



GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING ACTIVITY PROGRAMS FOR **SERVICE SCHOOL DAYCARE SERVICES:**

A Flexible, Practical Tool



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Preface

Bearing in mind that every school daycare service has its own unique features, the definition and objectives of school daycare services, as prescribed by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, are listed below.

Definition of School Daycare Services

Section 1 of the *Regulation respecting childcare services provided at school* defines these services as follows: "Childcare services provided at school shall ensure care to children at the preschool and elementary level of a school board, outside the period when educational services are provided to them."

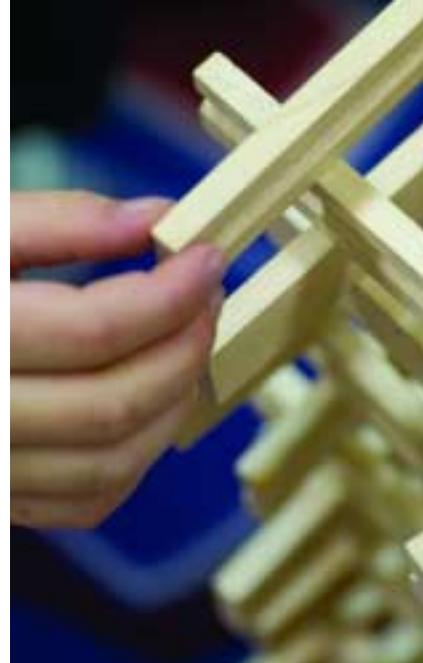
School daycare services complement the educational services provided by the school and are primarily focused on recreational activities. In order to provide a complementary service at the school and ensure continuity in its educational mission, planning for school daycare services is an integral part of the school's educational project.

Objectives of School Daycare Services

School daycare services are designed to meet the following objectives:

- to ensure the safety and general well-being of the children served
- to participate in the achievement of the objectives of the school's educational project
- to set up activities and recreational projects that contribute to the children's overall development
- to encourage the development of social skills such as respect, cooperation and openness to others
- to offer homework support after school by providing students with an appropriate place in which to work and the time and materials they require

School daycare services constitute a complementary living environment. Thanks to a continuing relationship with students, often over a considerable number of years, the members of the daycare staff are able to establish a special bond with the students and their parents.





INTRODUCTION

This document is intended for coordinators and staff of school daycare services. It is designed to be a guide to help devise a program of activities that will be flexible and practical enough to be used by all personnel. It indicates where to find the means and tools that coordinators and staff may use to create their own program of activities, according to their own characteristics and needs.

In addition, with regard to the self-evaluation of the program of activities, this document serves as a reflection tool for the members of the school administration, in their capacity as the ultimate managers of the daycare services, and the members of the school's governing board, who are accountable for the quality of services provided at their school.

The importance of proceeding with a self-evaluation process closely linked to the nine cross-curricular competencies and the five broad areas of learning set forth in the Québec Education Program (QEP) is also emphasized in this guide, including how and when to conduct this self-evaluation.

The proposed reflection takes place in three stages. Before undertaking to develop the program of activities, it is important first to know the children who frequent the daycare service and their parents, to know yourself and to know your staff. You must also establish conditions that will encourage all partners to become actively involved in the daily life of their daycare service and to familiarize themselves with the content of the QEP, which affects all school staff.



The second stage involves devising a program of activities that takes into account prior learning, the school's educational values, the strengths of the school's staff, the orientations taken by the daycare and specific needs of the clientele.

Finally, it is important to make this program known to all affected parties, that is, the parents, the children and school staff.



1

PREREQUISITES TO DEVELOPING THE PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

“All adults involved in the act of educating children have a personal philosophy. A philosophy is a collection of integrated beliefs... principles [and values] that we use to guide [our most] important decisions. Our philosophy represents the integration of all our personal values. [A daycare service therefore reflects the philosophy of the educators who work there.]” (Musson, p. 202)

Diversify your resources. Seek the contributions of committees, such as the daycare parents’ committee or the parent participation organization (PPO).

To draw out the philosophy that will underlie the general orientations of the program of activities, it is important to reflect upon the expectations of the clientele served, your own values, and the values of your staff.

Knowing the Clientele

The relationship established between daycare coordinators and their staff mirrors the relationship that will be established between staff members and the children. Whereas in-depth knowledge of the staff facilitates teamwork, knowing the clientele well makes it possible to adjust the content of the program of activities to fit the particular characteristics of the children and the needs of the parents.

Knowing the Parents

There are various ways to analyze the needs and expectations of parents. Surveys are useful in determining the rate of satisfaction (regarding spring break, for example, or the schedules of lunch periods). At registration, parents can be given a form on which to indicate their expectations and particular needs. When a special activity is organized, a “Comments and Suggestions” section can be added to the parental authorization form.

The more we involve parents, the more their satisfaction level is increased and the better our relationship is with them. Moreover, this helps avoid certain pitfalls due to a lack of awareness of parents’ values. For example, casino activities were quite popular for a time but, following television reports on compulsive gambling, some parents may have been alarmed by such activities. Inviting a celebrity or an outside speaker can be a touchy matter as well. For example, a daycare service sparked an outcry by inviting a musical group to their school, as some of the parents considered that the event went against their educational values. With regard to sports, it is important, as well, to consider that participation in an activity such as downhill



If you can change directions easily, you will transmit this inventive and creative power to the children.

skiing is not something that every family can afford and may make some families feel awkward. It goes without saying that you can't please everyone all of the time, so the best way to avoid disgruntlement is to promote optional activities, letting parents decide whether or not to sign their children up for a given activity.

