

YOUR CHILD IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS



Québec  

The transition from elementary to secondary school

Starting secondary school is an important step in a teenager's life. Many eagerly await this transition, while others dread it. Your child is in fact about to enter a new school. He or she will be in the company of many teachers every day and will meet students from various backgrounds, with different life experiences. Whatever their characteristics may be, all students need to be supported.

The school team plays a vital role in guiding and supporting your child during this transition and throughout secondary school. Every school wants to implement the best means possible to support students by taking into account their characteristics and needs. Even though your child is growing up, he or she still needs your encouragement and support during his or her educational and personal development.



SECONDARY SCHOOLS THAT ARE IN TOUCH WITH TODAY'S STUDENTS

Ever since your child began school, he or she has witnessed extensive changes in the school system as a result of the education reform. Why do we need to reform education? Because the world and young people have changed, because knowledge about learning has advanced, and because it is important that schools effectively meet the educational needs of today's young people. In this regard, society expects Québec schools to help all students fulfill their role as citizens and become independent individuals who are able to adapt to a constantly changing world.

To help students succeed, Québec schools are committed to a threefold mission: **to provide instruction** in a knowledge-based world, **to socialize** students in a pluralistic world, and **to provide qualifications** in a changing world. By doing so, schools help students fulfill their role within their family, society and, eventually, the labour market.



CONTINUITY IN EDUCATION



You will find several aspects of secondary school familiar. Secondary Cycle One, which lasts two years, is very similar to the cycles of elementary school in that it offers a core education for all students in groups that are usually stable and with age-appropriate support and supervision. Assisted by a team of teachers, your child will be encouraged to develop competencies in several familiar subject areas, such as language arts, mathematics, science, geography, history, and arts education.

Secondary Cycle Two, which lasts three years, differs from the preceding cycles in that it offers greater diversification of choices. It aims to enhance students' education based on their needs, interests and learning profile. Your child will continue with his or her basic education, but will have more freedom to choose among various elective courses and educational paths.

ESTABLISHING LINKS BETWEEN SCHOOL AND LIFE

Young people like to be able to make connections between what they learn at school, their personal lives and present-day issues. It is important for them to realize that what they are learning at school is useful for something. The Québec Education Program for secondary school takes this into account by asserting that life is the focus of academic learning and that schools should make great strides in preparing students for life.

Through **five broad areas of learning**, the Québec Education Program establishes the main educational aims underlying the education provided to today's students. Schools therefore ensure that students do the following:

• develop a sense of responsibility for adopting good living habits with respect to health, safety and sexuality	Health and Well-Being
• make and carry out plans designed to develop their potential and help them integrate into adult society	Personal and Career Planning
• develop an active relationship with their environment while maintaining a critical attitude toward consumption and the exploitation of the environment	Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities
• exercise critical, ethical and aesthetic judgment with respect to the media and produce media documents that respect individual and collective rights	Media Literacy
• take part in the democratic life of the classroom or the school and develop an attitude of openness to the world and respect for diversity	Citizenship and Community Life

These themes are not specific courses; rather, they are explored in each of the subject areas through school projects, tasks and activities. However, these educational aims will be all the more meaningful if they are also pursued at home, since they represent an important bridge between the school and the family.

A PROGRAM THAT FOCUSES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCIES

In secondary school, your child continues to develop his or her **competencies**. Why focus on competencies? Because in a complex world in which knowledge and skills are quickly changing, it is not enough for students to merely acquire knowledge that they memorize long enough to pass an examination and then immediately forget. Rather, students must be challenged intellectually so that the knowledge they acquire is lasting and meaningful for them.

For students, being competent means continuing to acquire knowledge that is considered to be important, and using it wisely at school and in everyday life. It also means knowing how to find the information they need by consulting a variety of resource people, such as their classmates, teachers, parents, as well as reference materials.

The Québec Education Program consists of two types of competencies: **subject-specific competencies**, which are specific to each subject area, and **cross-curricular competencies**, which are common to all the subject areas.

EXAMPLES OF COMPETENCIES



Subject-specific competencies

English Language Arts

- uses language/talk to communicate and to learn
- represents his/her literacy in different media
- reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts
- writes a variety of genres for personal and social purposes

Mathematics

- solves a situational problem
- uses mathematical reasoning
- communicates by using mathematical language

Physical Education and Health

- performs movement skills in different physical activity settings
- interacts with others in different physical activity settings
- adopts a healthy, active lifestyle

Visual Arts

- creates personal images
- creates media images
- appreciates works of art, traditional cultural objects, personal images and media images

Cross-curricular competencies

The cross-curricular competencies are integrated and developed through the various activities carried out at school. They include the following categories:

- intellectual (e.g. uses information)
- methodological (e.g. adopts effective work methods)
- personal and social (e.g. cooperates with others)
- communication-related (e.g. communicates appropriately)

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

Among the factors that contribute to students' success, parental involvement is crucial. Students who feel that their parents are interested in what they do at school are encouraged to persevere. You can help and support your child on a daily basis through simple actions: it is often enough just to be there, to listen, to show an interest in his or her school work, to meet with teachers, to discuss issues that are dealt with in class and in the news, to encourage him or her to go to the library, to become involved in the school, and so on.

MONITORING YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EVALUATION

To help you monitor your child's development and provide the necessary support, schools have implemented various means to evaluate his or her progress and inform you in this regard.

By observing students in class, keeping notes, taking into account their approaches and productions, teachers are able to monitor student progress and quickly identify a student's strengths and weaknesses. This enables teachers to adapt their approaches to a student's needs and thus provide better support. To assess the level students have reached in the development of competencies, teachers may use various evaluation instruments that account for the diversity of learning fairly and equitably: examinations, assignments, learning and evaluation situations, projects, ministerial examinations, etc.

Report cards and end-of-cycle progress reports are some of the tools the school uses to let you know how your child is doing. Your child's work, portfolio, the teacher's written comments on his or her work or school agenda are other ways to keep you informed of his or her development.

Students who successfully complete secondary school receive a Secondary School Diploma (SSD), which certifies that they have met the requirements specified in the Québec Education Program.





A TEAM AND ITS RESOURCES

More than ever, Québec school administrators and their teams are taking action to provide appropriate support for your child.

The key players on these teams are, of course, the teachers that your child sees on a daily basis. With their training and experience, they are able to clearly guide students in their learning. Other staff members at school also play a role, by providing students with complementary educational services and various resources: secretarial services, special instruction, vocational guidance, library services, labs, extracurricular activities, etc. All these individuals work as a team to implement the best conditions possible in order to promote learning and success for all.

If your child experiences difficulties, you will be invited to work with the school team and occasionally with the school board to assist him or her. Specialists can help you better understand the problems at issue and suggest solutions.

As a parent, you can also play a role by participating in school activities or those of the governing board. The school's educational project and success plan can provide you with information on the goals and means that the school is using to help students succeed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about the Québec Education Program or the different subject areas your child is being taught, visit the Web site of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport at <www.mels.gouv.qc.ca>.

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