

Chapter 1 A Curriculum for the 21st Century

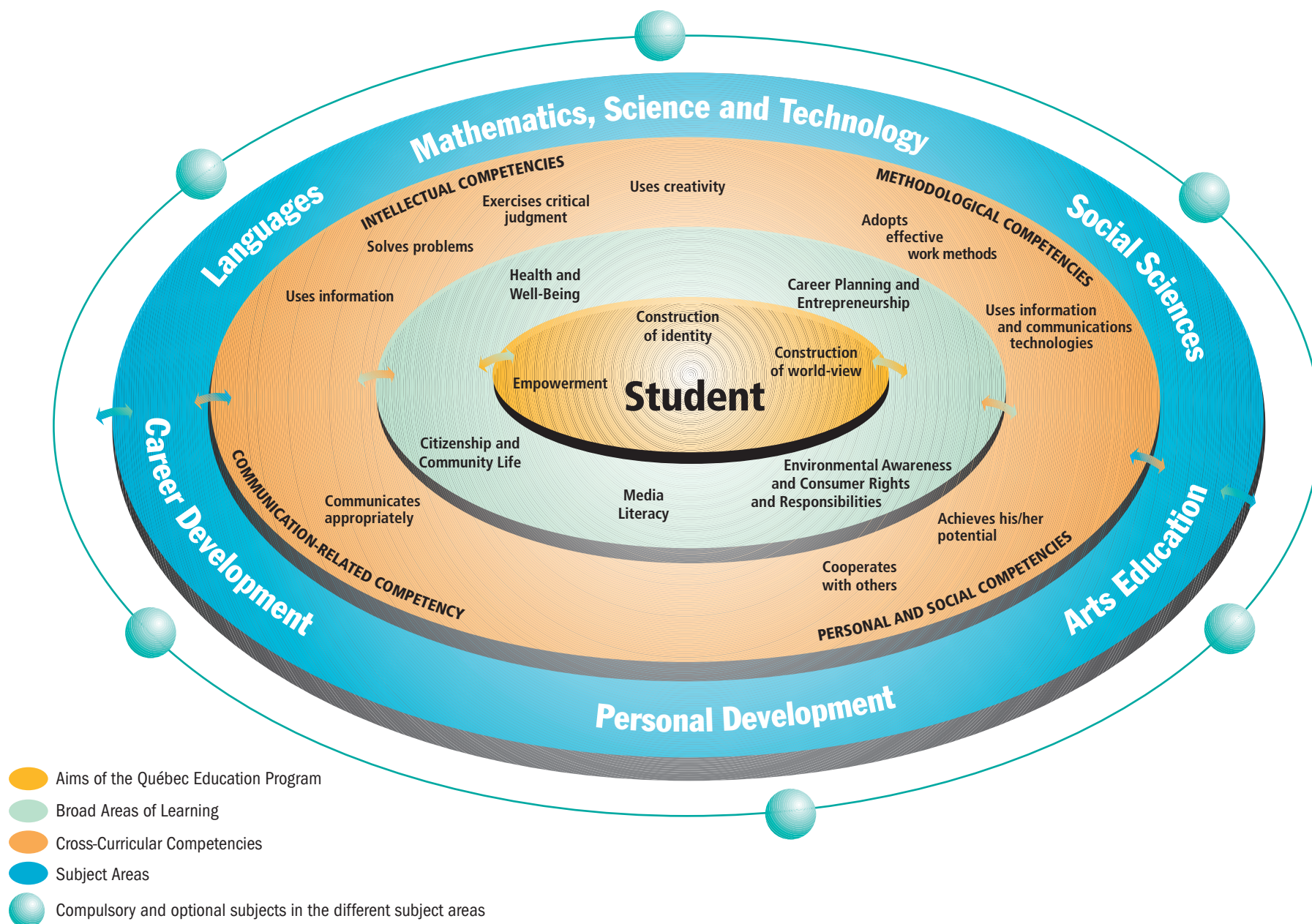


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1.1 Changing the School: A Societal Choice

Québec's education system has undergone constant change over the years. Following the publication of the Parent Commission report in 1964, and as a result of a collective desire to democratize education and raise the general educational level of Quebecers, educational services from preschool through secondary school, and even beyond, were made accessible to everyone. Several decades later, universal access to schooling had been achieved, but there were unforeseen problems 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 the ability to respond appropriately in various situations. However, the division of program content into a multitude of objectives—general, terminal and intermediate—led to a fragmented approach to teaching and learning.

People of the 21st century are confronted with increasingly complex issues, and the ability to integrate knowledge and transfer it to changing contexts is essential. 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, but also prepare all students to live successful lives and to contribute to social progress. Schools 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 well-educated individuals, active 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, constant change and interdependent problems whose solutions require expert, diversified and complementary skills.

Schools must continue transmitting the knowledge of previous generations, while at the same time helping all students develop skills that will enable them to become well-educated individuals, active citizens and competent workers.

A Reform That Responds to Social Expectations

Over the last two decades, numerous briefs, reports and surveys by UNESCO, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and, closer to home, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation have focused on how schools can adapt to the new social and cultural environment.

More specifically, reports by two committees, the work of a commission and a policy statement paved the way for the design and development of the new curriculum for Québec schools. In 1994, *Preparing Our Youth for the 21st Century*, the report of the Task Force on Elementary and Secondary School Learning Profiles, defined the major areas of learning that should form the basis of the school curriculum, which already included general competencies related to intellectual methods and skills.

In 1996, the Commission for the Estates General on Education sparked broad debate on the effectiveness of the education system, which made it possible to define society's expectations with respect to schools. The Commission's report, *Renewing Our Education System: Ten Priority Actions*, and the report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform, *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools* (1997), laid the foundations for the educational policy statement *Québec Schools on Course* (1997).

Targeting the objective of success for all students, with no lowering of requirements, the educational policy statement called on the schools to extend the process of democratization begun in the 1960s. Thus the school had to meet two demands: that of increasing access to education and raising the graduation rate and that of providing education of a high quality.

The policy statement called for a curriculum based on the learning considered essential for students in the early 21st century. By insisting on the importance of meeting the needs and interests of each student, the policy statement underlined the need for differentiated educational practices within the framework of a common curriculum, a curriculum that would become more specialized in Cycle Two of secondary school. The policy statement recalled the need to consolidate basic education by establishing a common core of learning, and it oriented secondary school toward a more open education that would allow some of the students to acquire basic qualifications for employment.

The objectives proposed in the policy statement are still relevant, and they are reflected in the programs of study. The Québec Education Program for Secondary Cycle Two is based on the same framework and orientations as the ones for elementary school and Secondary Cycle One.

A Collective Undertaking

The development of the Québec Education Program incorporates these analyses and choices and is part of a collective educational project in which more than 700 people have participated: teachers, school administrators, consultants, nonteaching professionals and university professors.

1.2 The Challenges of Cycle Two of Secondary School

Preparing Young People to Live in a Changing World

Economic, cultural and social boundaries have become permeable. At the same time, information and communications technologies speed up exchanges, both facilitating and complicating access to information. Globalization gives rise to individual and collective decisions that affect the quality of life throughout the world.

Teachers, principals and other school personnel are well placed to observe the effects of these developments on young people: they have a great deal of knowledge, but knowledge that is not always organized; they feel a need for stable reference points but they also want immediate gratification; they have great curiosity, but uneven motivation for their studies. Educators have to deal with the difficulty of providing guidance and support for an increasingly diverse group of students: those who are highly motivated and those who want to drop out, those who live in stable, intellectually stimulating families and those who have experienced frequent readjustments or very difficult times. There are students living in particular situations, such as some Aboriginal students, and there are recent immigrants who must adjust to a new context. And there are young people who must learn to overcome learning difficulties or handicaps.

Secondary Cycle Two poses the same educational challenges as the preceding cycles, with the addition of certain issues that arise from this cycle's role to serve as a transition from a renewed basic education to vocational training and college education. Another type of difference among students takes on importance at this time, that of their relation to knowledge: some of them see school learning as an obligation unrelated to the requirements of career development, while others see it as a preparation for working life. There are also some young people who are eager to leave school and enter the job market, while others plan to stay in school for many years more. It is important to see students in Secondary Cycle Two in all the diversity of their aspirations, values, socioeconomic conditions and cultural references.

The school has a responsibility to guide students who may be very different and have different ways of relating to knowledge.

Reconciling Contradictory Requirements

Another major challenge in developing the QEP resulted from the need to meet a set of apparently contradictory requirements.

The need for guidance and supervision and the need for autonomy

In Secondary Cycle Two, students are approaching adulthood, and their quest for autonomy in emotional and financial matters and other areas is accentuated. Their status is ambiguous: sometimes they are autonomous, sometimes dependent. This influences their view of school and their demands with respect to it. Educators should strive to make school meaningful for them and help them see its value. They should guide and supervise them, provide them with identifiable, attractive models, and give them access to the resources they need to solve their problems. But these young people also need space in which to exercise their autonomy in an increasingly reflective and responsible way. A first requirement for the school is thus to accommodate both the need for guidance and supervision and the need for autonomy.

A common curriculum and a diversified curriculum

The school also has to meet a second requirement: to extend and consolidate the common basic curriculum while allowing students to make choices that best suit their level of development, their interests and their career plans. This concern for diversification is reflected, first of all, in the many elective subjects offered by the MELS, the school or the school board. It is also shown in the possibility students have to choose from among different paths and by the creation of bridges that allow some mobility from path to path.

Subject-specific learning and the integration of knowledge

Secondary Cycle Two is also marked by greater specialization in the subjects, which is a result of their evolution. While this allows for greater depth, it also gives rise to a risk of fragmentation of knowledge. Despite this specialization, a third requirement of Cycle Two is thus the integration of subject-specific knowledge as well as of theoretical and practical knowledge. Because of the rapid proliferation of knowledge, this is one of the major challenges facing the school.

Competency development throughout the cycle and yearly progress

In a three-year cycle that coincides with a time that is crucial for students' choices for the future, it is important that educators have the means to support and assess competency development year by year. A fourth requirement is thus to monitor students' progress annually while respecting the continuous nature of learning throughout the cycle.