Consulting the Children, Learning Their Areas of Interest, and Involving Them in the Decisions That Affect Them

Children are active members of the school daycare community. They take part in activities, but they may also propose or initiate them. What are the children's interests? What do they want to do? Here again, resources are plentiful. For example, this is a situation in which the school life committee can be consulted. Moreover, when there is an outing or a special activity, children can be asked to evaluate the activity in which they have taken part.

Rainy days that prevent planned activities can become special times to use the children's ideas.

However, although consulting and seizing upon the children's interesting suggestions and ideas in the heat of the moment sounds great, how do we go about it? We may need to accept the idea of deviating from the program of activities in order to seize the moment and improvise. The fact that the daycare staff members are not required to adhere to a strict curriculum gives us extraordinary freedom that we must endeavour to draw upon. Thus, you might take the time to get a feel for the overall mood of the group and perhaps replace the planned activity with an activity suggested by one of the children.

Another way of actively involving children is to initiate a discussion of their successes, instilling in them an awareness of the challenges that they have met. Words of praise are always welcome and, sometimes, a word of encouragement leads to perseverance. At the end of the year, children can be given a little card highlighting

By giving funny or thematic names to groups and sub-groups, we instill a sense of belonging in the children.



their strengths, the challenges they have met and the objectives to be pursued, including, for example, the targeted social behaviour. A presentation full of colourful imagery will help to make this report attractive.

Supporting and Encouraging the Children in their Discovery Activities

Children's interest and curiosity are often piqued by what they have heard on television or at the movies. We cannot block out these fads, but perhaps we can use them to help the children push their thinking a bit further. For example, if the children play at *Dans une galaxie près de chez-vous*, you might draw on this interest to introduce them to astronomy.

It may happen that you have a child in your care who is experiencing major difficulties or who has special needs. In this case, you must notify the school administration and seek their support. It is recommended that you contact the parents as soon as possible and work with them to find solutions. These exceptional situations provide learning opportunities for the other children in the group as well. The list of suggested readings presented at the end of the document includes two works that give guidance on how to handle intervention in such circumstances, namely, *Techniques d'impact*.

Knowing the Staff

Knowing Yourself

It goes without saying that school daycare coordinators must be the first to reflect on their own values, threshold of tolerance, strengths and difficulties.

It is therefore essential for them to ask themselves the following questions in order to jumpstart this process:

- What are my educational values?
- Where am I at in my professional development?
- When did I last do some reading on my profession?

On this subject, it is suggested that you read—or reread—chapter 2 of Musson (1994), *School-age care: Theory and Practice*. See the list of suggested readings for the complete reference.

Knowing the Strengths and Difficulties of Each Member of the Daycare Staff

There are several activities that can provide ways of getting to know each staff member better and creating synergy within the group. Everyone is no doubt familiar with the exercise in which participants roll dice and take turns answering personal questions, such as:

- What is your favourite movie or who is your favourite actor?
- What would you do if you had a million dollars?
- What was the last trip you took?

You could also ask daycare staff members to take turns organizing and leading group self-reflection sessions. The list of suggested readings contains some tools for evaluation and questioning that can be used in the context of such sessions, namely, *Guide d'autoformation visant l'amélioration des pratiques professionnelles* and chapter 1 of *Vivre en harmonie avec les 9-12*.

Once staff members begin getting to know each other, what remains to be done is to highlight the strengths of each staff member and work on the points that need improvement. For example, if a staff member is from Honduras, he or she could set up workshops for learning Spanish. If a staff member is uncomfortable with gym activities, then she could be teamed up with someone else to carry out these activities. If nobody is available to handle the sports option, a solution could be to give this assignment to a staff member and have assistance provided by 10- or 11-year-old children who enjoy sports.

Some daycare staff members are young and enthusiastic; others are older and more experienced. You need to be able to draw on the qualities of each individual, leaving them full latitude to set up projects that suit them and pairing staff members up when problems arise. By staying attuned to the interests and qualities of each individual, you might discover exceptional talents in a particular staff member, who can then become a resource person in a specific area of activity.

We recommend holding regular planning meetings. Other staff meetings are also needed to ensure that the daycare service runs smoothly and to discuss special projects.

Consulting with Staff Regularly and Involving Them in Decisions

If synergy is really to work in a team, every individual must feel personally involved in the decision-making process. It is therefore important to plan meetings. Working committees can be organized to discuss pedagogical days, hallway traffic, rules of community living, etc. Before each meeting, an agenda must be prepared. In addition, someone needs to take the minutes, then, after the meeting, it is important to follow up on decisions. If you don't expect to be able to follow up on decisions made at a meeting, it is preferable not to hold the meeting at all. Nothing is more discouraging for staff members than to be left with the impression that they are attending meetings that serve no useful purpose.

Supporting Each Member of the Daycare Staff

For daycare staff members to be able to provide support to each other, they must be aware of what the others do. It is therefore essential to have information circulate—for example, when a special activity is organized. Moreover, in order for all staff members to lend their support when a co-worker comes up against a difficulty, an item can be included in the agenda whereby individuals are given a chance to talk about their particular concerns.

