

# Québec Education Program

Secondary School Education, Cycle One



Reach for  
your Dreams

Québec 

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your **Dreams**

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### **To All Secondary Cycle One Teachers:**

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am pleased to present the Québec Education Program for Secondary Cycle One.

The publication of this document represents an important accomplishment, since it marks the beginning of the implementation of curriculum reform at the secondary level. This education program is in keeping with the principles of the elementary level program, while taking into account the challenges specific to the secondary level.

This document is the result of a joint effort by over 400 people from the education community, most of whom were teachers. Moreover, it drew extensively on the most recent research in the field of education.

It is important to point out that, during the fall of 2002, this document benefited from the comments made by partners in the education community and by secondary school teachers during the validation and field-testing of the preliminary version of the Québec Education Program. The brief on this subject prepared by the Commission des programmes d'études was also used to make final improvements to the document. These invaluable contributions facilitated adjustments that more adequately reflect the needs of the main stakeholders.

The aim of the Québec Education Program for Secondary Cycle One is the success of all students. In this respect, it must be considered a useful and indeed essential framework for all those involved in education. It also specifies the aims and orientations that will guide the educational choices of the teachers, the entire school staff and the governing board, as well as the parents.

Please familiarize yourself with this program, bearing in mind that its implementation is scheduled for September 2004 in those schools that so desire, and for September 2005 in all Québec secondary schools. You will therefore be called upon to use your expertise and to work closely with your cycle team and your school team to help all students reach for their dreams and fully develop their potential.

Thank you for your clear commitment to all the students. I am counting on your collaboration in rising to the challenge of preparing today's young people to become full-fledged citizens.

Sincerely,

Minister of Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'P. Reid', is located below the text 'Minister of Education'.

PIERRE REID



## Foreword

The challenges of educating today's young people are increasingly demanding. In a complex and changing social context, providing all students with the best possible education requires a constant readjustment of practices. The Québec Education Program constitutes an indispensable framework for all the pedagogical choices facing educators under these circumstances. It calls for the concerted effort of all members of the school community, particularly teachers. It also presents the main educational orientations that should guide school staff, as well as the learning considered essential for young people today.

The Québec Education Program establishes the foundations of a moral contract between educational institutions and society—particularly parents and students. In light of the schools' mission, it embodies an educational approach that encompasses all dimensions of students'

development. It may thus be used to convey to students the educational vision that adults seek to realize with them, and the expectations that they must fulfill for their competencies to be recognized.

Like the program for elementary education, of which it is the logical continuation, the program for Secondary Cycle One has four distinctive characteristics:

- It targets the development of competencies by students who are actively involved in the learning process.
- It integrates all the subjects into a coherent whole focused on the major issues of contemporary life.
- It explicitly targets cross-curricular learning that transcends the boundaries of subject-specific learning.
- It calls for teachers' professional expertise and, in that spirit, allows for their individual and collective choices.



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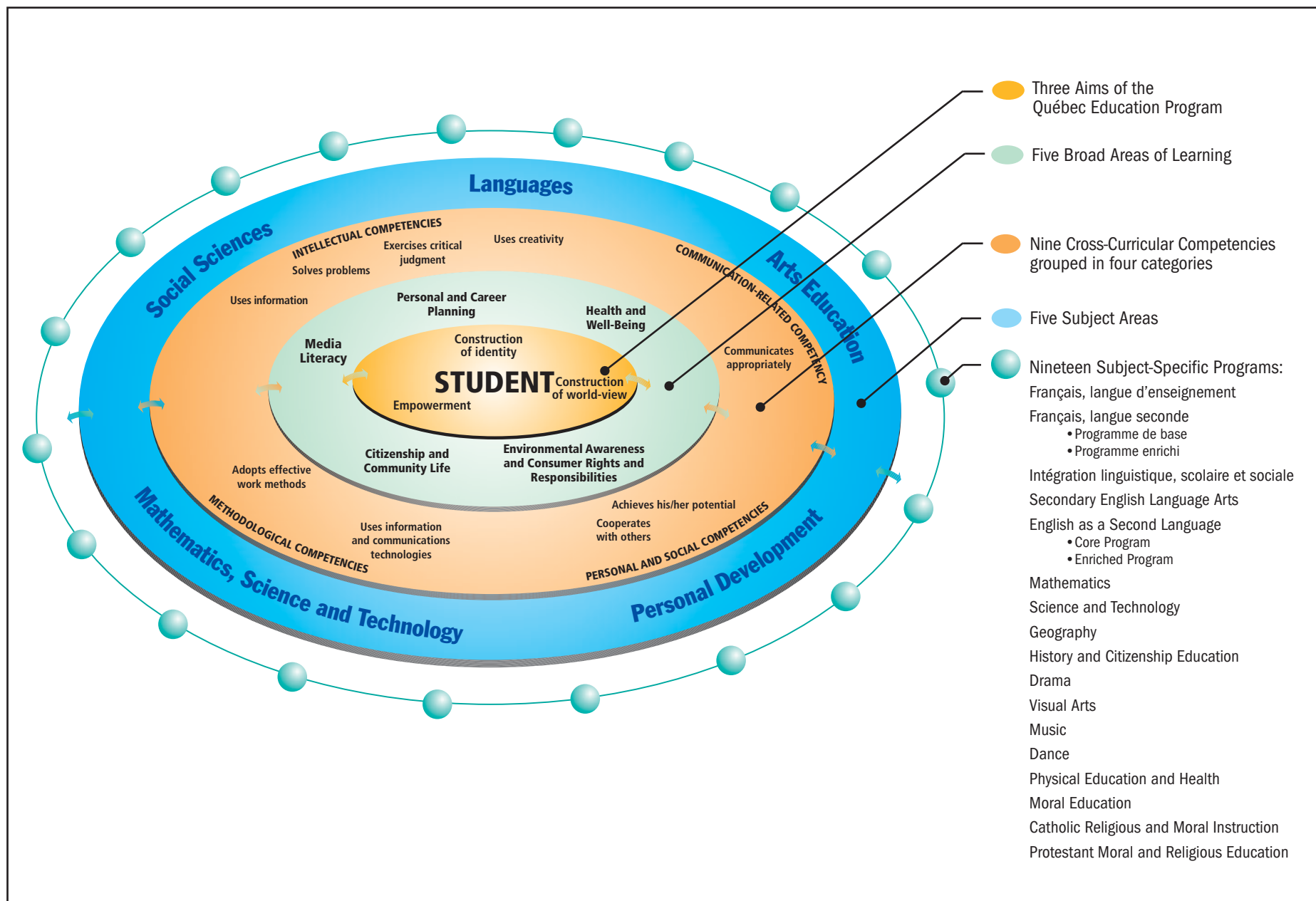
NOTE: A bibliography is provided at the end of the first four chapters as well as at the end of each subject-specific program.



