente Benoît-Vachon. Sometimes they are discreet, playing cards with students who find themselves alone. At other times, their special events fill the auditorium. Carol Thibaudeau, psychologist and an animator with spiritual care and guidance and community involvement services, cofounded the project. He and seven students talk about life as an MP3.

After attending a meeting of a peer assistance group at the teachers' conference in 2003, Carol Thibaudeau and Sylvie Langevin, a special education technician, decided to implement the MP3 project in their school. In no time, Danka Giguère, guidance counsellor; Pascal Lacasse and Christian Leclerc, spiritual care and guidance and community involvement service animators, and a few teachers, including Diane Lajoie, joined in. "We found a name and a mission, then we began recruiting students," says Thibaudeau.



MP3 stands for *Mission: Promoting three winning attitudes at school* (openness, respect and mutual assistance). To carry out their mission, 50 young people agreed to come in to school on a pedagogical day to participate in workshops developed by Giguère, Langevin and Thibaudeau.

Each of the nine MP3 teams is made up of five to eight young people plus a leader; who can be either a young person or an adult, and meets one or two days each cycle to strengthen bonds, develop projects or work with other students. The nine leaders meet at least once every cycle to discuss their projects. The adult's role is to provide students with the necessary framework and support.

For Thibaudeau, the main objective of the project is to have young people take charge of their school. "Rather than telling them what to

do, we let them help the community the way they want to. We ask them to tell us what they think about school life and what they would like to do to improve it. The adult then acts as resource person, helping them achieve their goals and realize their potential as human beings."

The group's slogan, written by Catherine Vallée-Dubuc, a Secondary V student, reflects the spirit of the MP3 project. Their meeting room boasts a poster reading: "Nous sommes tous des personnes différentes, avec des choses différentes à offrir en quantités différentes" (We are all different, and we all have different things to offer in different amounts).

The students are not told what to do; rather, they are encouraged to use their creativity. Remarkably mature, they are aware of the opportunity they are being given. "Although we can't do just anything we want, we don't have any rules or criteria to follow," says Catherine. "We are free to act and realize our potential."

No shortage of projects

Project: Bringing joy to the school

Marie-Andrée Ross-Savoie, a Secondary V student, leads a group she describes as "super dynamic." Made up exclusively of young women, the group patrols the school. "When we find people who are alone, we go talk to them," explains Marie-Andrée. "Sometimes they are a little hesitant, but most of them are pleased."

Project: Theme days

Kim Rodrigue, a Secondary V student, and Jessica Morales (in Secondary II) like to organize theme days. Their first one, *Happy as a fish in water*, took place at the end of March. Activities included a comedy contest, ending with the crowning of the king of comedy. There was also a booth where Kim and her group took funny pictures of students to be displayed later on in the school.

Coordinating such an activity requires a lot of organizational skills on the part of the students. But, for Kim, it's worth it: "We're bringing joy to the school," she says. Jessica is also part of a peer assistance group at École primaire Mgr-Feuillault, under the supervision of Carole Pageau, an animator with spiritual care and guidance and community involvement services.

Project: Team spirit

Lonely people? There are fewer and fewer at school thanks to the efforts of Catherine and Annick Rodrigue. These two Secondary II students and their team organize activities for students with learning or adjustment difficulties. Twice each cycle, they meet to decide on a plan of action. Through a variety of activities (playing cards after lunch or going to buying a cake when it is someone's birthday), the team gives people reason to smile.

"We also help by discussing their problems at home or at school," adds Catherine. "We try to help them experience team spirit. Often, these students find themselves caught up in a vicious circle. Life is more fun when they are with us!"





Project: Student lounge

When Geneviève Nadeau, a Secondary IV student, presented a 10-page study on the school's need for a student lounge, she not only inspired young MP3s to present their project in a methodical manner; she also convinced the administration that she was right. Driven by a desire to assist the young people, Thibaudeau helped Geneviève find the right room. Students now have a place of their own, where they can talk, listen to music (live or recorded), have a healthy snack and attend presentations given by their peers.

A number of MP3s worked on preparations for the grand opening, moving furniture, painting, building a counter and so on. According to Geneviève, not having a lounge was the only

thing holding students back from doing any number of activities. "Now we have everything we need!" she exclaimed.