Daycare coordinators play a vital role in providing support to educators, who need to feel that the coordinator is present and available. In this regard, you should always take the time to sit down with staff members who show a need to talk, and help them take stock of the situation.

Knowing the Community and the Resources Available

The school is an essential part of a community, which includes many people who can be invaluable partners.

If you are planning an activity outside of the school, let the police know when you will be transporting the children. Other ways to involve the community are to invite a representative of the CLSC to come and talk about health and nutrition, a firefighter to talk about safety and a police officer to talk about crime prevention. If you are organizing a play, for example, see what you can obtain from the local merchants, and if there is a lack of facilities at your school, find out whether you can use the auditorium of a nearby secondary school.

Human Resources

It is important to use all available means to publicize the school daycare service: the governing board, parish bulletins, community bulletin boards or at the *caisse populaire*, the local newspaper, the neighbourhood weekly, etc. By involving people who live in our community, we sometimes discover a pool of volunteers we never knew existed. Therefore it is beneficial to establish ties with neighbourhood merchants (grocery stores, pharmacies, bookstores, etc.) and public services (CLSCs, fire stations, police stations, community centres, youth activity centres, etc.).



Try to avoid purchasing equipment that is already available at the school. For example, balls from the gym can be used by the daycare service, and Lego blocks can be used by robotics workshops.

Material Resources

To benefit from the community's equipment and material resources, you can begin by drawing up a list of places and equipment to which you have access: the church basement, the community centre, the arena, the skating rink, the activity centre, the public library, etc. The recreation department in your municipality can also provide this type of information. It is important to make your needs known to the community.



You can also turn to the school board for material resources. For example, rather than renting a multimedia projector for a computer presentation, you can borrow one from your school board. By the same token, the Association des services de garde en milieu scolaire (ASGEMSQ) offers thematic kits, a video library and an advisory service.

Finally, parents are always an important resource: you can set up a network of people helping people or organize an open house to gather materials. On this subject, the video *Des clefs pour Fanny*, available from your school board, is a handy reference tool, presenting a number of solutions. You can find the exact reference in the list of suggested readings provided at the end of this document.

When the time comes to procure new equipment, it is important to keep in mind the particular objectives established by the daycare service. The idea is to offer a variety of equipment to provide for physical development as much as for emotional, social and intellectual development. It is recommended that you spread equipment purchases over three years in order to plan for replacement, among other things. For major purchases, such as playground equipment, it may be possible to share costs with the school or the school board.

Producing an Orientation Document

Daycare coordinators and their staff should now be aware of:

- the expectations of the parents and the children
- the main values of the school and the daycare service
- the strengths of the staff
- the main resources available in the community

With this information, you can produce a document in which you set forth the major orientations of the daycare service. The orientation document will be sent to the parents and integrated into the school's educational project.

The primary objective of the orientation document is to provide guidance for coordinators of school daycare services and their staff in developing a program of activities that will provide a real source of support to staff that is in line with the school's values and educational project. Therefore, this document, which presents the main orientations of the daycare service, constitutes the first step in this process. The more carefully this document is prepared to accurately convey the spirit of the daycare service, the easier it will be to develop the program of activities. The involvement and collaboration of all staff members are required during all stages of this process.

Take care to determine your needs accurately to avoid stockpiling too much equipment that takes up all your storage space and unnecessarily exhausts your network of suppliers.

Contact your suppliers and offer to test their new products.

2

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE EDUCATION REFORM

“A cross-curricular competency is a set of behaviours based on the effective mobilization and use of a range of resources... They are called cross-curricular because of their generic nature... and also because all school staff members, regardless of their subjects, are responsible for helping students to develop them.”
(Québec Education Program, p. 17)

A Harmonious Program

The program of activities of a school daycare service forms part of a whole. It must be an organic part of the school’s educational project and take into account the orientations of the QEP. Normally, the school’s educational project should include the orientations of the daycare service. It is therefore best if these two services (teaching and daycare) complement each other harmoniously.

At the core of the preschool and primary education program, the cross-curricular competencies cannot be ignored, as they affect all members of the school community. It is therefore important to stay alert to opportunities to develop these competencies.

The Focus of Cross-Curricular Competencies

The focus of cross-curricular competencies and other references that help foster their development are explained in Chapter 2 of the QEP.

To use information

To master how to acquire knowledge as much as the knowledge itself by learning to diversify and select their information sources, examine the accuracy and appropriateness of this information and use it in different contexts.

To solve problems

To handle a variety of problems rationally and effectively by learning to recognize key elements, to generate a variety of possible solutions and to persist until a satisfactory result has been achieved.



To exercise critical judgment

To adopt an enlightened position with respect to life's problems by learning to define the facts clearly, find the logical, ethical or aesthetic issues involved and establish his/her opinion through examination of various options and different points of view.

To use creativity

To come up with inventive ideas, solutions and ways of attaining his/her objective by learning to fall back on a broad range of resources, to take advantage of constraints that seem to be limitations as well as taking risks and persevering despite the insecurity brought about by taking on a new challenge.

To adopt effective work methods

Aim for a job completed and well done by learning to associate means to ends, to anticipate required resources, to adopt a structured approach to carrying out the task, to manage his/her material and time and to adjust his/her actions as required.