## Chapter 1

# A Curriculum for the Twenty-First Century

# The Québec Education Program



Québec Education Program



## 1.1 The Challenges Facing Québec Secondary Schools

### Preparing All Young People to Live in a Changing World

Economic, cultural and social boundaries are becoming permeable, while information and communications technologies accelerate the exchange of information, making it both easier and more difficult to obtain. Globalization necessitates individual and collective decisions that affect the quality of people's lives throughout the world. Teachers, school administrators and all school staff are in an excellent position to observe the effects of these developments on young people: with direct access to information anywhere on the planet, they have large quantities of different types of knowledge, but it is not always organized; they feel somewhat insecure about the future; they seek immediate satisfaction but also want more stable guidelines. Students also display paradoxical attitudes: they are very curious, but not highly motivated to study, they have a thirst for meaning but tend to overlook the interrelations among various phenomena that are an essential element of their meaning, they aspire to be autonomous but also display a need to belong. In addition, educators all find it difficult to provide young people with effective guidance because of the enormous differences that characterize them. Some students are highly motivated, while others drop out at the first obstacle. Some have stable and intellectually stimulating families, while others must deal with disorganized environments, frequent changes or periods in which all their energy goes into mere survival. There are also young people who have to adapt to new living conditions as recent immigrants to Québec.

### Working With Adolescents

At the beginning of secondary school, issues related to adolescence must be addressed along with those pertaining to education in general. This period of life represents a challenge for those going through it as well as those around them. Adolescence, with its unsettling changes, is a period when young people rethink all of their ideas, beliefs, and values. The development of their emotional life and sexuality requires a lot of energy and sometimes seems to interfere with their evolving intelligence. Their identity development sometimes entails comparing their perceptions and opinions with prevailing views. Faced with a larger and more diverse student population than that of elementary school, students starting secondary school are likely to form new social relationships. This period influences the choices young people make concerning how they relate to others.

Secondary schools thus receive young people who are all leaving childhood behind, but who did not all get the same thing out of elementary school. They bring different attitudes, knowledge and skills to this new educational level. Whatever their characteristics at this point, they all need support and guidance as they embark on the process of defining their identity by asking questions and taking positions. They share their educators' goal concerning their successful integration into the adult world that awaits them.



## 1.2 Changing School: A Societal Choice

### Building on Previous Reforms

Québec's present education system is the product of previous efforts to adapt it to the times. The reform carried out in the wake of the Parent Commission, in the 1960s, gave all young people access to educational services from preschool through secondary school, and allowed a very large proportion of them to go beyond the secondary level. Several decades later, universal access to schooling is a given, but now, our commitment as a society to raising the average level of schooling has resulted in unexpected problems for schools with regard to support, supervision and training.

The objective-based programs of study developed in the 1980s and 1990s also played a role in the genesis of the current reform. By promoting the development of skills and attitudes, these programs highlighted the importance of practical know-how and knowing how to respond appropriately in various situations. However, the division of their content into a multitude of objectives—general, terminal and intermediate—fostered a fragmented approach to knowledge and learning.

Society expects more from schools than it did in the past. They must not only ensure that as many students as possible succeed in school itself, but also prepare all young people to live successful lives. They are expected to continue transmitting the knowledge of previous generations, while at the same time helping all students develop skills that will enable them to become educated and cultivated individuals, involved citizens and competent workers. In short, we expect the schools to turn out autonomous people, capable of adapting in a world marked by the exponential growth of information, by constant change,

and by interdependent problems whose solution requires expert, diversified and complementary skills.

This increase in the demands placed on schools led Québec, like a number of other communities in the world since the early 1990s, to undertake a major reform of its education system.

### A Reform That Responds to Social Expectations

Over the last two decades, numerous briefs, reports and surveys by UNESCO, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and, closer to home, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, have focused on how schools can deal with the new social and cultural trends. In 1994, *Preparing Our Youth for the 21st Century*, the report of the task force on elementary and secondary school learning profiles, urged Québec's education system to take into account major trends such as internationalization, globalization, the information explosion, rapid technological development and the growing complexity of social life. It defined the broad subject areas that should form the basis of the school curriculum, as well as general competencies related to intellectual methods and skills. The work of the task force, like that related to the development of this program, reflects the evolution of knowledge about the learning process, which has made it possible to identify more clearly than before the characteristics of stimulating learning contexts.

In 1996, the Commission for the Estates General on Education sparked a broad social debate concerning the effectiveness of the education system, which made it possible to define society's expectations with respect to

schools. The final report of the Commission for the Estates General, *Renewing Our Education System: Ten Priority Actions*, and *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools*, the report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform (1997), laid the foundations for the educational policy statement *Québec Schools on Course* (1997).

This policy statement established the main orientations of the curriculum reform by targeting one central objective: success for all, with no lowering of requirements. It called for a curriculum based on the learning essential for students in the early twenty-first century. By insisting on the importance of meeting the particular needs and interests of each student, the policy statement underlined the need for differentiated educational practices within the framework of a common curriculum. It also recommended a more flexible organizational model that would respect the autonomy of educational institutions and their professional staff.

### A Collective Educational Project

The Québec Education Program incorporates these analyses and choices. Its development has taken the form of a collective educational project. More than 400 people participated in the development of the Secondary Cycle One program: teachers, school administrators, consultants, non-teaching education professionals and university professors. In addition, it has been revised to take into account the briefs produced by the Commission des programmes d'études and feedback from the 15 secondary-level pilot schools and from the partners of the education system who were consulted in the fall of 2002.

## 1.3 The Schools' Threefold Mission

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Québec schools today have a mandate to provide educational services to all young people, to take into account the diversity of their situations and to provide them with the tools necessary to achieve their social and intellectual potential in both their personal and working lives. This means that schools must play a multidimensional role in the lives of young people. Thus, according to the policy statement, *Québec Schools on Course*, the schools' mission is threefold: to provide instruction, to socialize and to provide qualifications.