Project: Sexperts

Hard to talk about sex with an adult? Then why not let students talk to each other? A group of Secondary V students has developed a three-part workshop. First, they put on a play for each Secondary II class about a boy and a girl who have a one-night stand. The adults then leave the room so that the students can talk to the workshop leaders on their own. After that, the adults come back in and lead a group discussion.

"We don't want to judge sexually active students," says Thibaudeau. "Secondary V students often have experience they can share

with younger students. I think they're much more credible than any adults would be. By talking to their older peers, the younger students may start thinking about some of their preconceived notions about sexuality and be more prepared to face the challenges that await them."

Project: Video on bullying

Sylvie Langevin, special education technician and adult leader of an MP3 group, is working on a video on violence. Each MP3 team contributed to the project by submitting a short script about something that goes on in school, such as harassment or teasing. The video will soon be available for viewing by Secondary I students.

Project: Visits to elementary schools

As part of the guidance-oriented approach to students' transition from elementary to secondary school, some students will accompany Danka Giguère on her tour of elementary schools. There the MP3s will be able to answer students' many questions about life in secondary school.

On patrol

Dave Nadeau, a Secondary III student, walks the halls during lunch hour. If anyone is alone or needs assistance, he is the first one there to help!

A life-changing experience

For Carol Thibaudeau, a project like this helps young MP3s apply a number of cross-curricular competencies. "When they decide to do something, they are in charge of every aspect. They must design and implement the project



"We are all different, and we all have different things to offer in different amounts."

themselves." Each student therefore develops autonomy, better self-knowledge and a feeling of belonging to the community.

Guidance services are also incorporated, thanks to Danka Giguère. But, most importantly, the project fosters the development of students' identity and the realization of their potential. Thibaudeau has the following message: "Students often need adults to confirm their abilities and value. My first priority is to show them the power they have over their environment." The MP3 program is also in line with the student life, counselling, promotion and prevention services programs.

This project, which is related to the main objective of student services, reflects students' interests and therefore helps them stay motivated. Everyone agrees: participating in the MP3 project gave them more self-confidence. Whether for Geneviève, who found a more human side at school; Kim, who developed self-assurance; Jessica, who gained maturity; Annick, who is now more outgoing; Catherine, who feels that she is truly putting her skills to use; Marie-Andrée, who feels she is doing something worthwhile; or Dave, who is now more sociable, the project has been a gateway to personal enrichment. Jessica summed it up neatly with, "When you help others, you're also helping yourself."

Something for everyone

Although the adults give the students all the leeway they can, they participate actively in the projects and share in the rewards. "When I see young people developing a project, I believe in the future," says Thibaudeau. "I didn't know that young people could have so much empathy, depth and kindness. Listening to them, I learned to trust young people and get to know them better."

Evening get-togethers

Some MP3 students meet one evening a month with Thibaudeau in order to discuss two or three more personal matters. "We use three intervention techniques to help the students learn to really listen," says the psychologist. "The first is reflection. We tell the person in our own words what we understand of his or her situation. The second involves asking a question

in order to elicit a more detailed response. The third is adopting a positive approach. I tell the person something good I see in him or her or in something he or she has said."

Thibaudeau sometimes invites another adult from the school, for example the principal, and asks this person to share his or her experience with the students. The adult answers one or two questions such as: "What does it mean to be a leader?" and "How did you develop your leadership skills?" The students then practise the techniques they have learned and use reflection, ask questions or adopt a positive approach.

"The mutual assistance is remarkable," says Thibaudeau. "These meetings enable the students to strengthen their bonds with their MP3 teammates and to learn how to listen." "During the meetings," adds Jessica, "everyone recognizes your qualities and that's when you become closer. It helps us develop our listening skills and our openness. It's fantastic!"

A career on the horizon?

The students are so committed to these projects that some of them are considering a career in intervention. Danka Giguère, a guidance counsellor, asked each MP3 to make a connection between his or her choice of CEGEP program and the experience gained in the projects. It's no surprise that Kim is enrolling in special education!