To use information and communications technologies (ICT)

To use information and communications technologies as a basis for carrying out more complex tasks involving cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies by learning to master these technologies, to explore how they contribute to intellectual work and to observe the ethical rules governing their use.



To construct his/her identity

To define himself/herself as an autonomous, responsible person, rooted in a given culture, desirous of broadening his/her world-view by learning to know himself/herself and to know the cultural references of his/her community and human heritage.



To cooperate with others

To work with others towards achieving objectives that cannot be fully accomplished without combining the strengths of each individual, by learning to share his/her ideas and to compare them to those of others, to contribute actively to carrying out a common task and to assess his/her participation and that of others accurately.

To communicate appropriately

To call on diverse modes of communication effectively to share information by learning to establish appropriate ways of communicating and to observe the rules and conventions particular to the mode of communication used.

The Educational Aims of the Broad Areas of Learning

The five broad areas of learning of the QEP are also the responsibility of all school staff. They cover the major issues of contemporary life. The educational aims associated with these broad areas of learning give the actions to be taken a common direction, in the classroom as in the school, by both teachers and other school staff. Chapter 3 of the QEP presents these educational aims and provides other information relating to the broad areas of learning.

Health and Well-Being

To ensure that students adopt a self-monitoring procedure concerning the development of good living habits related to health, well-being, sexuality and safety.

Personal and Career Planning

To enable students to undertake and complete projects that develop their potential and help them integrate into society.

Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

To encourage students to develop an active relationship with their environment while maintaining a critical attitude towards exploitation of the environment, technological development and consumer goods.

Media Literacy

To develop students' critical and ethical judgment with respect to media and to give them opportunities to produce media documents that respect individual and collective rights.

Citizenship and Community Life

To ensure that students take part in the democratic life of the classroom or the school and develop a spirit of openness to the world and respect for diversity.





3

DEVELOPING THE PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

“The program of activities of a school daycare service should emphasize enjoyment, relaxation and play while fostering life situations and activities that stimulate the children’s overall development. Nonetheless, the needs of the children attending the daycare vary according to age group, the types of services offered, and time of day. These needs also vary from one daycare service to another, according to the physical, social and cultural environment in which the children live.

([retranslation] Terrence, Jones and Berber, p. 97).

In order to offer an interesting and stimulating program of activities, the following must be taken into account:

- Alternation, variety and balance of activities.
- Fostering discovery (to encourage children to explore unknown areas, to open up to the world, to take part in a variety of collections).
- The children’s interests and suggestions.
- The children’s needs, according to their age and the stages in their development. For more in-depth reading, please refer to chapters 4–6 of the Musson text (1994), the complete reference for which can be found in the list of suggested readings provided at the end of this document.

The activities included in the program will be adjusted according to the specific needs of the children, but also according to the school’s schedule and the available resources and equipment.

Planning the Schedule

Schedule planning must take into account certain constraints that vary from school to school: class times, parents’ schedules (if the commuter train arrives at 5:45 p.m., for example, you will need to take this into consideration), available rooms, the school calendar, etc. It is also important to take into account the children’s needs and availability at different times of day (morning, lunch time, evening). In other words, certain times are better suited for activities that get the children moving (e.g. soccer or skating) while other times should be allotted for quieter activities (e.g. table games, handicrafts, relaxation and breathing exercises).



Making the Most of the Morning Period

The morning is an ideal time for stimulating the interest of more introverted children. This is often a time when the children need to be given freedom and access to the games of their choice. We give them time to wake up fully and start their day. Drawing or handicraft activities are often welcome. By varying the tools (wax crayons, felt pens, etc.), we can continuously renew an activity.

When the morning period is short, this provides an occasion for daycare service staff to put their quick games kit to good use. Provided there is enough time, the morning period, oriented towards individual activities, is well suited to study time: those who so desire, then, can finish up or review their school homework. The morning is also a good time to meet the parents. For example, you might organize breakfast meetings. Finally, you can offer the older children a chance to take part in sports activities, if adequate space is available.

At the beginning of the year, you can build a personal games kit, made up of quick little games that can serve as activity-starters for short periods (15 minutes) and small groups (during transition times, for example): a bin filled with nuts and bolts, a knitting, embroidery and sewing kit with hoops and spools of thread, card games, a group puzzle, etc.

Organizing the Lunch Period

The lunch period is a time that is well suited to active observation and listening. By discreetly observing the children while they eat lunch, noting what they are eating and establishing ties with them, we discover their personalities and can sometimes spot problems. The lunch period is also a time for dialogue during which we can communicate rules of life, such as good eating habits, hygiene, table manners, and so on.

Dividing children up into sub-groups—according to interests, age group or family (in groups including children of different ages)—has many advantages. For example, this helps to create a feeling of belonging and intimacy. If possible, set up partitions in your facility so that the children may form groups of five or six. This will have the added advantage of reducing the overall noise level.

The lunch period is also well suited to outside play. Here, it is important to think about organizing the space to leave room for free play areas, team sport areas (soccer, lawn bowling, dodge ball, etc.) and rest areas. For more on the multi-function schoolyard, see Chapter 7, Section 6 (pp. 195–198) of the text by Diane Berger and Jocelyne Martin, the exact reference for which can be found in the list of suggested readings provided at the end of this document.