The Challenge of Reconciling Contradictory Requirements		
<i>For students</i>	Need for guidance and supervision	Need for autonomy
<i>In terms of curriculum</i>	Common curriculum	Diversified curriculum
<i>In terms of knowledge</i>	Subject-specific learning	Integration of knowledge
<i>In terms of the progress of learning</i>	Competency development throughout the cycle	Yearly progress

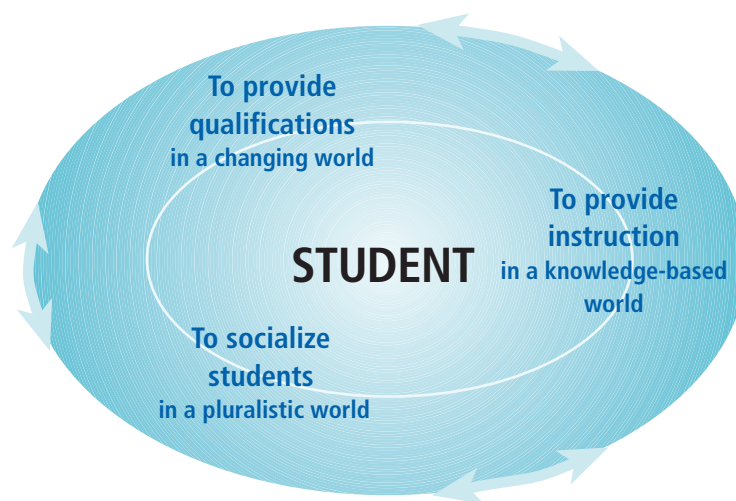
1.3 The Schools' Threefold Mission

Québec schools 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, social and working lives. This means that schools must play a multidimensional role in the lives of young people. Thus, the *Education Act* (section 36) gives schools a threefold mission: to provide instruction, to socialize and to provide qualifications. While they are based on the same underlying principles as in previous cycles, these three elements of the schools' mission are influenced by concerns specific to Cycle Two of secondary school.

To Provide Instruction in a Knowledge-Based World

In today's world, knowledge is the driving force of any human undertaking. 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 world, 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.

The Schools' Threefold Mission



Although schools are not the only place where young people learn, they play a crucial role in the construction and organization 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.

This learning cycle stresses broad, open education in the subjects common to all students as well as in the elective subjects. There is no premature specialization or preparation for specific subjects or occupations. In the General Education Path, for example, the knowledge to be acquired is related to overall culture and enables students to understand the major issues of contemporary life; it is not the more specialized knowledge associated with a specific occupation, trade or technique. In the Work-Oriented Training Path, the knowledge to be acquired should allow students as broad as possible a range of choice, based on an understanding of the multiplicity of human activities and the occupations associated with them.

To Socialize Students in a Pluralistic World

Geographic and occupational mobility and the constant renegotiation of interpersonal relationships as a result of new partnerships and blended families have given rise to a new view of relationships. 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, in which the 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. Schools should seek to prevent exclusion, of which there is a greater risk in Cycle Two of secondary school because adolescents sometimes express their need to affirm themselves by rejecting others. Schools should therefore show concern for students' social and emotional development, promote the

fundamental values of democracy and ensure that young people act as responsible citizens in a manner commensurate with their age. This is particularly important for most of the students in the Work-Oriented Training Path, because there will be no further opportunities for them to be guided by the education system before they enter the job market and become active citizens.

To Provide Qualifications in a Changing World

A knowledge-based society requires an increase in the educational level of the population and the development of a broader range of competencies. Québec schools have to meet the challenge of dealing with the increasing heterogeneity of their students and of supporting their progress along various paths without segregating any of them. All students should be able to leave secondary school with a diploma or a record of their learning, whether they choose to continue their education or to enter the job market.

In addition to ensuring that all students acquire a basic education, schools have to help them develop the ability to learn throughout their lives. Official recognition of competencies acquired must become an integral part of this continuing development and must accurately attest to each person's achievements. 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. This period of learning provides many young people with a transition to vocational training centres or college-level institutions for preuniversity education or technical training. The Work-Oriented Training Path enables students to develop a set of competencies related to employability and can lead directly to the job market.

The Québec Education Program lays the foundation for a moral contract between schools and society, describing the education the schools are committed to providing for Québec's youth.

1.4 Aims of the Québec Education Program

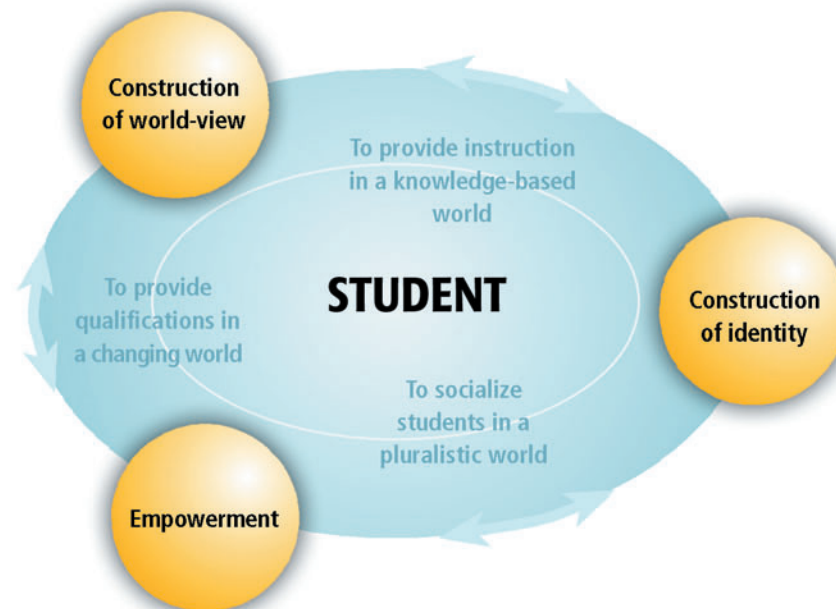
Helping students construct a world-view, construct an identity and become empowered are the three aims of the Québec Education Program. These aims reflect the school's mission. They provide a common direction for all educational measures and convey the sense that schools do more than give students academic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

These aims serve as guidelines for the education of all young people, from preschool education to the end of secondary school. They are expressed explicitly in the educational aims of the broad areas of learning and they are achieved through the development of the cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies. All of these elements together constitute the framework of the students' learning profiles.

Construction of World-View

Constructing a world-view means learning to take a lucid, grounded look at the material universe in order to grasp its workings, and at the human universe in order to understand ideas, history, culture and values. This is essential to the schools' mission to provide instruction. Young people construct a world-view through a growing ability to make critical judgments of more and more information and increasingly diverse attitudes and beliefs. The broadening of their cultural knowledge and resources provides fertile ground for this.

The Three Aims of the Québec Education Program



The students are already constructing a world-view, and in Secondary Cycle Two, they are encouraged to increase their understanding of natural and social phenomena. It is important that they be introduced to the hypotheses and methodologies of the different subjects in order to grasp their logic and scope. They also need to learn to compare their perceptions of reality with those of experts. This exercise helps them to develop intellectual curiosity, thirst for understanding and a desire to delve more deeply, as well as the capacity for precise observation and rigorous reasoning.

It is important to recall the role of language and culture as powerful levers in the construction of a world-view. It is well known that language contributes to the formation of concepts and ideas, and enables people to acquire knowledge and understanding. A tool for organizing and expressing thought, language plays a key role in the development of students' world-views and the way they see their place in the world; it is therefore essential that students learn it well.

Culture, understood as an openness and a dynamic relationship to the collective heritage, provides another basic element for the development of an integrative view. Schools must first of all consider the immediate culture, which gives students a sense of their place in the world—of their personal and social identity—based on representations, values and symbols stemming from their immediate surroundings. But schools also have to ensure that all students have access to the broad culture that has been built over time.

In the early 21st century there is so much artistic, philosophical and scientific work of all origins that the development of an open-minded attitude toward culture itself must take precedence over presenting a specific cultural universe. In the framework of this program, teaching from a cultural perspective consists essentially in using cultural references to enable students to understand the world and discover that each subject is meaningful by virtue of both its history and the questions it raises.

Construction of Identity

People construct an identity by developing an awareness of their uniqueness through their roots and their history, and by discovering that they belong to a social network that reveals them to themselves and others. Constructing

one's identity means adjusting to the world in a personal and balanced way. The range of subjects explored in secondary school, particularly when they touch on issues included in the broad areas of learning, enables students to understand their potential place in the contemporary world. In addition, more attention is paid to work-related identity, and students are encouraged to clarify and develop their career paths and their self-esteem and to affirm themselves as individuals, workers and citizens. Helping students construct their personal and social identity is part of the school's mission of socialization.

Here again, language and culture are essential tools. Various anchor points for the construction of identity may be found in Québec culture, in the media, literature, songs, poetry, theatre and films. It is primarily through language that individuals become part of a social group and receive its underlying norms, values and knowledge. Language, an important factor of social cohesion, expresses ways of being, representations of reality and ways of thinking and feeling that are part of the surrounding culture, but also, more broadly, of the cultural heritage of humanity. The construction of a strong identity is rooted in culture, and language is the means of its expression. In addition, the multiethnic nature of Québec society promotes openness to other cultures and languages and offers opportunities for contact that can enrich each student's identity.

Empowerment

Being able to act in response to the complexity of current social issues or to confront major ethical and existential questions gives young people power over their lives. Their power is greater if it is supported by a coherent world-view and a well-defined identity.

Being able to act presupposes the ability to integrate knowledge and know-how. The goal of empowerment for students ties in with the concept of competency, which is the cornerstone of the Québec Education Program. This concept implies that students have the capacity to properly use what they have learned at school and their experiences, skills, attitudes and interests, as well as external resources such as their classmates, their teachers, Complementary Educational Services personnel, experts in the community and various other information sources.

Being able to act presupposes the ability to integrate knowledge and know-how.

Secondary Cycle Two is a time that is especially rich in opportunities for young people's empowerment, for their acquisition and exercise of control over their lives. They often have jobs, manage part of their own budgets and talk with each other about changing the world. They are experimenting with a more complex emotional life, and some of them are beginning to be more sexually active. They are also beginning to envision entering the working world. The Québec Education Program is designed precisely to support them in this broadening of their range of action. Through the focuses of development that structure the broad areas of learning, through the learning situations designed to develop their cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies, through the paths offered, the Québec Education Program calls for the establishment of conditions that will empower students and enable them to make informed choices.