### To Provide Instruction in a Knowledge-Based World

In today's world, knowledge is the driving force of any human undertaking, whether technical or social. In this context, the schools' role in the transmission of collective learning between the generations takes on added importance. However, with the continuous expansion of knowledge and the need to take into account the cultural resources of the entire planet, schools must not only ensure that students acquire knowledge considered essential today; they must also help them develop their ability to obtain other information when they need it.

Although schools are not the only place where young people learn, they play a crucial role in the construction of students' knowledge and the development of their intellectual capacities. Now more than ever, the schools' responsibility to cultivate the mind is vital for both individuals and the community.

### To Socialize Students in a Pluralistic World

Geographic and professional mobility and the perpetual renegotiation of interpersonal relationships, particularly with the development of new family and work arrangements, make it essential to consider relationships among individuals in a new light. In the interest of both individual development and community life, people must learn to appreciate personal and cultural differences in others, while ensuring that their own distinctiveness is respected.

Schools must act as agents of social cohesion by helping students learn how to live together and by fostering a feeling of belonging to the community. The school itself constitutes a community, and both students' desire for autonomy and their identification with peer groups should be seen as drives that they must learn to channel for the good of the community. Along these lines, schools must seek to prevent exclusion, of which there is a greater risk in secondary school because adolescents sometimes express their need to affirm themselves by rejecting others. It is thus essential that schools show a concern for students' social and emotional development, promote the fundamental values of democracy and ensure that young people act like responsible citizens in a manner commensurate with their age.

### To Provide Qualifications in a Changing World

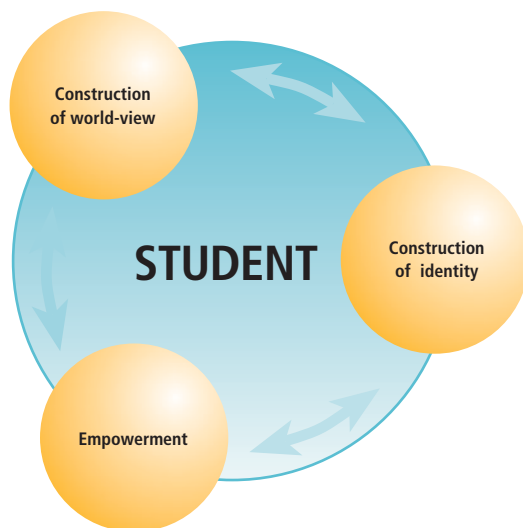
A knowledge-based society requires an increase in the educational level of the population. Québec schools are thus responsible for ensuring that all citizens have an opportunity to acquire the learning they need to take their place at work, in their families and in the community. To achieve this goal, schools must—without lapsing into segregation—deal with the increasing heterogeneity of their students and allow them to progress at different rhythms. All students should be able to leave secondary school with a diploma that represents the equivalent of a recognized passport for their subsequent path in life, whether they choose to continue their education or to enter the job market. The corollary is that secondary schools must provide guidance to help all young people make choices corresponding to their aspirations and potential.

In addition to ensuring that all students acquire a basic education, schools have to help them develop the ability to learn throughout their lives. It is important to facilitate the transition to other levels in the education system and also to encourage people to return to school or other training environments, when appropriate. The official recognition of prior learning and competencies must become an integral part of the emphasis on continuing development and must accurately attest to each person's achievements.

## 1.4 Aims of the Québec Education Program

Helping students construct their world-view, construct their identity and become empowered are the three aims of the Québec Education Program. They provide a common direction for all educational measures and convey the sense that schools do more than give students academic tools; they also enable them to set goals for their lives and prepare them to contribute to society.

These aims served as guidelines for the development of the program. They are explained more fully in Chapter 2, which presents the educational aims of the broad areas of learning. They are achieved through the development of the cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies, which will be covered in other chapters of the program. All of these elements together constitute the framework of the students' learning profiles.



### Construction of World-View

The way we see the world depends on many factors. From the outset, cultural heritage and family background have an enormous impact on our world-view. Although it is undeniable that by the time students start secondary school, previous family and educational experiences predispose them to interpret the world in certain ways, school nonetheless has a major influence on their world-views, mainly because they attend school during the period in their lives when they are most receptive to a variety of influences.

Access to a large store of knowledge and varied cultural resources provides students with fertile ground for the construction of their world-view. This is why the program suggests that teachers encourage the integrated development of knowledge by relating subject-specific sources of information to the world as perceived by young people. Students can enrich their world-view by looking critically at themselves and their actions, opinions, and values. It is important for all members of the school community to be on the lookout for opportunities to support students in their process of reflection, which contributes to the formation and expression of their world-view.

### Construction of Identity

Particularly in adolescence, schools influence the construction of students' personal, social and cultural identity. They provide opportunities for them to develop their resources and talents by comparing themselves with those of others, learning the best way to use their strengths and testing their limits. The possibility of expressing their opinions, making choices, and learning

to justify them and assess their consequences helps students develop their autonomy. Similarly, contact with ethnic and cultural diversity can make them realize that they are part of a community and help them to take their place in that community while affirming their own values in a spirit of respect for differences. Students learn to express their perceptions, feelings and ideas and recognize how other people's opinions can influence their own reactions.

All the subject areas contribute to the development of the students' identity by bringing them into contact with various types of knowledge, broadening their horizons, expanding their knowledge about themselves and their origins, stimulating their faculties, encouraging them to take positions on major social issues and providing them with the opportunity to reflect on the moral and spiritual tenets of their community.

### Empowerment

Knowing what action to take in response to the complexity of current issues or how to confront major ethical and existential questions gives young people power over their lives. Their power will be greater if it is supported by a coherent world-view and a well-defined identity, but that is not enough. They must also learn, patiently and by dint of oft-renewed efforts, to take effective action, which entails the integration of their knowledge and know-how.

Knowing how to respond appropriately involves using various combinations of subject matter and intellectual and social skills as tools for action and reflection according to the context. The goal of student empowerment ties in with the concept of competency, which is the cornerstone of the Québec Education Program. A competency

may be defined as *the capacity to act effectively by drawing on a variety of resources*. This means the capacity to properly use the means at their disposal, including everything that students have learned at school as well as their

experiences, skills, attitudes and interests, as well as external resources, such as their classmates, their teachers, experts or various information sources.