To make moving from one place to another pleasant, make up games with the younger children: e.g. play at being robots, make a train, be a caterpillar, etc.

The Evening Period

Generally speaking, it is during the evening period that the daycare staff are in the presence of the children for the longest time. Consequently, this is the best time for special projects and theme workshops.

The “personality” of the daycare service will be revealed by the way in which the evening activities are organized. Variety and alternation should be key, with sports, artistic and scientific activities, a time for study and reading, language workshops (Spanish or French, for example), and so on. **It is good to offer many choices of activities.** If you observe that a child always chooses the same activity every evening, you can suggest other activities to encourage the pleasure of discovery. Naturally, it is important for children to try a little bit of everything in order to develop different abilities; but respecting children’s choices is still our priority. It is also more pleasant to lead an activity that the children have chosen themselves.

It is important to make an effort to invent new games, to use different materials (finger paints, metallic paints, Jell-O, coloured sand, china painting on dollar-store coffee mugs, etc.) and to come up with new ways of doing things. To stimulate the children’s imagination, you can organize brainstorming sessions with your staff and solicit the children’s ideas on how things might be done differently.

To conclude, it should be emphasized that the more we take into account the schedule constraints of both parents and children, the more planning will be appreciated. For example, you don’t start a game of chess at 5 p.m. if you know that the parents are due to arrive at 5:15. It is important, then, to be aware of the habitual arrival and departure times of each child and to stay abreast of public transportation timetables, the better to accommodate the parents.

Planning Various Types of Activities

The text by Musson (1994), sections 8.5–8.7, pages 216–245 and the text by Tarrant, Jones and Berger (2002), pages 102–121 (see the list of suggested readings provided at the end of this document) offer suggestions for interesting activities as well as several practical tips concerning transportation and insurance for outings.

Routine Activities

Routine activities take place every day. They are more specifically associated with the child’s arrival, hygiene, lunch, snacks and departure.

Arrival and departure times as well as occasions that involve moving from one place to another within the daycare foster the development of autonomy among the younger students and responsibility among the older ones. Wherever possible, let the younger children go to the washroom on their own, get dressed or wash their hands without help, put away their lunch box, and so on. As for the older children, let the faster ones go out before the others, give them a note to pass on to the daycare service coordinator or another staff member, make them responsible for tidying up or preparing an activity room, and so on. We can get them used to moving about freely and quietly, without shouting or speaking too loudly.

Free Activities

Free activities consist in individual or group play, indoors or outdoors. Free activities allow students to choose from among a variety of pastimes according to their changing interests, and include the use of a range of materials.

You can set up various theme areas in your facility: construction, role-playing, table games, visual arts, sciences, etc. Outdoors, use the playgrounds (ball games, hopscotch, grassy areas), recreational facilities (sandbox, swings, psychomotor unit), and set aside areas for relaxation.

Free activity periods do not mean, “anything goes.” They require organization: staff members take part in children’s games and must ensure their safety and well-being. They also provide a special time to establish ties by playing with the children, talking with them or observing them.

Daydreaming, resting and reflection time all serve a vital purpose.

When you replace or update your supply of table games, you might want to try some new games rather than replacing worn out games with the same ones.

The free activity periods are also good times to introduce children to table games. The children can form small groups and play games such as Monopoly, Mille Bornes, checkers, cards, dominos, etc. It can be surprising to see how many children have not yet been introduced to these games at home.

Short-Term Workshop Activities

Short-term workshop activities are planned ahead of time and organized. They may include handicrafts, music, cooperative or board games, science experiments, cooking or baking, or computer games. These workshops are sometimes offered at lunch time, when time permits, and after class, at the end of the day.

The short-term workshop activities are fun for the children, because results are immediate. Whether activities involve handicrafts, sports or role-play, there is a beginning and an end. In general, we choose a game that pleases the group.

An animated story is always well received. You can also do modelling, a baking workshop or propose a theme-based Internet research project.

Long-Term Workshop Activities

Long-term workshop activities, like short-term ones, are planned and organized ahead of time. They involve projects requiring more time. Long-term workshops might include a school newspaper, drama and improvisational theatre, choir, nature projects, or projects organized jointly by the daycare and teaching staff, for example the *Arboretum*.

The long-term workshop activities provide an opportunity to encourage the active involvement of all educators by letting all individuals set up personal projects whereby they can draw on their individual talents and potential. They also draw on the children's interests and the questions that arise. It is therefore important to choose projects that can contribute to providing food for thought.

Moreover, long-term workshop activities are ideal for setting up clubs (horticulture and cooking, arts, journalism, radio, photography, science or nature, good manners, and so on). Through the creation of clubs, we can awaken new interests in the children, which sometimes grow into real passions.



Special Activities

Special activities are held at specific times of the school year. These include educational and recreational outings on pedagogical days, projects to celebrate festive occasions, such as Christmas and Saint Valentine's Day, and special activities involving parents.

When planning an outing, it is important to consider the children's interests, which vary according to age group. For example, the older children might go on an outing while the younger children stay at the school, or you might organize

To find out about the various activities available in your community, pick up a copy of your municipality's recreation guide.



two different outings. It is also important to consider the pedagogical outing already planned in the school calendar to avoid proposing the same activities, or activities that are too similar. Wherever possible, outings and special activities should be planned at the beginning of the year, and an activities calendar produced that is then distributed to parents and school staff. Two readings are also suggested, namely the *Guide 4-14*, a directory of activities for children 4 through 14 and *Un monde plein de ressources*, a training document on safety standards during outings.