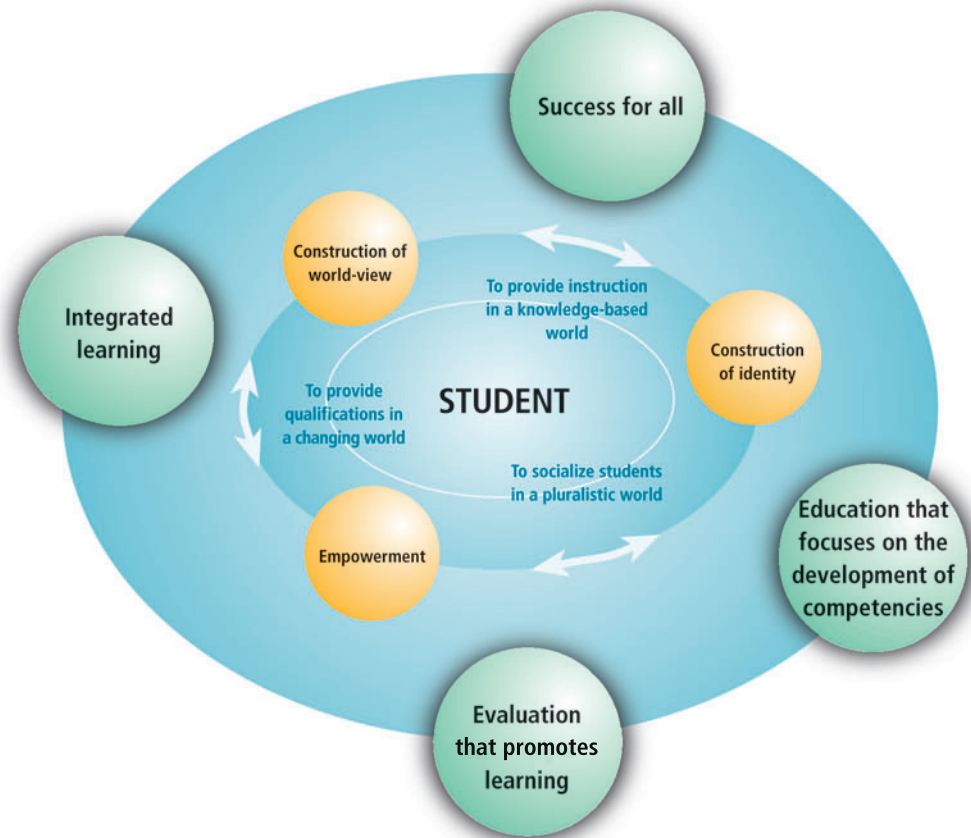
Language and culture play a major role here as well. Language is an instrument of liberation and power because it allows students to express their ideas and to compare them with those of others. Language mirrors, refines and articulates thought. In a democratic society, speaking one's mind is also an act of citizenship and participation in community life and a way to resolve conflicts. Culture is a catalyst of thought and action, a living reality to which each generation contributes and which gives the people who share it a range of means of action. Using the culture of young people themselves to encourage them to open up to other dimensions of human activity and express their creativity in all fields, the school carries out its mission of providing qualifications.

1.5 Orientations for Appropriate Action

Four orientations provide guidelines for the application of the program's educational aims and serve as a basis for educational measures:

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

The Four Orientations of the Québec Education Program



Success for All

The renewal of the education system is based on a renewed understanding of the concept of success and how it should be evaluated. The concept of success for the greatest possible number must be replaced by that of success for all. This calls on the school to review its conceptions regarding teaching, learning and evaluation.

Success for all comprises two dimensions, which offer complementary perspectives: formal academic success and individualized educational success.

We need a renewed understanding of the concept of success and how it should be evaluated.

Formal academic success

Formal academic success means receiving official recognition of the development of the competencies targeted in the various subjects in the Québec Education Program.

Formal academic success has become both more demanding and easier to achieve. It is more demanding in that the new *Basic school regulation* makes it compulsory for students to obtain credits for Cycle Two in all the subject areas of the path they have chosen in order to receive a secondary school diploma.¹ This requirement highlights the fact that all these subject areas are essential to students' overall education. On the other hand, it is now easier to achieve formal academic success, because of the introduction of diversified paths leading to a secondary school diploma, a prework training certificate or a training certificate in a semiskilled trade.² These paths make it clear that success in school may be achieved in various ways, through a range of programs whose requirements are high yet realistic for the individual student.

Such an orientation means the school must do everything in its power so that all students finish their studies and receive certification from the Ministère in the form of either a diploma or a certificate. This will facilitate their active participation in the development of society as individuals, citizens and workers.

1. This requirement will be applicable as of May 2010.

2. Diagrams showing the diversified paths set out in the *Basic school regulation* are shown in sections 1.7 and 1.8.

Individualized educational success

The idea of individualized educational success brings out the school's responsibility to strive to give all students—whatever their interests, strengths or difficulties—the basis for integration into society and the job market and enable them to develop their full potential.

Success here depends on the challenges each student tries to meet. From this point of view, it concerns all students, those who easily meet academic requirements and those who face difficulties large or small.

The establishment of different paths in Secondary Cycle Two thus reflects a collective desire to give all young people a context with broad horizons, a context in which they are encouraged to fulfill their aspirations and their potential. The Québec Education Program also has a truly guidance-oriented approach.

Education that focuses on the development of competencies

The aim of enabling students to become empowered, informed individuals reveals the limits of a pedagogy based on the transmission of knowledge. The concept of competency proposed in the Québec Education Program requires a different approach to teaching and learning. A competency is defined as the ability to act effectively by mobilizing a range of resources. This means that it involves more than the mere addition or juxtaposition of elements. Competencies are manifested in situations of a certain complexity, and students can continue increasing their mastery of a competency throughout their schooling and, indeed, throughout their lives.

Promoting the development of competencies thus means that school personnel should not focus just on instrumental learning, but on teaching students how to think and developing their autonomy. It also means taking into account from the outset the *transfer of learning*, which implies a capacity to effectively reuse resources acquired in dealing with previous situations, adapting these resources to new contexts.

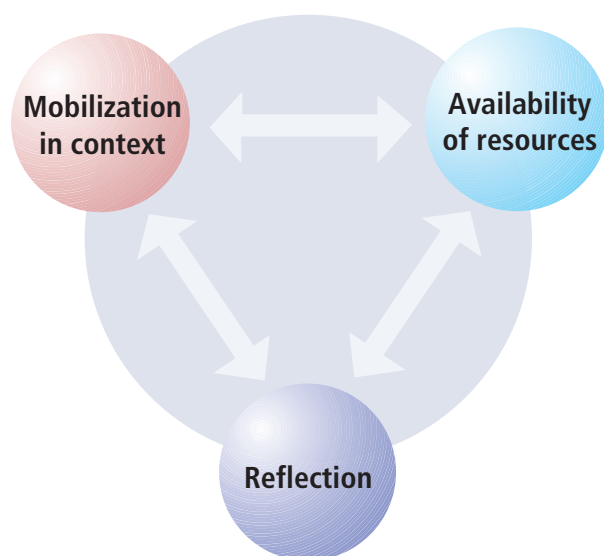
School personnel should not focus just on instrumental learning, but on teaching students how to think and developing their autonomy.

The quantity and quality of knowledge available undeniably have an effect on the level of competency.

Developing all aspects of a competency

The definition of a competency refers to three aspects: the mobilization of resources in a specific context, the availability of a diversified repertoire of resources and the capacity to reflect upon the process of mobilizing, reorganizing and integrating the resources.

The Three Aspects of a Competency



Acting in context

A competency is expressed primarily through effective action and is revealed only in the adequate performance of a task in a specific context. It requires, first of all, a thoughtful “reading” of the characteristics of the context. The concept of the ability to act effectively thus brings to mind the idea of *situations* in which competencies are developed and demonstrated and in which they can be evaluated. Mobilizing resources requires that the competent person take into account any constraints that exist in the context and adjust his or her actions accordingly. One cannot speak of competency without this regulation of action.

However, the concept of competency does not necessarily imply innovation, nor does it preclude the use of more repetitive strategies for reasons of urgency or safety in carrying out specific procedures. For example, someone who took too many liberties in carrying out a protocol in a crisis situation could hardly be considered competent. Similarly, in a science laboratory, exercising a competency requires the strict application of safety rules.

Building up a repertoire of resources

A competency is also based on the availability of a broad, organized set of diversified resources. This is an essential aspect of every kind of expertise, because if a competency is primarily a matter of mobilizing resources, it necessarily depends on the number, variety and relevance of those resources.

Some resources, such as knowledge, strategies and attitudes, are internal or specific to an individual. The development of a competency thus also involves the effective acquisition and reorganization of these resources—for example, in patterns or networks—and the ability to arrange and combine them in various ways.

Other resources are external; these include knowledge that has been developed and set out in various forms, or different types of materials, tools or technologies. They also include people, whose knowledge, skills and points of view may be of great value. Teachers are foremost among these resource persons.

Being able to explain one's actions

Finally, being competent means having a certain capacity to explain the process through which one has been able to effectively mobilize an appropriate set of resources in a specific situation. The ability to explain one's actions is essential to learning; it allows students to refine their process and teachers to regulate their own actions.

The concept of competency thus implies the capacity to describe the process used to carry out tasks and solve problems. A competent person is able not only to draw on a great many automatic responses to carry out complex tasks, but also to effectively regulate his or her actions through reflection. This is particularly evident when more complex decisions are needed or when the risk of error is higher or has important consequences.

The dynamic nature of a competency

The three aspects of a competency are not simply juxtaposed; they interact dynamically and their interactions contribute to the transfer of learning.

- Interaction between the mobilization of resources and the resources themselves is shown in the reuse and combination of knowledge in various ways, depending on the context.
- Interaction between reflection and the mobilization of resources involves any form of analysis of the process to identify its strengths and weaknesses.
- Interaction between reflection and resources occurs in the structuring of resources and their arrangement in a network.

Education should address the connections among phenomena and the complementarity of knowledge.

Knowledge and competencies are complementary

The different sorts of knowledge constitute essential resources for responding appropriately in a complex situation. The quantity and quality of knowledge available undeniably have an effect on the level of competency, in that they give a person more ways of dealing with various situations.

While the acquisition of knowledge may be well suited to a process that goes from the parts to the whole, the same is not true of the development of a competency, which depends on the characteristics of a situation. For example, to develop competency in playing hockey, the use of a fragmented approach based on memorizing all the rules and acquiring skating and stickhandling techniques before even playing a game would not be very effective. It is through action that players acquire knowledge and skills that they gradually combine. Nonetheless, practising the targeted skills with a competent trainer remains necessary, because it enables students to concentrate on various elements of the game in order to improve their mastery of them, establish reflexes and thus play with greater ease.