## Language and Culture: Intrinsic to the Aims of the Program

Any discussion of the aims of the program must address the pivotal role of language and culture in the development of each individual.

### **Language: Vehicle of Thought, Identity and Freedom**

It is well known that language contributes to the formation of concepts and ideas, and enables people to acquire knowledge and understanding. As the principal tool for organizing and expressing thought, language plays a key role in the development of students' world-view and personal identity.

It is also an instrument of liberation and power because it allows students to express their ideas and to influence those of others. In a democratic society, speaking one's mind is an act of citizenship and participation in community life and a way to resolve conflicts.

The language of instruction contributes to the definition of both personal and collective identity. An important factor in social cohesion, a language enables a community of individuals to express its essence, its view of reality, its thoughts and its feelings through literature, song, poetry, theatre and cinema and so on.

### **Culture: A Means of Self-Perception and Perception of the World**

Culture, understood as a tool that provides a window on the collective heritage, constitutes another essential element for the development of students' world-view, the construction of their identity and their empowerment.

Schools must first of all consider the general culture. Individual students' sense of their place in the universe—of their personal and social identity—is based on representations, values and symbols stemming from their immediate surroundings. But schools also have a major role to play in ensuring that all students have access to a broad culture. This culture is the result of intelligent human activity past and present, knowledge of the collective heritage and of common frames of reference developed over time to address the major scientific, ethical and political issues that confront human beings.

In the early twenty-first century there is so much artistic, philosophical and scientific work of all origins that it is not possible to choose to introduce students to a single cultural universe. Instead, schools must opt for the development of an open-minded attitude toward culture in general. In the framework of this program, teaching from a cultural perspective consists essentially in using cultural references to help students understand the world and discover that each subject is meaningful by virtue of both its history and the questions it raises. This involves ensuring that the students establish more connections among the various scientific, social, artistic, moral and economic phenomena, and develop their own perspectives on these phenomena. The cultural approach thus promotes a critical, ethical and aesthetic view of the world.

Finally, 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.

## 1.5 Orientations for Appropriate Action

The Québec Education Program builds on the past. Thus, the broad objectives pursued by schools in the past are not dismissed, but they are seen from a new perspective.

The four orientations listed below provide guidelines for the practical application of the program's aims:

- success for all
- education that focuses on the development of competencies
- evaluation that promotes learning
- integrated learning

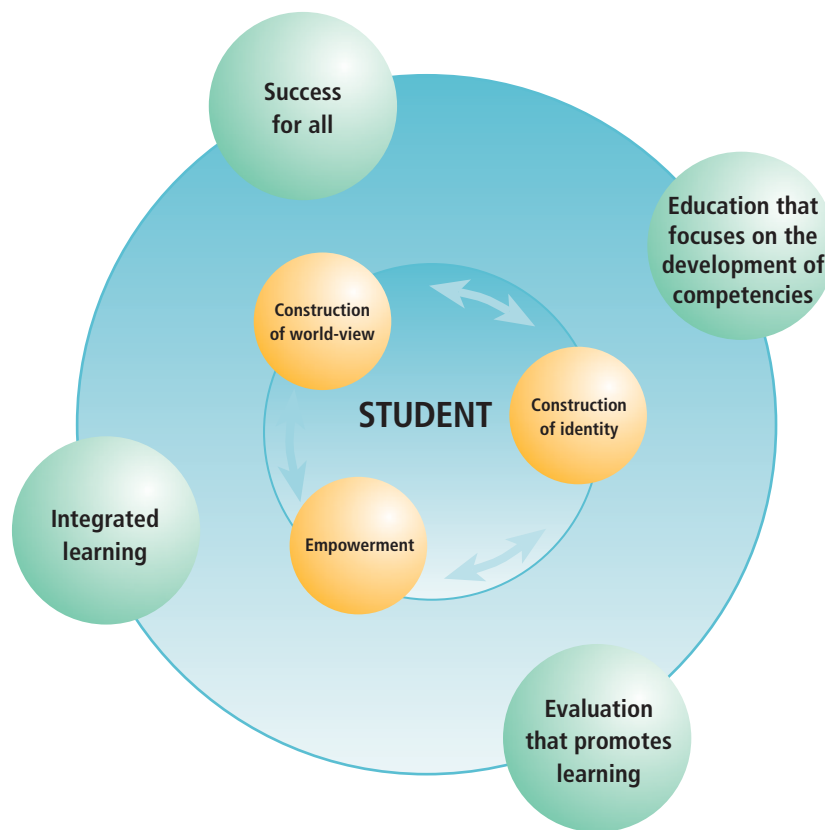
### Success for All

The objective of success underlies all the aims of the Québec Education Program. However, in the field of education, the meaning of this objective is open to several interpretations. In order to be able to determine the appropriateness of actions taken with a view to promoting success, it is important to grasp the following complementary perspectives.

#### Formal Academic Success

For most people, success means *the success of the greatest possible number of students*. This interpretation suggests that schools should enable ever-increasing numbers of students to acquire the competencies considered essential in order to earn a secondary school diploma. Along these lines, and in keeping with the Québec Education Program, official diplomas will attest to the development of competencies in all subject areas: languages, mathematics, science and technology, arts education, the social sciences and personal development. Standards will be high, because the aim is to prepare students for active integration into a complex world, but flexible enough to recognize that there are many different ways to take one's place in the world.

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## Educational Success

The concept of *success for all* underscores the school's responsibility to provide all its students, whatever their talents, aptitudes and interests, with the necessary foundations for successful social integration. This might be called functional educational success, a concept of success with different parameters, defined by data taken from all areas of life. According to this logic, the objective is to recognize the ways in which students have enriched the capacities they started out with, and have taken advantage of their years in school.

## Individualized Educational Success

Success also has another meaning; it can refer to the challenges students face. This concept of success concerns all students: talented and gifted ones and those with major or minor difficulties alike must realize that they are the main agents of their education and establish personal objectives in order to deal effectively with their weaknesses, develop their strengths and, if possible, go beyond the established expectations. In short, individualized educational success means realizing one's dreams.

## Success for Educational Institutions

Schools provide educational services to individuals but are also responsible to the community. They must perform effectively and verify the appropriateness of the measures they implement. Their fulfillment of these responsibilities is reflected in the level of competency generally attained by their students. This means that the school's educational project must be implemented and evaluated in relation to all dimensions of the Québec Education Program—both those that concern individuals and those that concern the community.