The Homework Period

Homework periods are for primary school students only, as kindergarteners do not have homework.

Homework periods, provided for under the *Regulation respecting childcare services provided at school* (s. 2), give students the opportunity to do their homework and obtain help, usually from educators. A set period of time—about 30 minutes—is generally allotted to homework, which is done in a quiet atmosphere that promotes concentration. Homework may be done individually, in pairs or in small groups. The daily homework period is usually preceded by recreational activities. It does not replace the time to be devoted to remedial work, in the case of students with difficulties, and in no way relieves the parents of their responsibility to make sure that their child has done his or her homework.

Clear instructions define this period of activities. For example: “Whisper, stay in your seat, go to another room when you have finished your homework”; or “I sit quietly in my seat, I am patient when I need an explanation; if I have finished before the end of the period, I read quietly in my seat”; or yet again, “I am quiet at all times, I remain seated, I raise my hand when I need help.”

Having appropriate materials on hand helps make the homework period run smoothly. Handouts on verbs, mystery word games, additions and multiplications can be useful. Reference works, such as a dictionary, a grammar reference, an atlas, etc., are also essential to have on hand. This is also a wonderful opportunity for a reading period, for children who like to read; you might therefore think of offering an assortment of novels and picture books. Finally, children often appreciate an atmosphere enhanced by classical music, which is conducive to study.

The school homework period must be part of a procedure instituted by the school. Normally, each teacher determines an average time requirement to complete homework. A dialogue needs to be established, then, between teaching staff and daycare service staff to determine how many periods are needed to complete the homework and how long these periods should last.

A similar dialogue can be established with parents and the children. Parents can be offered the possibility of signing their children up for the school homework period in the same way they would sign up for other evening activities. The parents can then choose the arrangement that best suits their needs. For example, the form could state the following options for parents to choose from: 1) my child will participate in the school homework period every evening (Monday through Thursday); 2) my child will participate in the school homework period on some days (indicate which days); 3) my child will not participate in the school homework period; he/she is signed up for the reading and drawing activity. Children aged 9 to 12 are mature enough to manage their homework adequately. They can therefore be asked to sign a commitment contract when their parents sign

Assign the task of organizing special days to two or three daycare staff members. This will give them an opportunity to showcase their talents: a carnival, a theme day (for example, a medieval day), water games, a scavenger hunt (for example, “Discovering our Neighbourhood”).

them up for the school homework period. Schools that have opted for this approach have noticed that children who sign up for the homework period of their own accord are more motivated and observe the rules and, consequently, educators are less likely to have to intervene to make sure they do their homework. When children object to doing their homework, they can be reminded that they signed the contract for help with homework, as did their parents. In this way, the children learn that the established agreement can be changed, provided the parents are informed.

Find out if your neighbourhood library has special lending conditions adapted to the needs of daycare services.