There are many parallels to this example in learning that occurs at school. Thus, while a good vocabulary and mastery of the rules of syntax are necessary, they are not sufficient to produce a text that is well constructed, pleasant to read and convincing. It is in an authentic writing situation, in which there is a clear desire to communicate with a significant person or persons, that competency in writing can truly develop. Nor can competencies in science

and technology be reduced to the knowledge—however essential—of laws and principles or the application of a methodology of observation, collection of data and analysis of results. They generally involve the observation of a phenomenon that arouses curiosity, defies expectations and demands explanation. The comparison of different hypotheses, especially if they reflect different points of view, is the focal point for the concepts, techniques and strategies belonging to the repertoire of resources specific to the discipline.

The learning process is really a spiral, within which the exercise of competencies leads to the acquisition of new knowledge, which, in turn, contributes to the further development of the competencies.

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. Students should thus be encouraged to construct knowledge by solving multidimensional problems and making connections among different fields.

The openness of the school to the world, the complementary and continuous nature of educational action and the choice of a unified program organized in cycles are favourable conditions for the integration of learning.

Opening the school 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 world outside. Integrating schools into their environment encourages students to reflect on the extent to which their learning is useful for understanding the world and acting in it. 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.

In addition, with increasing globalization, schools in Québec must see that students not only master the language of instruction but also acquire a functional knowledge of the second language and even a third language.

Openness to the world is especially important in Cycle Two of secondary school, because that is when students are making career choices and preparing to play an active role in civil society and the working world.

The openness of the school to the world, the complementary and continuous nature of educational action and the choice of a unified program organized in cycles are favourable conditions for the integration of learning.

Complementary and continuous educational action

The development of competencies is part of a continuum in which each stage is based on what has been assimilated in the previous stage. Students beginning Secondary Cycle Two should build on the competencies they developed in elementary school and Secondary Cycle One. Educational actions should thus be viewed in continuity. The school is urged to go beyond the boundaries between levels of education, between subjects and between school and extracurricular activities, to adopt common goals and to monitor students' development throughout their schooling.

The world is a complex, interdependent reality that cannot be grasped only through the study of the various subjects. Hence, education should be open to the relationships among phenomena and to the connections among different areas of knowledge. While starting from their specific subjects, teachers should encourage students to discover the connections that may be made with other subjects. In addition, they should sometimes focus on the integrated development of competencies through interdisciplinary activities in the classroom or the school.

In this regard, an integrative projet has been included at the end of the cycle in order to give students an opportunity to integrate their learning and use it to meet a challenge of their own choice.

Integrated Complementary Educational Services

Complementary Educational Services are essential to student success. In order to include them in the education process, school boards must establish four programs, as set out in the *Basic school regulation*:

- Support services program
- Student life services program
- Counselling services program
- Promotion and prevention services program

These programs are implemented in continuity with instructional services and share the concern with the development of students' competencies. They help to reinforce protection factors and reduce risk factors.

Cycle-based organization

The multiyear learning cycle is the mode of organization most conducive to the complementarity of educational measures and the continuity of the learning process. Through shared management of learning activities, it allows students to progress at their own individual rates of learning. The first eight years of schooling are organized in 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 some ways: it is based on a core education for all students, the composition of classes is generally stable and there is systematic supervision.

Secondary Cycle Two differs from the preceding cycles in that it is spread over three years, that there is a choice among the three paths each year³ and that the education provided is a little more specialized in the case of the General Education Path and the Applied General Education Path and is clearly oriented toward employment in the case of the Work-Oriented Training Path. The support and supervision are also different, because allowance is made for increased student autonomy through such programs as the Personal Orientation Project and the Integrative Project.

This more flexible organization presents a major challenge for the cycle-based approach. However, the collaboration that distinguishes that approach still remains the most consistent way to provide transitions from path to path. The competencies remain essentially the same for the programs; close collaboration among members of the cycle team is needed to ensure that students making a transition from one path to another can continue to develop them in a similar way.

Evaluation That Promotes Learning

The emphasis on success for all students and the choice in favour of a competency-based program led the Ministère to reaffirm the importance of making evaluation a catalyst for learning. Therefore, in 2003, it adopted a policy on the evaluation of learning that defined two main functions of evaluation:

- to support learning
- to recognize competencies

3. It should be noted that the training for a semiskilled trade is only one year in duration.

The central idea of the policy is that evaluation is not an end in itself. Students do not learn in order to be evaluated: they are evaluated in order to learn better.

Envisioned as a means for helping students to learn and helping teachers to guide students, evaluation provides the basis for decisions and actions regulating students' learning, both in everyday situations and at more critical times.

Evaluation to support learning

Evaluation is a type of educational action that can have decisive consequences for students and that should be carried out in accordance with the goals and orientations of the program.

Because it helps teachers assess students' previous learning, monitor their development and judge the effectiveness of their own pedagogical strategies, evaluation is an essential tool for attaining the objective of student success. Viewed in this way, evaluation can also facilitate communication with parents and help them understand their children's progress.

Evaluation to recognize competencies

At the end of a cycle, evaluation is used to determine the level of competency development students have achieved during the cycle. It serves to recognize competencies and is carried out with reference to the requirements prescribed in the program. It involves making assessments of students' learning that can be used individually with students in making decisions regarding a more appropriate path, specific support measures, adjustment of an individualized education plan, etc.

Evaluation is not an end in itself. Students do not learn in order to be evaluated: they are evaluated in order to learn better.

In Secondary Cycle Two, the obligation to provide annual reports on students' learning progress provides support for choices regarding electives, paths and prerequisites. However, it is crucial that the pedagogical organization of these three years be based on the collaboration and consistency that characterize cycle-based organization.

Evaluation for the purpose of recognizing competencies is also the basis for decisions related to the certification of studies; judgments made regarding the development of competencies determine the decision to issue the official certification document. The results of the evaluation may also be used to support decisions regarding admission to other sectors of education such as college-level education.

The Importance of professional judgment

Whether evaluation is used to support students' learning or to recognize their competencies, teachers' judgment plays a decisive role. 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 evaluation is rigorous and 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, the end-of-cycle outcomes and the subject-specific content should be their frame of reference for this task. The expertise of educational services personnel may also be sought in order to complete the information or to interpret it.

Evaluation consistent with the Québec Education Program

In the spirit of the Québec Education Program and the Policy on the Evaluation of Learning, evaluation is from the outset part of the competency-based approach, and thus it concerns the learning targets: the subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies.

The broad areas of learning, which concern issues in contemporary society, are focuses of education that the school must address. It is obligated, in its decisions on its educational project and choice of educational measures, to organize a pedagogical context conducive to addressing them and to evaluate the pertinence and effectiveness of that context. While there is no formal evaluation of students' learning with regard to the broad areas of learning, they nevertheless provide the framework for many of the learning and evaluation situations and are thus taken into account in the evaluation of competencies.

1.6 A Renewal of Practices

The Québec Education Program draws on several theories of learning that share a recognition that learners are the main architects of their competencies and knowledge. The cognitivist, constructivist and social constructivist theories are particularly useful in this regard:

- cognitivism, because it describes the processes enabling individuals to incorporate new knowledge into their knowledge system and use it in new contexts
- 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

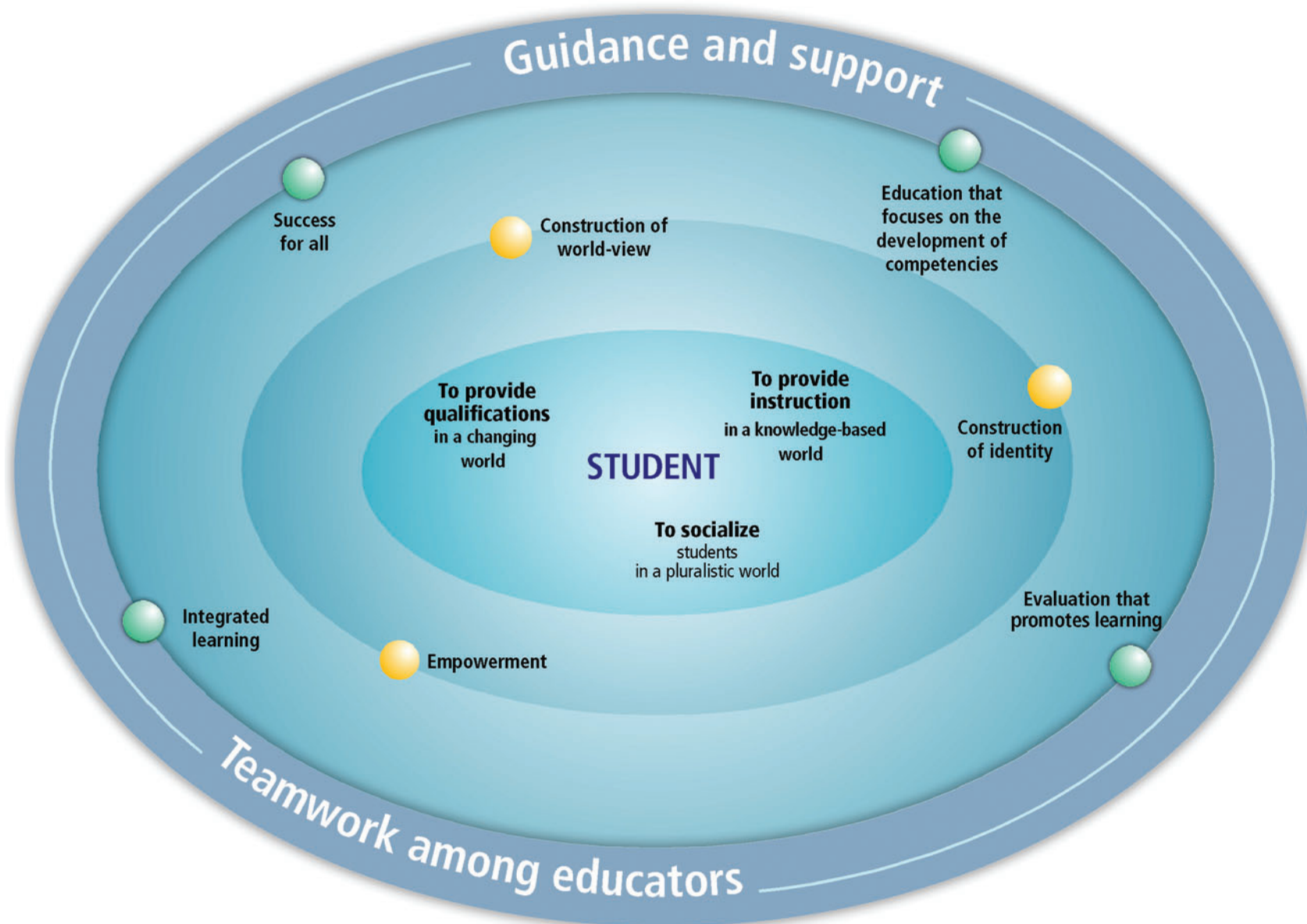
Educating students must include practices that draw on processes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

These approaches in no way limit the range of pedagogical approaches teachers may adapt or combine according to their professional experience and judgment, in conformity with the orientations of the program. While it is the responsibility of the Ministère to establish the orientations of the education system, it is up to school staff to define ways to implement them.