## Education That Focuses on the Development of Competencies

A pedagogy based on the transmission of knowledge is not the best way to foster the empowerment of students, and even less an empowerment that takes into account their individual differences. Thus, the concept of competency proposed by the Québec Education Program requires a different approach to teaching and learning.

Competency is the ability to act effectively or respond appropriately in situations of a certain complexity. This means that it involves more than the mere addition or juxtaposition of elements. It also means that students can continue increasing their mastery of a competency throughout their schooling, and indeed, beyond it. Promoting the development of competencies thus involves encouraging students to view knowledge in a different way and to focus instead on learning how to think and developing their autonomy.

## A Program That Focuses on Learning

The program is based on the premise that knowledge should be constructed by students rather than transmitted by teachers, because no one can learn for another person. Although it is not based on one particular approach, it draws on several theories that share a recognition that learners are the main architects of their competencies and knowledge. The constructivist, social constructivist and cognitivist theories of learning are particularly useful in this regard:

- constructivism, because it presents knowledge as the result of actions (originally concrete and subsequently internalized), that are taken by individuals in relation to objects, representations or abstract statements

- social constructivism, because it stresses the social character of thought and learning, and views concepts as social tools that support the exchange of viewpoints and the negotiation of meaning
- cognitivism, because it describes the processes enabling individuals to incorporate new knowledge into their knowledge system and use it in new contexts

People involved in applying the QEP may find these theoretical approaches helpful for purposes of constructing tools of thought and intervention strategies.<sup>1</sup>

While it is the responsibility of the Ministère de l'Éducation to establish the aims of the education system, it is up to school staff to define ways to achieve them. However, since students cannot, logically, learn to think if their activities are limited to rote exercises, even without specifying any particular approach, the program has implications for pedagogical practices. It is not so much a question of following one school of thought or another, but of creating learning situations and pedagogical contexts that promote the development of competencies. This paradigm shift presents new educational challenges, but it also offers many opportunities for rich and stimulating pedagogical experiences.

## Knowledge and Competencies Are Complementary

Knowledge and competencies are not mutually exclusive; they complement each other. The different sorts of knowledge constitute essential resources for responding appropriately in a complex situation. The capacity to respond appropriately that characterizes a competency, however, is based on the assimilation and deliberate use of the requisite concepts and skills. Thus the knowledge useful for the exercise of a competency is that which the intellectually

1. The bibliography suggests further reading for those interested in learning more about the theoretical foundations of the program.

active student has constructed, and the scope of the competency depends directly on the relevance and breadth of the knowledge the students bring to it.

The development of a competency does not follow a linear sequence, from simple to complex, or parts to whole. Rather, the competency is constructed on the basis of the various dimensions of a situation. The point of departure for the use and development of a competency is located in the overall challenge to be met, and the point of arrival corresponds to a suitable response to the initial problems. For example, a fragmented approach to becoming a hockey player, one that requires students to memorize all the rules before playing their first game, and then focuses on skating techniques and the proper use of the hockey stick, would not be very effective. It is by playing the game that beginners gradually acquire knowledge and skills, which they combine with their prior learning. Nonetheless, practice sessions with a competent trainer remain necessary, because they enable students to concentrate on various elements of the game in order to improve their mastery of them and thus play with greater ease. The learning curve is really a spiral, within which existing competencies permit the acquisition of new knowledge, which, in turn, contributes to the development of the competencies.

### Developing Only the Essential Elements

Developing competencies is time-consuming. Students have to use and reuse them regularly to increase their scope and the depth.

The decision to promote the development of competencies thus entails focusing on a certain number of competencies and targeting only essential knowledge in order to ensure that there is enough time for students to progress in their development of certain competencies and to construct others.

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The choice of a competency-based approach also reflects the idea that school is where students must begin to develop the complex skills that will enable them to adapt to a changing environment later on by acquiring new learning and skills. Thus the competencies, especially the cross-curricular ones, can become tools for lifelong learning.

### Evaluation That Promotes Learning<sup>2</sup>

Evaluation is not an end in itself. Students do not learn in order to be evaluated, but they are evaluated in order to help them learn better.

#### Evaluation: A Learning Tool

In light of the challenges posed by this program, it is important to bear in mind that evaluation should above all be seen as a tool to help students learn and to help teachers as they guide students through the learning process. Developed and used in this spirit, it provides a more solid basis for the decisions and actions that govern students' learning, on a daily basis and at more strategic moments, such as the transitions between cycles. Because it helps teachers assess students' prior learning, monitor their development and judge the effectiveness of their own pedagogical strategies, evaluation constitutes an essential resource for attaining the objective of student success. This approach to evaluation can facilitate communication with parents, and help them understand their children's progress and identify ways to help them learn.

Along these lines, evaluation enables teachers to determine the level students have reached in their development of the competencies, measured in terms of the end-of-cycle outcomes for each subject. In order to establish this assessment of learning, teachers must have a variety of information derived from different situations.

To this end, they should rely more on evaluation that is integrated into the learning process, which does not rule out planning specific evaluation situations. The results of examinations administered by the Ministère de l'Éducation or the school boards should be included among the items of information on which the teacher's evaluation is based.

Seeing the evaluation of learning as a factor that contributes to students' success does not mean lowering standards, but rather making the most of information obtained through evaluation, both at the end of the cycle and throughout the learning process, to create learning conditions that foster the optimal development of competencies by all students.

### Evaluation That Is Consistent With the Québec Education Program

Whether it serves to promote learning or to recognize the levels of competency attained by students, evaluation must take into consideration all the elements that make up the programs: the subject-specific competencies, the cross-curricular competencies and the broad areas of learning.

### Integrated Learning

The world is characterized by growing interdependence, and the level of competency required to deal with this reality is increasing all the time. As a result, teaching fragmented elements of content is no longer sufficient.

2. The desire to promote the success of all students and the choice of a competency-based approach for the Québec Education Program entailed a reexamination by the Ministère de l'Éducation of the meaning of the evaluation of learning. This requirement underlay the recent adoption of the new *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning: Evaluation for Better Learning* (2003).



Learning too must be integrated; students must recognize that these elements are connected, so that they can learn by solving complex problems. Opening up schools to the world and opting for a unified program organized in terms of cycles reflect the kind of attitude that is required in order to successfully integrate different kinds of learning.