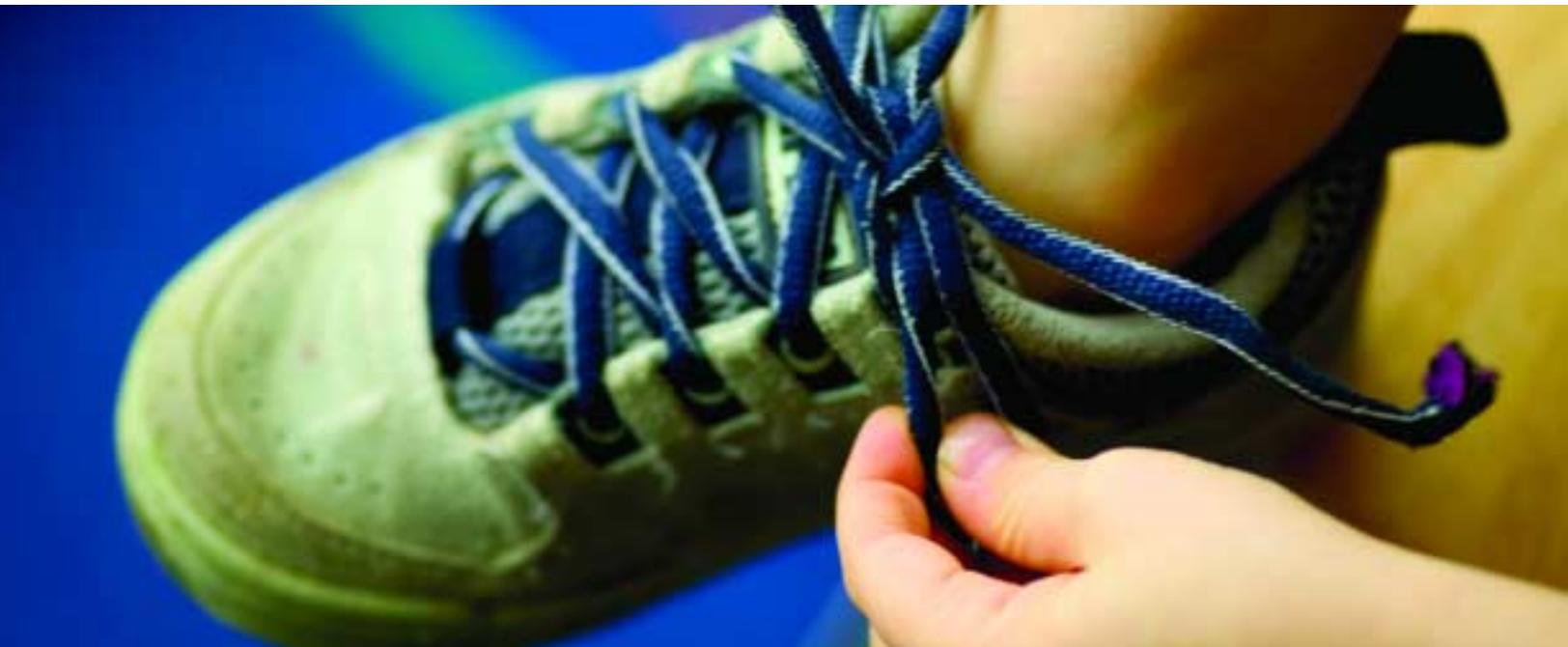


Pedagogical Days and Spring Break

Pedagogical days and spring break are quite often a challenging time for daycare service coordinators and their staff to be innovative and creative. In this regard, it would no doubt be beneficial to consult with other school daycare services in the area. Daycare services working together can build a bank of ideas for theme days. You may also invite a neighbouring daycare service for a visit, asking the children to organize this event with a sports option, an artistic option, a scientific and technological option, etc. By getting together with other daycare services, you increase the number of children and decrease the costs of these special days—for example, if you have planned to invite a clown or a theatre troupe.

Finally, here are some general recommendations:

- An activity that is not carried through to completion will not yield the desired results. If you do not think you will be able to finish an activity, it is preferable not to do it at all. The children's disappointment would be too great.
- Always consider the children's interest in the activities proposed. It is not enough to keep them occupied; they also need to be interested in an activity before they will eagerly get involved in that activity.
- Educators must be given latitude and allowed to learn from their mistakes.



- A daycare service staff member must be present at all official meetings organized by the school. At these meetings, the person delegated by the daycare service will gather a good deal of useful information and will keep abreast of special events, parents' comments, the concerns of school staff, etc. As a result, he or she will know what is going on at the school and can in turn inform the rest of the daycare service staff accordingly.
- It is often beneficial for a daycare service staff member to attend meetings regarding an individualized education plan that is to be established for a student, when that student frequents the daycare service. Such meetings provide a forum for sharing meaningful experiences with those involved in the child's education. Indeed, daycare service staff members are often privy to information on the child's family situation, as they see the parents every morning and evening. They are often witnesses to changes in the family's dynamics, such as when parents separate or in the case of a blended family coming together.

An Ongoing Evaluation of the Program of Activities

A program of activities is a longer-term project—not just a one-shot deal. It therefore needs to be fine-tuned in response to actual experiences. Specific times must be set aside during the school year to conduct evaluations and make necessary adjustments. The QEP is an essential evaluation tool, in addition to the vitally important perceptions of staff. Moreover, questions need to be asked such as: Which cross-curricular competencies were touched upon? Do the activities still pertain to the same focuses of development? Can we diversify our approach?

Parents' perceptions are also a part of the evaluation. When surveys are conducted to determine the level of parents' satisfaction, it is vital that parents be given the opportunity to make comments and suggestions.

It is important to note that the purpose of this exercise is not to evaluate the daycare service staff but, rather, the program of activities. In other words, if a workshop prompts negative commentary, it is not the workshop coordinator who is under attack but, rather, the activity itself—this is an important distinction to make.

The follow-up sheet provides a means of keeping a record of activities undertaken so that an assessment can be made from time to time to check, at each stage in the activity, the variety, alternation and balance of the various programs offered. To provide food for thought on the method to adopt in conducting the ongoing evaluation. Tracking sheets (or self-evaluation sheets) can be used by daycare service staff as a follow-up to each activity.

In summary, this step provides a means to compile the activities guide while taking into account acquired knowledge of the specific needs of our clientele, the school's educational values, the strengths of staff members as well as the orientations taken by the daycare service.

Drawing up the program of activities should provide the means to:

- produce a calendar of special activities and outings
- plan the organization of pedagogical days, spring break and holidays, if necessary
- develop a program schedule of activities
- organize the supervision of children and groups



4

DISSEMINATION OF THE PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

The program of activities must be disseminated to parents, children and school staff. It must also be presented to the governing board and to the daycare parents' committee, if such a committee exists at the school. The comments gathered during these presentations can help to improve, enrich or adapt the program.

Providing Information to Parents

It is important to provide parents with all information possible concerning the activities of the daycare service. The more parents are kept informed of what goes on at the daycare service, the more they can get involved in the daycare by providing material help, by offering appropriate suggestions or comments or simply by remembering to make sure their children are appropriately dressed (for example, if parents know that there will be a painting activity on Tuesday, perhaps they will save the dress with the cute little floral pattern for another day!).

Daycare service staff members are specialists in the social life of children. In this capacity, they have expertise that is of interest to the parents.

You get to see the children's parents almost every day. Take this opportunity to talk about certain activities and explain how they allow the children to develop cross-curricular competencies. Talk to them about the activities that have taken place, special activities that are of particular importance to you, challenges met, etc. For example, a parent might be happy to learn that his or her child, who is usually shy, has been named captain of the fencing team.