It is obvious that educating students involves more than giving them information to memorize and that it must include practices that draw on the higher cognitive processes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The question is not what school of thought to adhere to but rather how to design an educational environment and learning situations that foster the development of thinking and competencies.

To carry out this mandate, educators should apply two types of professional practices: practices related to guiding and supporting students and practices related to teamwork among educators.

Pedagogical Practices Related to the Québec Education Program



Guiding and Supporting Students

Competencies are not taught in the traditional sense of the term; rather, it is the students that develop them. They develop them more effectively if they receive support and are given regular opportunities to use them—in other words, if they receive guidance and support.⁴ The emphasis on the students' involvement in their own learning, rather than diminishing the importance of the teacher's role, brings out its complexity and shows it in a different light.

The guidance and support provided by teachers involves the three basic aspects of a competency: *mobilization in context, availability of resources and reflection on the process*. Guiding and supporting students in developing competencies means stimulating their ability to relate what they know to what they are going to learn. It means teaching them to recognize resources that can help them—those that exist in their memory and those found among people close to them. It also means enabling them to construct or research new resources and supporting them in their choice and use of these resources, in particular by teaching them skills and allowing them to discover creative ways of combining them and applying them in new contexts. In this way, teachers help students to become aware of what they know, to explain it clearly and to identify their errors and recognize their failings for themselves, so as to be able to regulate their own learning process autonomously.

Teachers are still the experts, both on their particular subjects and on learning. They continue to give students the benefit of their knowledge, regularly placing them in active situations in which they have to solve problems or carry out projects. They rely on a broad knowledge of their

subjects and they strive, in accordance with the Québec Education Program, to connect questions in their subjects with major contemporary issues and build bridges to other subjects.

The practice of guidance and support concerns all educators in the school. The students need to see that the adults in the school are attentive to their progress and are working together consistently with them. The Québec Education Program, combined with the Complementary Educational Services programs, is in this regard a tool that promotes the harmonization and consistency of educational actions.

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

Providing meaningful and diversified situations

Since competencies are essentially expressed in action, a competency-based approach implies

the use of a *pedagogy based on situations*. Whatever name is used,⁵ a situation is always defined as a pedagogical device that opens up a space for action. It is based on a pedagogical aim and takes the form of a set of activities for students and a certain number of resources to be mobilized. Not all the activities are the same in nature; some are freer and more open; others imply a goal to be achieved and are thus tasks, some of which may take the form of problems to be solved. Other activities involve reflection on the process itself or the resources used.

When dealing with a situation involves an expected result, that result should be clearly communicated to the students. It may involve solving a problem, producing a document or performing some other task. It may be used to assess the level of development of a competency, but this is not always the case, because it is often useful to have students take part in situations that are less goal-oriented, such as those involving exploration and observation. Usually, however, the activities provide opportunities for regulation that helps consolidate learning.

Depending on the pedagogical objective and the scope of the work required, the activities, tasks or problems may be quite detailed and repetitive, as in the case of exercises involving applications. However, they may also be more

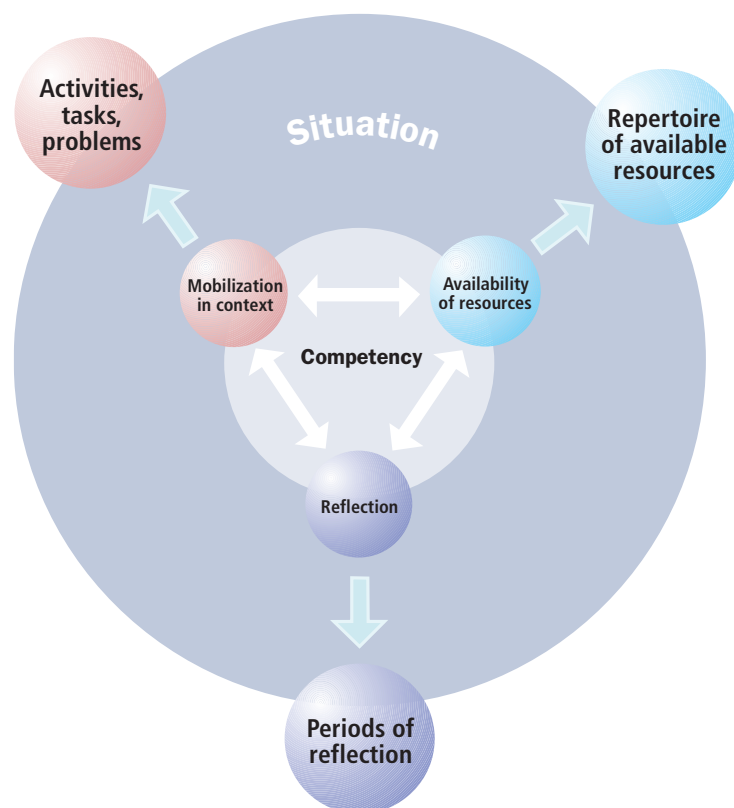
4. "Guidance and support (*accompagnement* in French; occasionally referred to as "accompagnement" in English) are provided to help people in learning situations achieve progress in the construction of their knowledge" (Lafortune and Deaudelin, *Accompagnement socioconstructiviste: Pour s'approprier une réforme en éducation* [Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2001], p. 199-200 [translation]). Depending on the perspective adopted, they may take various forms. In a social constructivist approach, these practices involve taking into account the learners' previously acquired knowledge, fostering co-construction, encouraging socio-cognitive conflict and seeking to disseminate reflective and metacognitive practices. The process should take into consideration the cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social dimensions of guidance and support.

5. Some of the terms used in the Ministère's documents are *learning situation, learning and evaluation situation and teaching and learning situation*.

open, involving a substantial production spread over a period of time. In the latter case, the situations become projects. Most situations fall between these two extremes and consist of a number of problems to be solved.

Designed to be used to promote the development of competencies and, later, to assess that development, the situations should address the three aspects of a competency: mobilization in context, availability of resources and reflection on the process. This means that the design of the situations should involve putting together a set of meaningful activities, tasks and problems, taking into account the internal or external resources that are required or relevant, and planning time for explanation, feedback and regulation of the processes constructed or adopted by the students.

Elements to be Taken Into Account in Designing Learning and Evaluation Situations



The question of resources refers not only to the physical setup of the environment and the materials available, but also to the attitudes and knowledge already acquired or to be constructed in order to meet the demands of the situation. The resources may include people that are present or that students can consult from a distance, and various means of communication among the participants.

Supporting the progress of learning

The diversity of learning and evaluation situations is welcome, because it takes more than a single situation to develop or to evaluate a competency. Each competency requires a set of comparable situations. It is also important to graduate the complexity of the situations in order to ensure the progressive development of the competencies and allow students to meet ever-increasing challenges through the year or from year to year of the cycle. This may be done by adjusting certain parameters, such as the following:

- nature and complexity of the problem that constitutes the core of the situation
- number of tasks that make up the situation
- degree of familiarity of the tasks required
- nature of the work to be produced
- time constraints and the process involved
- nature, scope and complexity of internal resources to be mobilized
- type, variety and accessibility of external resources to be used
- expectations with regard to students' explanation of their approach and process

Teachers should thus use pedagogical strategies that allow them to adjust the complexity of the activities given to the students: open-ended problems, manipulations, research, experiments, simulations, interdisciplinary projects, etc.

The students, by analyzing the recurring elements of the activities provided, assessing the resources often used in carrying out these activities and applying analogical reasoning, will gradually acquire cognitive and metacognitive strategies that can help them perform increasingly complex activities.

Students will gradually acquire strategies that can help them perform increasingly complex tasks.

Ways of ensuring learning progress through the cycle vary from subject to subject; they are described in the chapters on the subject-specific programs. In the case of work-oriented training, given the particular nature of this path, it is more appropriate to speak of learning targets than of annual outcomes. However, these targets, too, are part of a logic of continuous progress and learning, and teachers should strive to bring each student as far as possible.

Differentiated guidance and support

In addition to graduating the requirements of learning and evaluation situations to ensure the development of the competencies during the cycle, teachers should organize their teaching in a way that takes into account the students' previous learning, individual cognitive styles and interests so as to provide the most favourable conditions for learning. Thus teachers

Teachers are sensitive to the diversity of the students in the class.

should adapt their teaching strategies, their ways of having students work together and the design of their situations in order to take individual differences into account as far as possible in the class setting. This approach to teaching is known as *differentiated instruction*.

Teachers who practise differentiated instruction understand the dynamics at work in their classes and are sensitive to the diversity of the students in them. This means they use a broad range of strategies and take advantage of interactions that occur naturally in the class. The parameters used to graduate the level of complexity of the situations can also be used to differentiate the situations in class.

In Secondary Cycle Two, as in the previous cycles, the program promotes flexible classroom organization, the use of varied documentary and technological resources, respect for individual work rhythms and differentiated support and enrichment. The strategies that can be used include having students work on their own or in small groups, and teachers can use lecturing and explicit instruction when necessary.

Motivating students

Supporting students in the development and exercise of their competencies entails recognizing the importance of the emotional dimension of the learning process.

Various strategies may be used to provide stimulating and meaningful learning and evaluation situations that elicit students' interest and involvement:

- Start from the students' interests.
- Awaken their curiosity and encourage their interest in things that are new to them.
- Set tasks that cause a cognitive imbalance and present a challenge that students can meet.
- Provide situations they can see as useful and relevant.
- Make connections with other knowledge, explain things they do not yet understand and organize knowledge in outlines.
- Make the classroom a place of discussion and research and encourage cooperative work.