### **Opening the Schools Up to the World**

Schools will be better able to foster the intellectual and emotional growth of their students if they establish connections with the realities of the world. Since school is not an end in itself, schools must prepare students for life outside their walls.

Integrating schools into their environment encourages students to reflect on the extent to which their learning is useful or applicable in different contexts. This process of reflection is likely to enhance their capacity to transfer their learning to situations that are new to them and for which they have not yet acquired any specific learning.

### **Educational Measures That Respect the Need for Continuity**

The development of competencies is an ongoing process; each step builds on the previous one. Students starting secondary school can thus use competencies developed in elementary school, which means that educational measures must be designed with continuity in mind. Schools must transcend the boundaries between educational levels and subjects. From the beginning of elementary school through the end of secondary school, they must monitor their students' progress and work toward common goals.

### **Cycle-Based Organization to Ensure the Complementarity of Educational Measures**

The multi-year learning cycle is the mode of organization most conducive to the complementarity of educational measures and the continuity of the learning process. Above all, by making it possible for the cycle team to collectively manage educational services, the multi-year cycle allows students to progress according to their own learning rates.

In Québec, the first eight years of schooling are organized into two-year cycles. The six years of elementary school are divided into three two-year cycles. The first cycle of secondary school, which is also of two years' duration, resembles elementary school in many ways: it too is based on a core education for all students, the composition of classes is often stable, and there is systematic supervision.

## 1.6 A Framework That Promotes the Renewal of Pedagogical Practices

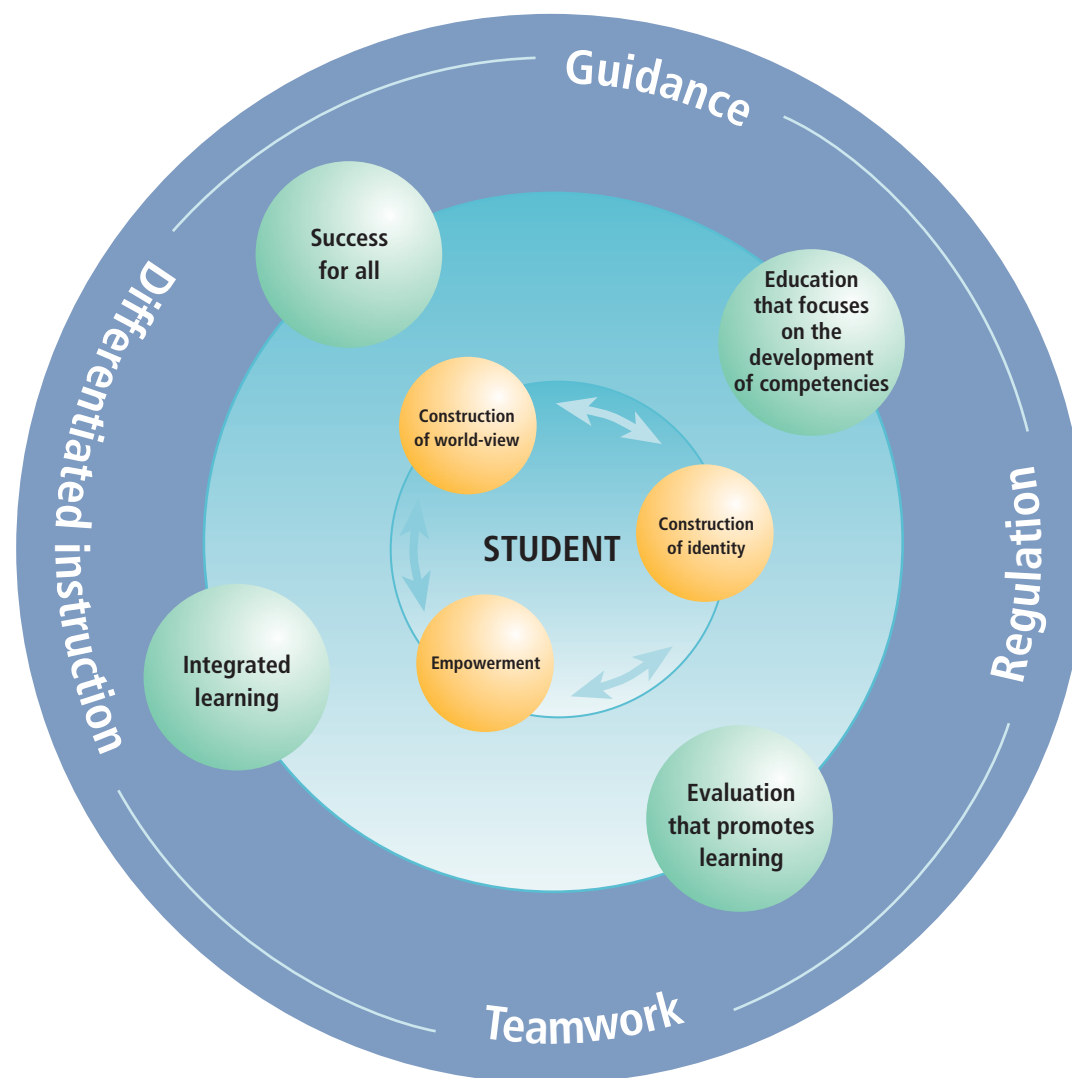
The orientations of the Québec Education Program underscore the importance of certain pedagogical practices that are distinct, yet interdependent.

### The Practice of Differentiation

The objective of success for all students grows out of the conviction that academic failure is not inevitable and that faced with challenges that engage them, all students can learn and realize their potential. This program does not claim to solve the problem of unequal abilities, but it makes it possible to take into account the heterogeneity that characterizes all classrooms, and supports differentiated instruction, which is an essential condition for countering failure. It encourages teachers to use students' interests and questions, to respect their learning styles and rates, to build on the strengths and prior learning of each student, and to take into consideration personal, social and family differences.

### Using a Variety of Strategies and Resources

Having all students do the same lesson or exercise at the same time rarely presents challenges appropriate for all students. The Québec Education Program provides teachers with a broader range of elements, with which to construct more diversified learning situations that meet the needs of all students. Since the three main components of the program—the broad areas of learning, the cross-curricular competencies and the subject-specific competencies—can be combined in a multitude of ways, teachers can offer students complex and meaningful learning situations that allow each student to use resources that will necessarily differ from those of the other students. Thus, the program promotes flexible classroom organization, the use of many sources of information and technological



tools, the formation of flexible learning groups, respect for individual work rhythms, and differentiated support and enrichment. The strategies that can be used include having students work together or having individual students work on their own, and teachers can use the traditional lecture-based approach if necessary.