Don't be shy about staking your claim in the school. Be proactive with the teachers. Initiate partnerships. Suggest exchanges. Share your information.

Providing Information to Children

Since children are the people most directly affected by the activities, they need to be kept informed of what has been planned for them. For example, when you send an announcement about a new activity home to the parents, make sure that the children are also told about it

You could also post the program of activities on a bulletin board every week. Each member of the daycare staff could present his or her program for the week on Monday, and talk about it with them. Another important means of keeping children informed about matters of concern to them is to draw attention to the children's successes on a daily basis.

Providing Information to School Staff

In a school, as in an ecosystem, what happens in one sphere influences the activities of another sphere. Thus, if a scheduled activity has been eagerly awaited by a group of children for some time, at is determined ahead of time, the teacher who teaches the class that precedes this activity should be told about it beforehand. Likewise, if a teacher decides to keep a student after school, the daycare service staff member who is expecting that student at 3:15 should be notified.

It could be useful to have a blackboard or bulletin board set aside in strategic areas of the school specifically for use by the daycare service. This could be used to announce outings, program activities for the week, special lunchtime activities, open invitations to the school staff, or even a riddle or puzzle. This type of communication tool could also be set up in the staff lounge. The school radio is another way of informing people about the various activities being organized.



CONCLUSION

Developing a program of activities for a school daycare service requires knowing the children who frequent the daycare service and their parents well, so that activities can be adapted to the requirements of the socio-economic context and the values espoused by these families. This development task also relies on self-reflection on the part of daycare service staff, in a spirit of dialogue and mutual support, for the purpose of knowing co-workers well and having a good sense of the strengths of each individual.

In addition, a thorough familiarity with the community's human and material resources will allow you to actively participate in community life, thereby taking advantage of all opportunities for collaboration with the various organizations present in the community. It is also essential to be familiar with and understand the role of the cross-curricular competencies and the educational aims of the broad areas of learning in the overall development of the children entrusted to the school daycare service.

This preliminary phase is essential in order for every educator to embrace the daycare service program of activities and make it a genuine tool for his or her everyday work. When choosing activities, it is imperative to consider the nine cross-curricular competencies and the educational aims of the five broad areas of learning in order to adhere to the education reform spearheaded by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport.

Schedule planning must take into account the varying circumstances at different times of day, given that the children's needs are different in the morning and in the evening. The daycare service must offer a varied program that covers all of the types of activities (routine, free, special, short-term, long-term, periods set aside for school homework) and let children choose the activities that suit them best. Finally, ongoing evaluation and program follow-up are essential so that critical adjustments can be made in consequence, throughout the school year.

Once the program for the school year has been established, it is important to make it known to all those affected by it: parents, children and school staff, as well as the governing board and the daycare parents' committee, where appropriate. Dissemination of the program of activities provides a valuable opportunity to establish a dialogue with the parents and the children, tell them about the successes of each individual and take note of their comments and suggestions.



This document proposes a process for developing a flexible, practical program of activities that is suitable for all educators. Without a doubt, teamwork is crucial to the success of a quality program. As every person is unique and every daycare service has its own characteristics, no “one-size-fits-all” approach will work. You will need to come up with the method of operation that best suits your daycare service whereby each individual is an active and critical member of the team.

Finally, the daycare service is an important component of the school and plays an active role in school life. The teaching service and the daycare service often share the same facilities and they deal with the **same children**. Whether it is a matter of materials, facilities or rules for living, harmony and mutual assistance between these two services are in the best interests of the children.

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Suggested Readings

Association des Services de Garde en Milieu Scolaire du Québec.

Des clefs pour Fanny, Videocassette and accompanying document.
Longueuil: ASGEMSQ, 2000.

Association des Services de Garde en Milieu Scolaire de Québec.

Vivre en harmonie avec les 9-12. Conception d'un programme d'activités: Guide et outils. Longueuil: ASGEMSQ, n.d.

Beaulieu, Dany. *Techniques d'impact en classe*. Lac Beauport, Québec: Éditions Académie Impact, 2001. (Group management techniques, how to respond to children with behavioural difficulties, etc.)

Commission Scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys. *Guide d'autoformation visant l'amélioration des pratiques professionnelles destiné aux employés des services de garde et de surveillance des dîneurs*. Montréal: Ressources pédagogiques et services complémentaires et de l'adaptation scolaire, 2004. To obtain a copy of the *Guide d'autoformation*, please contact the Coop étudiante adulte Clément at (514) 367-8700.

Fournier-Perkins, Doriane, et al. *Guide 4-14. Un répertoire d'activités pour les enfants de 4–14 ans*. Sainte-Foy, Québec: Édition Idées Loisirs Gestion.

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Suggested Training

Un monde plein de ressources. Gestion du dossier santé, sécurité et hygiène en services de garde. Training provided by the *Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec*, (418) 651-3220.

Intégration des enfants ayant une déficience en service de garde en milieu scolaire. Training provided by the *Association des services de garde en milieu scolaire du Québec*, (450) 646-2714.

Guide d'autoformation visant l'amélioration des pratiques professionnelles destiné aux employés des services de garde et de surveillance des dîneurs. Commission Scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys, Monique Laprise (450) 569-5212 or molaprise@videotron.ca.





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