Activities that involve students in improving the quality of life at school increase their motivation. It has been amply demonstrated that participation in the life of the school has a positive effect on students' feeling of belonging and perseverance.

Giving students responsibility for their learning also plays an essential role in reinforcing their motivation and autonomy. In the classroom, teachers should encourage them to assess their learning, monitor their own progress and judge the effectiveness of their learning strategies. They should provide tools for self-evaluation and make frequent use of peer evaluation. By participating actively in the ongoing evaluation of their learning, students learn, with the help of teachers and classmates, to more accurately assess the knowledge they acquire and the way in which they use it. Here, too, they develop a capacity for reflection that will support their motivation to learn throughout their lives.

Evaluating the development of competencies

Competencies are progressive, comprehensive and integrated. A great variety of information is needed in order to identify where students are making progress and where they are not. This information can be used to make individual or collective adjustments, but it can also provide encouragement by validating students' major or minor successes and teachers' pedagogical successes.

It is important to recognize the emotional dimension of the learning process.

Situations are the key means used to evaluate competencies. The evaluation focuses on the three aspects of a competency: mobilization of resources in a specific context, the availability of a diversified repertoire of resources and the capacity to reflect upon the process of mobilizing, reorganizing and integrating the resources. The situations should give students the opportunity to demonstrate:

- their capacity to effectively mobilize internal and external resources
- their mastery of the required learning, including strategies for finding or constructing the knowledge they need
- their ability to clearly explain their process and the choices that have led to a solution

It is in open-ended situations that the actual use of resources may best be observed. It is also in such situations that students can most naturally be led to describe their process. In addition, the customary methods for the evaluation of learning may be used to assess students' mastery of the required resources.

Teamwork Among Educators

In Secondary Cycle Two, even more than in the previous cycles, the need to provide complex and diversified situations calls for joint action by all educators. While school personnel as individuals are responsible for their professional actions, they are also expected to construct shared representations and to work together on problems to be solved, situations to be dealt with, objectives to be attained, means to be used and projects to be carried out. All of them—administrators, teachers, Complementary Educational Services personnel and support staff—must work together to create optimal teaching-learning conditions. In so doing, they have to go beyond individual competencies and create collective competency.

A cycle-based curriculum demands synergy in the application of the different professional competencies.

Making the school a learning organization

The school should adopt practices like those characteristic of a growing number of what are called “learning organizations,” that is, organizations that use their experience to improve their ability to attain the results sought. To do so, they ensure that their staff all share a common vision; they rely on shared expertise, communication and close cooperation among people with different educational backgrounds and different talents; they invest in continuous professional development; and they create an environment for the construction of knowledge and the emergence of innovative solutions to their problems.

It is in the interest of schools to evolve in this direction, because the nature and scope of the requirements they must meet demand that they coordinate their strengths and establish systemic regulation mechanisms.

A program that encourages coordinated action

The Québec Education Program not only influences educational practices; it affects the roles of all participants in a collaborative endeavour.

Students: active participants in educational action

Students have the primary responsibility for their learning and are encouraged to be curious, rigorous and cooperative. In Secondary Cycle Two, more than ever, their involvement in educational actions that concern them should be recognized.

Teachers: experts in pedagogical practices

Teachers are cultural mediators who provide professional support for the development of students' competencies. Teachers working with the same group of students should work collectively, using multidisciplinary learning situations, sharing resources, strategies and responsibilities and seeking solutions to the problems in their school.

The cycle-based approach reinforces this new way of working together and flexibly managing groups of students, time and space. Working in cycle teams also makes it possible to share the most effective strategies.

Complementary Educational Services personnel: essential counsellors and educators

All Complementary Educational Services personnel should see themselves as playing an essential role in the implementation of the Québec Education Program, and should be recognized as such. They should participate in developing and carrying out the educational project, take part in the school team's pedagogical activities, support the school's activities with regard to the educational aims of the broad areas of learning and create opportunities for students to apply subject-specific or cross-curricular competencies they have learned. In turn, teachers should work with them in applying the Complementary Educational Services programs.⁶

The school administration: leaders in the education reform

The school administration is responsible for steering the education reform in the school, and thus plays a key role. The school administrators should foster a learning culture and work to build a shared vision. They are also the guardians of the quality of educational services and should stimulate collaboration among partners within and outside the school.

Parents: key partners

Collaboration by parents often makes the difference between success and underachievement for students. While students in Secondary Cycle Two demand greater autonomy and show more independence, parental support is still a factor in their motivation.

Parents know their adolescents, and this knowledge can be useful to school staff. Parents also have expectations with regard to the school, and educators should be aware of these expectations. It is thus worth 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 understand the meaning and aims of the Québec Education Program and feel that their aspirations are being taken into account.

6. See the reference framework *Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success* (2002).

1.7 A Diversified Curriculum That Helps Students Plan for the Future

From the beginning of preschool education to the end of Secondary Cycle One, the Québec Education Program is the same for all students, while explicitly taking into account the heterogeneity that characterizes any group of students. The practice of differentiated instruction is seen as an essential condition for countering failure, because it allows every student to make optimal progress.

Secondary Cycle Two is designed as a stage in which students, while continuing their basic education, prepare for life as workers and citizens, which is closer for some of them and farther for others. It is marked by the introduction of a variety of possibilities for acquiring qualifications, so as to encourage students to choose their own individual paths and allow them to avoid needless detours.

In both general education and prework training, the education provided in Secondary Cycle Two is based on the recognition of a variety of ways of acquiring knowledge.

It relies to varying degrees on the mutual enrichment of theoretical and more practical knowledge and recognizes the value of a strong, dynamic, multidimensional culture. All educators thus have the challenge and the duty of ensuring that all students have an opportunity to construct an integrated world-view and a strong personal identity and are empowered to take action to meet the demands of the 21st century.

Hence the concept of diversification supplements that of differentiated instruction. The two terms are related, but each one has a specific definition in the Québec Education Program. *Differentiated instruction* refers to pedagogical practices that take into account the students' heterogeneity in terms of their prior learning, interests and learning styles, while *diversification* refers to the organizational arrangements made to respond to students' individual characteristics, arrangements involving different paths and elective subjects. These organizational arrangements involve more than merely grouping students according to their abilities or interests. They are above all the school team's means for helping students develop optimally by making informed choices regarding their studies.

The education provided in Secondary Cycle Two is based on the recognition of a variety of ways of acquiring knowledge.

Seen in this way, diversification is perfectly in keeping with the guidance-oriented approach. It encourages students aged 14 to 18 to be actively involved in making educational and career choices, to discover and use the fact that knowledge can be applied and that it is empowering, and to decide how much energy to put into their own progress in order to satisfy their ambitions, realize their dreams and fulfill their potential.

The following diagram shows the structure of the Québec Education Program for Secondary Cycle Two. It shows the different paths students can choose and

the bridges that allow for mobility among them. The Work-Oriented Training Path enables students to join the work force fairly quickly, but it also allows them to receive training in a semiskilled trade, go into vocational training or continue their studies in general education. The General

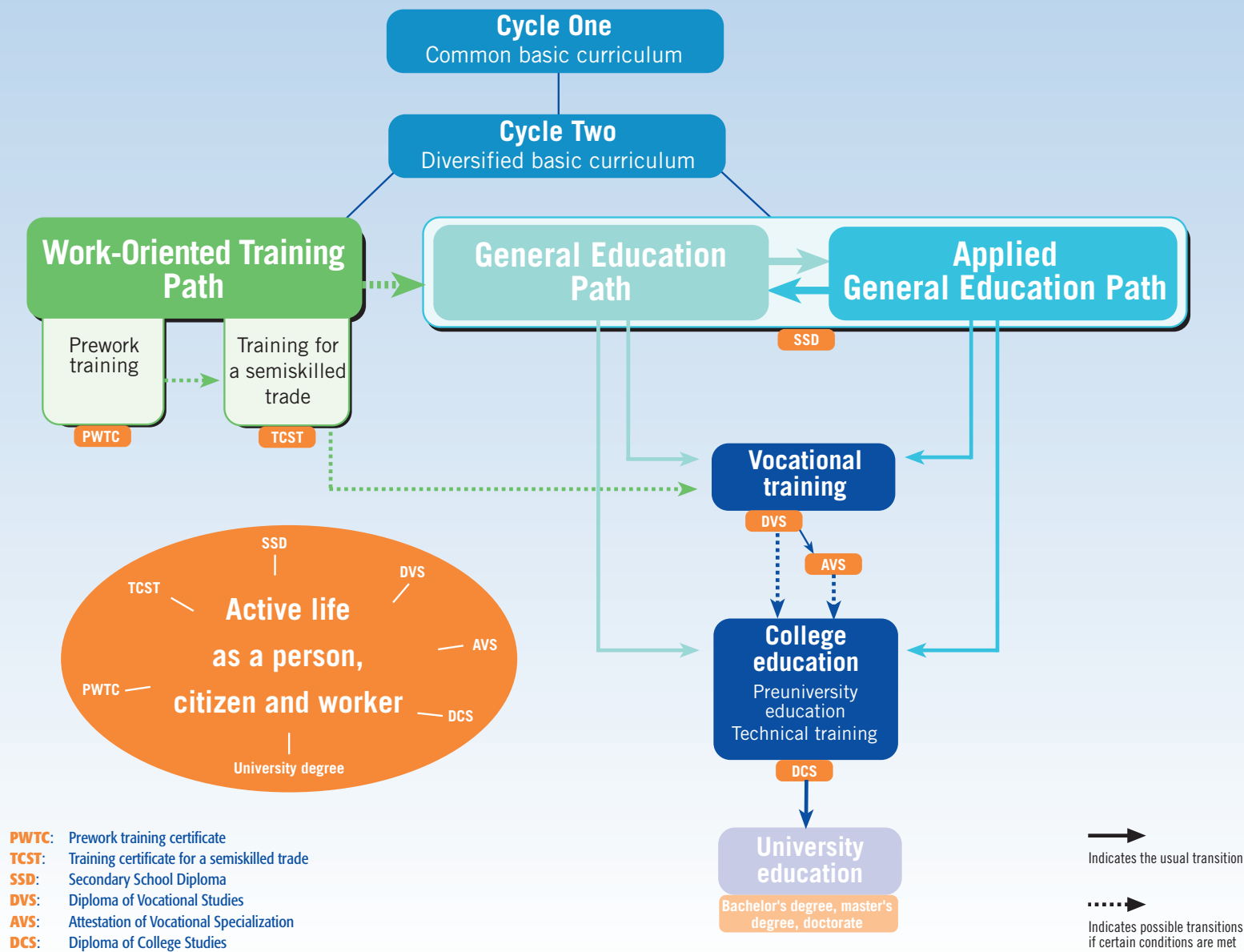
Education Path and the Applied General Education Path can both lead to further studies in vocational training, college-level education or university.