## The Practice of Guidance

The competencies are not taught in the traditional sense of the term; the students themselves develop them. This said, they develop them more effectively if they receive guidance, mentoring and regular opportunities to use them. When the attention of students and educators is focused on the development of competencies, the teaching/learning process no longer targets the reproduction of more or less automatic procedures or predetermined answers, but emphasizes the ability to choose ways of achieving desired results. Teachers are thus encouraged to embrace the basic tenets of the program, seeing it as a tool that can help them make appropriate decisions for the education of young people.

## Paying Attention to Students

Supporting the development of competencies entails focusing on the students, showing concern for the evolution of their knowledge and their capacity to use it and recognizing the importance of the emotional dimension in the learning process. By providing guidance, teachers help students to become aware of what they know and understand, and draw their attention to learning they need to acquire. Helping students develop competencies involves assisting them in relating what they know and can already do to what they are going to learn. It also means enabling them to recognize resources that can help them.

In all cases, students' development is strongly contingent on their perception of their ability to learn and their judgment of what it is worth their while to learn. The cross-curricular competencies can promote students' self-confidence by showing them that it is also possible to learn how to learn. Similarly, the broad areas of learning can foster their motivation by helping teachers demonstrate the connections between school learning and the world outside the school.

## The Practice of Regulation (or Adjustment)

### Regulating the Development of Competencies

Competencies are progressive, comprehensive and integrated. The learning activities used for their development or evaluation must oblige students to draw on a set of resources to perform tasks that are complex, contextualized and meaningful. Students need sufficient time and opportunities to develop their competencies. Frequent feedback is also helpful. Students need a great variety of information in order to identify what works and what works less well. This information can help students make individual or collective adjustments, but it can also provide encouragement by validating, in the course of action, students' major or minor progress and teachers' pedagogical success.

### Students and the Regulation of Their Learning

Teachers who practice adjustment seek the collaboration of students in order to ascertain their learning, monitor their progress and determine their own effectiveness. They readily employ self-evaluation and peer evaluation. By participating actively in the evaluation of their ongoing learning, students learn, with the help of teachers and classmates, to accurately assess the knowledge they acquire and the way in which they use it. They thus develop their metacognitive abilities, which they can use to continue

learning throughout their lives. Whether it is spontaneous or planned, this practice is essential to students' success.

## Professional Judgment: Going Beyond Subjectivity

Whether it is used to help students learn or to support a decision concerning the recognition of their competencies, teachers' judgment plays a decisive role, for the evaluation of competencies cannot be reduced to the mere compilation of data. Pedagogical and administrative decisions must be based on the concerted judgment of competent professionals. To make fair decisions, teachers must take measures to ensure that their judgment is rigorous and that their approach is transparent. This involves planning evaluation situations, using appropriate tools, recording enough appropriate information and interpreting the information in a manner consistent with the Québec Education Program. The competencies and their key features, the evaluation criteria and end-of-cycle outcomes as well as the subject matter should be their frame of reference for this task.

## Parents' Participation in the Process of Regulation

Evaluation also serves to inform parents. In addition to the report cards issued during and at the end of each cycle, various other means of communication may be used: annotated assignments, meetings with parents and so on, to update parents on their children's progress and share ways to provide their children with ongoing support in their school work. Parents, on the other hand, know their children, and this knowledge can be useful to school staff. It is thus worthwhile noting that the communication process between schools and families should work in both directions. Parents will be better able to play their role in this process if they have already understood the Québec Education Program, which constitutes the framework for all measures taken by the school.

## The Practice of Teamwork

As individuals, teachers are responsible for their professional actions and, at the same time, they are expected to work closely and share responsibility with colleagues. Administrators, teachers, non-teaching professionals and members of the support staff must work together to create optimal teaching-learning conditions, particularly within a given cycle. The Québec Education Program is designed to make it easier for all members of the school staff to coordinate their efforts.

### Making the Class and the School a Learning Community

The focus on learning and competencies calls for a renewed approach to teaching. The development of competencies and the organization of teaching focused on learning require the whole school team to participate actively in the school's educational project in order to develop a systemic perspective on what they aim to achieve with the students. Through cooperation, collaboration among teachers of different subjects, and shared projects and activities, teachers can pool their energy to maximize student learning.

### Making the School a Learning Organization

The organizational changes the school has to make will bring it closer to the practices characteristic of a growing number of what are called "learning organizations" because their staff all share a common vision, because they rely on shared expertise, communication and close cooperation among staff with different educational backgrounds and different talents, and because they invest in professional development and promote the construction of knowledge and innovative solutions to problems.

It is in the interest of schools to evolve in this direction, if only to fulfill their mission in a coherent way, because they have to educate young people who are able to integrate harmoniously into this type of organization. The daily management of the class and the school should be based largely on cooperation among teachers in the same cycle, the systematic use of multidisciplinary learning situations, the sharing of resources, strategies and responsibilities, and the effort to find appropriate solutions to problems specific to the school.

### A Program Designed for Use in a Cycle-Based School Organization

The cycle-based approach reinforces this new way of working together and of flexibly managing groups of students, time and space. As a program designed to be used within a cycle, the Québec Education Program calls for the synergy of the professional competencies. Teamwork by teachers of this cycle should make it possible to distribute tasks and organize groups in different ways depending on the situations that arise and the projects to be carried out. Working in a cycle-team allows school staff to identify and understand learning difficulties more rapidly and to find effective shared strategies for dealing with these difficulties. This sharing of responsibilities enhances the effectiveness and the coherence of the measures taken and fosters the development of collective expertise.

## 1.7 A Coherent Program Structure

The Québec Education Program is designed as a system, with three integrating elements: broad areas of learning, cross-curricular competencies and subject areas. The program should be seen as a dynamic whole whose usefulness as a pedagogical resource resides in the complementarity and interdependence of its components. Its structure is intended to facilitate the establishment of connections among the different components. It also makes it possible to place the subject-specific learning in the context of the educational aims shared by all staff. The intended unity of the program should by no means be understood in terms of uniform action. Shared orientations must not impose a single way of doing things on either teachers or students. Thus, each subject may be seen as providing a particular view of reality. However, the program seeks to help students develop a comprehensive understanding of the world.