Looking ahead

With the help of his colleagues, Carol Thibaudeau will see this year's projects through to the end, but he is already looking ahead. "At the end of March, we took about 15 students to the three-day Tel-Jeunes conference in Montréal in order to consolidate a core MP3 team for next year. I don't know where this is going. We need to adapt in order to continue to remain within our team members' fields of interest. But I have full confidence in them and I will do everything I can to give them the support they need to enjoy self-fulfillment and to carry out their mission in the school!"





AND WHAT ARE YOU READING?

Literary Camps

Réjane Bougé

The action plan on reading launched in January 2005 by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport involves a number of activities: large purchases of books for school libraries over a period of three years, a provincial conference and, for the second year in a row, literary camps. These camps, which were a big hit last year, are intended to stir up a passion for reading among personnel who work with young people and to help them fulfill their role as cultural brokers and mediators.

A winning formula

Marie-France Laberge, a collaborator on the action plan and the person responsible for camp content, points out: "The idea is to bring last year's winning formula, which was a tremendous success in three camps in the Laurentides and Estrie regions, to different parts of Québec. Participants' evaluation of the camps was excellent overall, so we won't be changing anything basic." For the second year in a row, teachers, school principals, education consultants and librarians, who usually have little opportunity to work together; will be united with a view to developing synergy. They will be accompanied by the team of experts from *Livres ouverts*, an MELS Web site that promotes and discusses books for young readers. As well, educators will find out about resources that can help them to present books in a more interesting way and to gain a better understanding of young people.

Authors, reading specialists and other experts will be on hand to meet with participants, who will again keep a logbook and attend a book fair. The atmosphere will be relaxed and friendly, in order to foster the development of new ideas and concepts with a view to constantly improving communication between adult and young readers.

The camps will take place next August in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, Capitale-Nationale and Chaudière-Appalaches regions. This year there will be a camp for English-speaking personnel. "Some of the regions we visited last year have decided to repeat the experience on their own, and we hope the same will be true of the regions we visit in 2006 and 2007," says Marie-France Laberge. "But for now, while we are flexible with respect to the variety of cultural experiences offered, we firmly believe that each region should receive similar training. It is important to end this first

year with the same base for everyone. This being said, we will make a slight change this summer so that our workshop leaders are more aware of the specific needs of disadvantaged communities."

Last years' participants were unanimous: the literary camps are much more than a series of related workshops; they are based on a philosophy of reading that they are helping to share. There is no doubt that this initiative on the part of reading enthusiasts will succeed in attracting others! ◀



Renewing the Evaluation of Learning: Quite the Challenge!

Réjane Bougé

To the media and the public at large, evaluation means report cards. But the subject of evaluation is much more complex, as Pierre Bergevin, Assistant Deputy Minister for preschool, elementary and secondary education, pointed out in his opening address at the latest training session for resource persons, held in Québec City on March 14 and 15. The development of competencies takes time, and so does the renewal of evaluation practices. Since this training session, however, there are now 600 more people qualified to provide information about the new evaluation practices.

Evaluation in learning situations

Laila Valin, evaluation director at the Direction générale de la formation des jeunes, emphasized the special nature of the training session, which was devoted exclusively to evaluation. She also pointed out education consultants' favourable reception of the guide for renewing local frameworks for the evaluation of learning. Of course, the training session was intended to familiarize participants with the new ministerial frameworks for evaluation and, through various activities, to help them understand the changes and to introduce them to the training materials they will be using.

Aline Buron and Christian Rousseau, who are in charge of evaluation research and development, then presented the guidelines of the theoretical framework for the training session. They specified that evaluation now focuses on cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies and is intended to support learning, which makes a big difference. The fact that evaluation is literally incorporated into the learning process marks a significant change of philosophy since it means that it is now a shared responsibility, hence the importance of meaningful learning and evaluation situations. Tasks must have meaning for students and answer the age-old question: "What for?" Ultimately, these situations make students want to engage in a more or less complex task, which may involve one or more competencies related to one or more subject areas.