Each path combines a variety of compulsory and optional subjects and brings together basic core education for all students and more specialized education corresponding to various interests, aptitudes or talents. The diagram highlights the flexible possibilities for movement between paths, particularly between general education and applied general education. Thus, a student could begin Secondary Cycle Two in applied general education and, at the end of a school year, go on to general education, or vice-versa.

Although it is intended for students who, for various reasons, have difficulties in school, the Work-Oriented Training Path is not cut off from the others. Despite limitations associated with difficulties earlier in their schooling, some students may, with a work plan established by the school, be able to go on to one of the general education paths or a more demanding vocational training program.

Whatever path they choose, all students will, at the successful completion of their studies, receive ministerial recognition in the form of a diploma or certificate attesting to their studies and the level of their competency development.

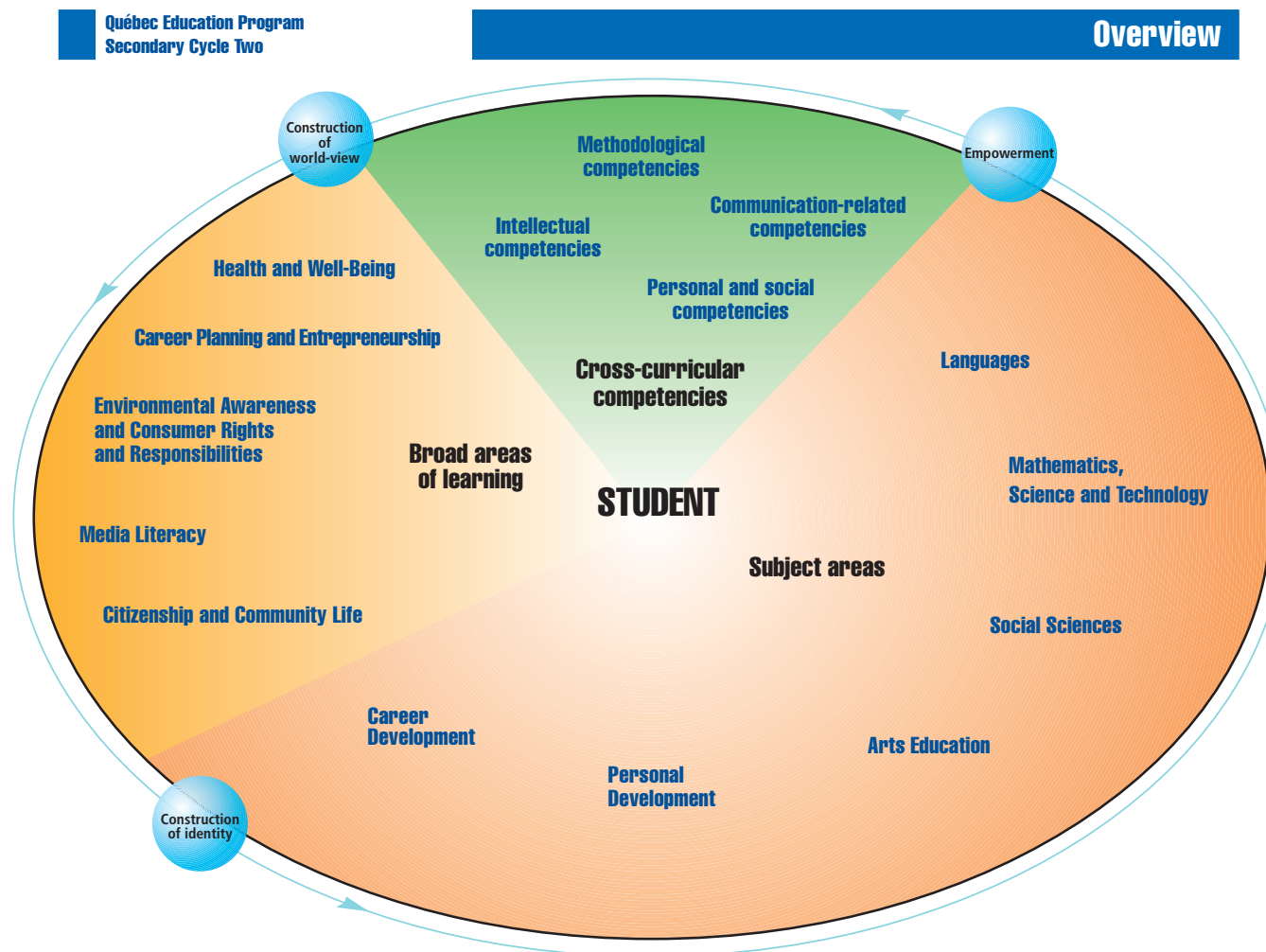
LEARNING PATHS IN THE YOUTH SECTOR



1.8 An Integrated Program Structure

Designed as a system, the Québec Education Program has three basic dimensions: broad areas of learning, cross-curricular competencies and subject areas. The program should be approached as a dynamic whole whose usefulness as a pedagogical resource resides in the complementarity and

interdependence of its dimensions. Its structure is intended to facilitate the establishment of connections among the different dimensions. It also makes it possible to place the subject-specific learning in the broader context of the educational aims that should be shared by all school staff.



Broad Areas of Learning⁷

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 the following:

- Health and Well-Being
- Career Planning and Entrepreneurship
- Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities
- Media Literacy
- Citizenship and Community Life

The broad areas of learning deal with aspects of contemporary life young people must face; this clearly gives them an interdisciplinary dimension. They are a concrete expression of the school's mission and they provide the basis for educational practices and give learning situations meaning and authenticity. They should constitute the foundations of a school's educational project and it should be the responsibility of all school staff to address them.

Cross-Curricular Competencies⁸

The Québec Education Program stresses the need for all students to develop various types of competencies:

- Intellectual competencies: uses information; solves problems; exercises critical judgment; uses creativity
- Methodological competencies: adopts effective work methods; uses information and communications technologies
- Personal and social competencies: achieves his/her potential; cooperates with others
- Communication-related competencies: communicates appropriately

These competencies are called cross-curricular because they are of a generic nature and are used in the broad areas of learning and subject areas. By definition, they have greater scope than subject-specific competencies, since they go beyond the boundaries of the subject areas. They are developed in

7. The broad areas of learning are dealt with in Chapter 2.

8. The cross-curricular competencies are dealt with in Chapter 3.

both the subjects and the broad areas of learning, through the integration of learning over time.

Subject Areas⁹

There are six subject areas in the QEP:

- Languages
- Mathematics, Science and Technology
- Social Sciences
- Arts Education
- Personal Development
- Career Development

They represent the major fields of knowledge that determine the subjects deemed essential to students' education. The grouping of the subjects into these areas represents a significant step towards the integration of the subjects.

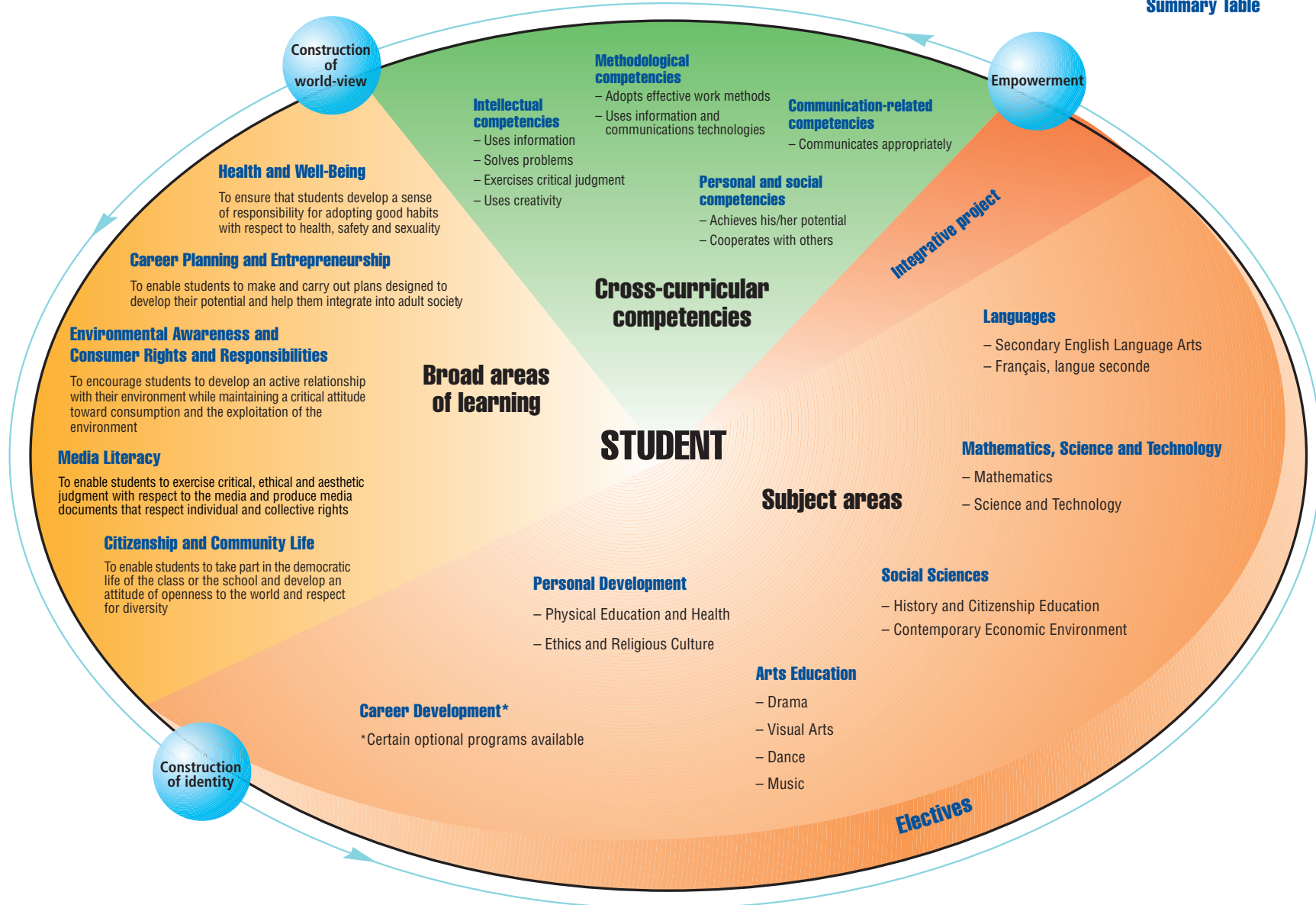
In addition, to serve the needs and interests of students in this cycle, the subject areas are adapted to the different paths. Thus, in the General Education Path, programs in Career Development may be chosen as electives, while in the Applied General Education Path, the Personal Orientation Project is compulsory. In the Work-Oriented Training Path, the Career Development subject area is stressed, while the arts may be included in the situations provided or students may take optional Arts Education programs.