### The Broad Areas of Learning

Under the heading *broad areas of learning*, the Québec Education Program presents a number of important educational aims and focuses of development that inform the collective action of all members of the school community. These areas are interdisciplinary and deal with aspects of contemporary life young people must face. Their inclusion is intended to encourage students to make connections between what they learn at school, their everyday lives and social realities. The broad areas of learning provide them with opportunities to develop a sophisticated understanding of various life contexts and to envision a variety of possible actions in related situations. They enable students to make connections among different areas of learning and to look critically at their personal, social and cultural environment.

The broad areas of learning should constitute the foundations of a school's educational project and success plan and taking them into account should be the responsibility of all school staff.

### The Cross-Curricular Competencies

The Québec Education Program stresses the need for all students to develop a high level of intellectual, methodological, personal and social, and communication-related competency. These competencies are called cross-curricular because they are of a generic nature and are used in various subject areas. By definition, they have greater scope than subject-specific competencies, since they go beyond the boundaries of the subject areas. They are used in both the subjects and the broad areas of learning, and build on the integration of learning over time. In this sense, they are valuable tools for people who have to live in a society characterized by complex, unpredictable and continually changing situations and interactions. While reflecting the greater complexity of the secondary level, the cross-curricular competencies have been formulated in terms close to those for the elementary level to ensure continuity.

### The Subject Areas

There are five subject areas: languages; mathematics, science and technology; social sciences; arts education; and personal development. The subjects considered essential for the students' education are drawn from these subject areas. The grouping of the subjects into five broad subject areas represents a step towards the integration of all school subjects, in the sense that it makes it possible to

relate the subjects to the subject areas, which serve as reference points, and thus encourages teachers to see their subject as an integral part of a major component of students' education. In addition to the education associated with these areas, the basic learning profile of Secondary Cycle One students must reflect the overall aims of the Québec Education Program and include the cross-curricular competencies.

### The Components of the Subject-Specific Programs

Each subject-specific program is organized in terms of a limited number of competencies whose complementarity contributes to the attainment of the educational aims for that subject. These competencies are inextricably linked to the acquisition of the knowledge considered essential for developing and using them. This knowledge, which is extremely diverse, corresponds to the learning content of each program. The competencies help students make connections between the different types of knowledge and the learning situations.

The subject-specific programs are organized under the following headings:

- Introduction
- Making Connections: Subject and the Other Dimensions of the Québec Education Program
- Pedagogical Context
- Competencies
- Program Content

## Introduction of the Subject

The Introduction describes the specific contribution of the subject to students' education, how the subject is viewed and the spirit in which it should be taught. It also presents the competencies to be developed, the relationships among them and the connections between the elementary—and secondary—school programs.

## Making Connections: The Subject and the Other Dimensions of the Québec Education Program

Under this heading potential connections among subject-specific competencies, cross-curricular competencies, broad areas of learning and the other subjects are explained and illustrated. Important relationships between the subject and any broad areas of learning to which it is related are also indicated.

## Pedagogical Context

The *pedagogical context* provides some subject-related comments that clarify the more general pedagogical considerations in the first chapter of the Québec Education Program. It deals with various themes, including the classroom dynamic to establish in order to foster learning, the type of learning situations that can create a classroom conducive to the development of the competencies and the roles of teachers and students. Suggestions may be made concerning human and material resources to make available to students.

## Competencies

The *competencies* correspond to the educational targets specific to each subject. A diagram illustrates their interaction. The framework for the presentation of the competencies is the same for all the subjects. For each competency, the focus of the competency, its key features, the evaluation criteria and the end-of-cycle outcomes are indicated.

### *Québec Education Program*

## Focus of the Competency

The *focus of the competency* gives the reasons why students should develop it, its role in the assimilation of the subject and its interrelationship with the other competencies associated with that subject. Under this heading, the nature of the competency and the manner in which it is demonstrated are described, and information is provided to place the learning targeted in Secondary Cycle One on a continuum that includes the learning acquired in elementary school.

## Key Features of the Competency

The *key features of the competency* describe its main aspects. They provide a clear image of it and clarify the major factors involved in using it.

## Evaluation Criteria

The *evaluation criteria* are essential points to consider in judging the degree to which students have developed the competencies. They are generic in nature, as they are formulated in a sufficiently inclusive way to apply to all the tasks for which students make use of their competency. Since the competency is reflected not only in the final product—the students' work—but also in the students' ways of doing the work, the criteria may concern the students' approach or the work resulting from that approach. They thus do not constitute a checklist to be used item by item in conducting an evaluation, but rather a framework on the basis of which instruments for the evaluation of the competency can be developed.

## End-of-Cycle Outcomes

The *end-of-cycle outcomes* present a comprehensive description of what is expected of students at the end of Secondary Cycle One. This description, which is based on all the evaluation criteria, takes into account the learning that is most often used in the exercise of the competencies and the types of situations in which it is used. The comprehensive nature of this description does not eliminate the need to consider each component of the competency, but rather underscores the importance of considering the components as part of an integrated whole.

## Program Content

The *program content* provides the knowledge—or resources—required for the development and use of the competency. It includes information on concepts, methods, strategies, processes, techniques and attitudes. The program content is organized in a manner that suits the subject, and takes into account its inherent logic. It is presented for the whole cycle rather than by year, and the way of indicating the changes in the treatment of the subject over the course of the cycle is specific to each subject. Finally, in one way or another, the program content includes cultural references, which correspond to social and cultural resources that can foster the development of the competency.

## 1.8 A Compulsory Program

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The Québec Education Program is a common frame of reference and an indispensable guide. The various school staff have to respect its broad orientations and educational aims. It is compulsory in the sense that schools have to ensure the application of all dimensions of the program—the broad areas of learning, the cross-curricular competencies and the subject-specific competencies.

This means that simply covering the subject content is not an option; educators must seek to develop the competencies required to assimilate the learning and apply it in various situations. To do this involves creating teaching and learning conditions and organizational structures consistent with the orientations and aims of the Québec Education Program, both in the classroom and in the context of each school's educational project.

Like all activities related to the application of the curriculum, the evaluation of learning must be carried out in a manner consistent with the principles of the Québec Education Program. Thus, it must take into account all components of the program. In addition, it must respect the Basic school regulation, which defines the compulsory elements of the curriculum and indicates the conditions for the certification of studies.