Laila Valin, evaluation director at the Direction générale de la formation des jeunes



It is necessary to distinguish between a learning and evaluation situation, and an evaluation situation. The first is intended to help students develop competencies and construct resources. The second, which is intended purely for evaluation purposes, simply assesses students' level of competency development. Teachers may choose one or the other type of situation. Note, however, that both types allow for the regulation of learning and making judgments, and that they are therefore complementary. Moreover, learning and evaluation situations must take students' autonomy into account. Both speakers remarked that evaluation situations tend to elicit the most reactions. There is a tendency to associate evaluation with the good old days of exams. But these exams were too often presented in a context different from the one in which the concepts were learned. Traditionally, such exams assessed students' achievement of a certain number of objectives and marks were awarded and added up. The difference now is that evaluation takes place in a context related to the one in the learning situation and that it helps the teacher make a judgment on the student's competencies. To this end, and in order to organize their observations, teachers will now use criteria to develop evaluation tools and provide a means of regulating learning. Similarly, they will develop observable indicators based on these criteria. These indicators, each describing a single observable behaviour understood the same way by all parties, will be developed in sufficient numbers to represent the criterion in question. Generally speaking, a criterion will be accompanied by three or four indicators.

The importance of differentiation

Christian Rousseau and Jolène Lanthier, education consultant at the Commission scolaire de Laval, addressed the subject of differentiation. In response to the question: "What does differentiation mean in terms of evaluation?" Lanthier explained what differentiation does *not* mean. "Differentiation does not mean individualized evaluation situations or a disregard for basic values such as justice and equality. Nor does it mean developing cut-rate evaluation situations for the purpose of levelling down or accepting different standards. Above all, differentiation does not mean doing less!"



"Evaluation requirements or criteria can be modified for special needs students, but the certification rules must be respected in the case of ministry examinations."

Jolène Lanthier, education consultant at the Commission scolaire de Laval

Emphasizing that differentiation in evaluation is beneficial for all students, Lanthier pointed out that it should be coupled with differentiated learning and that close cooperation among educators enriches the practice of differentiation. Students should also be actively involved in the process. "Up until now, teachers applied differentiation spontaneously; now it needs to be made more formal." Since teachers are always asking just how far they can go, note that differentiation can be broken down into three major aspects: flexibility, adaptation and modification. While flexibility fits in naturally with the choices teachers give students, adaptation could involve providing a special needs student with texts in large type or with increased line spacing. Adaptation involves material organization. Evaluation requirements or criteria can be modified for special needs students, but the certification rules must be respected in the case of ministry examinations. Jolène Lanthier pointed out that the report card should always be as clear and concise as possible, since it contains essential information that tells parents whether and how their child is progressing and how his or her achievements compare with the expected outcomes set out in the Québec Education Program. The student's learning should be presented in terms of the challenges he or she has set and the requirements all students must meet during and at the end of the cycle.

A wealth of observations

The session also included three blocks of workshops in which participants were able to apply all of these principles and develop an evaluation rubric in a variety of learning contexts. The participants broke down into small groups, each of which established the tasks to be performed, identified the targeted subject-specific or cross-curricular competencies, and made sure they were consistent with the QEP. They also reflected on the concept of judgment in evaluation with respect to justice, equity and equality. They compared the evaluation criteria they developed with those in the QEP, noting the differences between their instinctive answers and the prescribed criteria. For each criterion, they identified observable indicators and learned that reaching a shared understanding of a problem can sometimes be difficult.

Martine Hart and Blozaire Paul, two experienced workshop leaders, agreed that there was a need for a training session on evaluation: "Educators really need to develop evaluation competencies!" In keeping with the reform, teachers are encouraged to develop the 12 competencies set out in the publication *Teacher Training: Orientations, Professional Competencies* (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2001). Martine Hart uses the image of nesting dolls to explain the workshop procedure: "The exercises teachers will be doing, i.e. identifying criteria and defining observable indicators, will have been tested on education consultants and other coordinators: everyone will have the same

training. At first, it is very important to use a modelling approach, demonstrating that the resulting rubric provides concrete elements to work on," says Martine Hart. "It is important to remember, however, that the aim of the exercise is to facilitate communication with parents." For his part, Blozaire Paul points out the dual function of this training in the evaluation of learning: support for learning and an assessment of the student's progress. In his opinion, it is essential that the concept of professional judgment be accessible. On a practical level, he adds: "if teachers are to regulate evaluation, they must first be able to present specific, concrete tasks." ◀

"If teachers are to regulate evaluation, they must first be able to present specific concrete tasks."



Blozaire Paul

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