The following diagrams show the features of each path as based on the three dimensions of the Québec Education Program: broad areas of learning, cross-curricular competencies and subject areas.

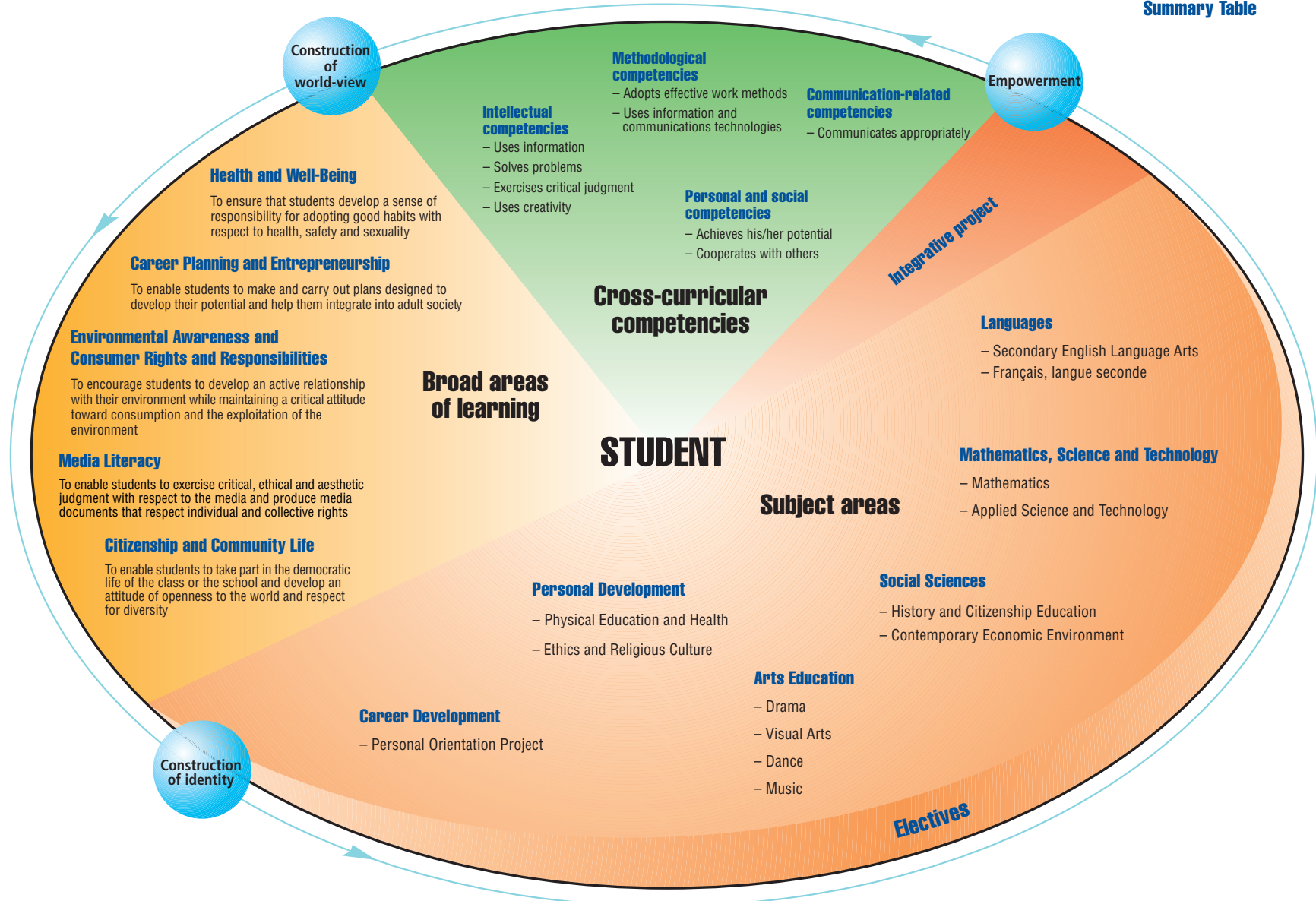
End-of-cycle project

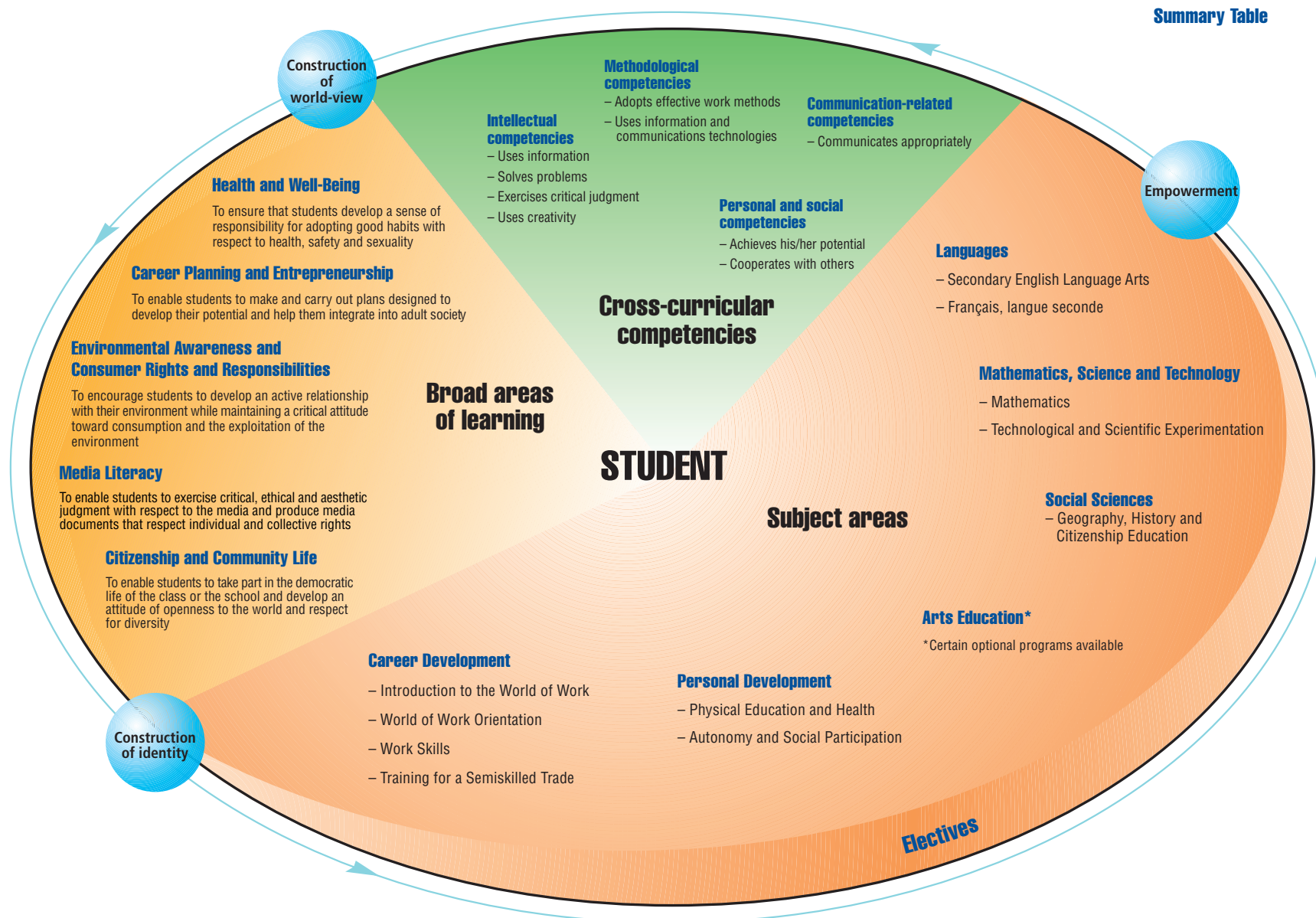
In Secondary V in the General Education Path and the Applied General Education Path, there is a compulsory program entitled the Integrative Project, which gives students an opportunity to integrate some of their learning in an individual project of their choice at the end of their schooling. In the first two diagrams below, this innovative feature is shown alongside the broad areas of learning, the cross-curricular competencies and the subject areas.

9. The subject areas are dealt with in Chapter 4.



Summary Table





1.9 A Compulsory Program

The Québec Education Program is a common frame of reference and an indispensable guide. All school staff have to respect its broad orientations and educational aims.

The School's Obligations

The school has an obligation to apply all the dimensions of the Québec Education Program: broad areas of learning, cross-curricular competencies and subject-specific competencies.

This means that it is not sufficient to cover only the subject content without:

- pursuing the educational aims of the broad areas of learning
- developing the subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies required for the integration of learning, its contextualization and its application in various situations

This is an obligation of means, which involves establishing the organizational, pedagogical and didactic conditions in both the classroom and the school.

The school must ensure that its action is effective in terms of the level of competency generally attained by students and must verify the appropriateness of the measures it implements. Its educational project should therefore be designed, implemented and evaluated in relation to all dimensions of the Québec Education Program.

Evaluation of Prescribed Learning

It is important to understand that not all the dimensions of the program are prescriptive in the same way. For the subject areas, every student has to demonstrate a sufficient level of competency and knowledge, as set out in the subject-specific programs and defined in scales of competency levels. The cross-curricular competencies must be addressed in the regulation of learning and mentioned in the end-of-cycle competency reports. In contrast, the broad areas of learning should not be seen as formal content to be taught or evaluated. Rather, as stated above, they are prescriptive in the sense that the school must address them in an integrated way.