

Chapter

3



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Health and Well-Being



Media Literacy



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Environmental Awareness
and Consumer Rights
and Responsibilities



Personal and
Career Planning



Citizenship and Community Life

Broad Areas of Learning

Chapter 3

Broad Areas of Learning



These areas favour the integration of the learnings in various subjects and the coherence and complementarity of the school's services.

Under this heading the Québec Education Program addresses a number of issues that confront young people. The broad areas of learning help students relate subject-specific knowledges to their daily concerns and thus give them a better grasp of reality. There are five broad areas of learning in the Québec Education Program—Health and Well-Being, Personal and Career Planning, Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, Media Literacy, and Citizenship and Community Life—which correspond to various student needs or interests and also reflect social expectations regarding education.

Because the issues they deal with are related to more than one subject, they favour the integration of the learnings in various subjects. They are not simply learning contexts but rather anchor points for the development of the cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies. They can only be developed through and by means of other learnings, while at the same time, they ensure that these learnings remain attuned to real life. They provide continuity for educational activities throughout students' basic schooling, from preschool through secondary school, and their scope extends well beyond the classroom.

Issues as important as choosing a lifestyle, using critical judgment as a consumer, and in particular as a media consumer, and making and carrying out plans, to name only a few, cannot be dealt with in isolation. It is by progressively acquiring the cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies that students will construct their answers to these questions, and to do so, they will need concerted support from educators and the community. The broad areas of learning, with the cross-curricular competencies, constitute a backdrop that gives coherence and complementarity to the activities of the school's services: educational services, student services, special services and child-care services.

Each area of learning has an *educational aim* to guide teachers and other school staff and *focuses of development* indicating characteristic strategies or questions, which may serve as the basis for intellectually stimulating learning situations. The broad areas of learning also provide contexts for the transfer of subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies

Figure 3
Broad Areas of Learning



Being at ease in one's surroundings, developing harmoniously and having confidence and a sense of well-being and security.



Health and Well-Being

Being in good health means, on one hand, possessing the physical and psychological conditions for satisfying one's needs and carrying out one's plans, and on the other hand, being at ease in one's surroundings, developing harmoniously and having confidence and a sense of well-being and security. Schools have an important role to play in helping students to understand issues related to health and well-being and to adopt a healthy lifestyle. They must provide students with an environment that is safe and conducive to their optimal personal and emotional development, and also ensure that they have many opportunities to move. This responsibility goes well beyond the physical education and health program; it requires the concerted action of all school staff members, working closely with parents, health professionals, community planners and others in the school and community.

It is important to foster a concern for prevention and safety in preschool children by helping them identify certain hazards or health risks and encouraging healthy lifestyle habits. The school should provide them with many opportunities to discover the main characteristics of their personality and help them recognize and express their tastes, emotions and feelings.

In elementary school, the emphasis should be on developing students' self-awareness and ability to express their needs and emotions and on the consequences of their personal choices and attitudes for their health and physical and emotional security. Pre-adolescent students in particular need help distinguishing between positive influences and those that may be harmful to their health and well-being.

EDUCATIONAL AIM

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

FOCUSES OF DEVELOPMENT

- **Awareness of his/her basic needs:** physical needs, need for safety, need for acceptance, need to develop harmoniously as a girl or boy, need for self-fulfillment
- **Awareness of the consequences for health and well-being of his/her personal choices:** diet, physical activity, sexuality, hygiene and safety, stress management and management of emotions
- **Active lifestyle and safe behaviour:** physical activities in the classroom, at school, in the family and elsewhere; safe behaviour in all circumstances

PERSONAL AND CAREER PLANNING

Although the schools' mandate goes well beyond preparing young people for the job market, this is part of their responsibility. It is a complex and challenging task today, because the needs of the job market are constantly evolving in response to rapid economic and social change. Schools must prepare students to handle the career choices that they will face throughout their lives. They also have to foster the development of the personal qualities students will need to fulfill their potential. Creativity, self-confidence, tenacity and courage—the qualities that characterize entrepreneurs—are high on the list, but students also have to know themselves, to be aware of their interests and aptitudes, and be able to choose appropriately from among the many possible career paths and have a sense of their own responsibility for their occupational future and their success or failure.

Dreaming and making plans are sources of pleasure and growth for all human beings, including children. They are eager to get involved in plans for things they care about: personal projects, academic and career plans, plans for the future. Their personal projects have to do with self-fulfillment. Their academic plans are concerned with the development of knowledges and competencies related to



school learning. Their career plans are associated with their choice of a subject area or occupation that will enable them to successfully integrate into society. Their plans for the future draw on their strengths and talents and allow them to discover their full potential.

In *preschool*, play is the principal means used to involve children in projects and give them a taste of the satisfaction of relying on their own resources to carry out an activity. Through play, sharing and experimentation, children also discover various trades and occupations.

In *elementary school*, students become more aware of their tastes, interests and strengths, and also become familiar with various aspects of the education system and the world of work. They imagine projects and make the choices required to carry them out. They learn about occupations, businesses and trades in their community. This activity helps them perceive the connections between their interests and aptitudes, school subjects and occupations.

EDUCATIONAL AIM

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

FOCUSES OF DEVELOPMENT

- **Self-knowledge and awareness of his/her potential and how to fulfill it:** recognition of



his/her talents, strengths, interests and personal and career aspirations; understanding of the importance of school work; taste for challenge; sense of responsibility for his/her successes and failures; familiarity with the resources of the school system, the learning paths offered and their requirements, and factors related to success in school subjects

- **Adoption of strategies related to a plan or project:** awareness of the connection between his/her self-knowledge and plans for the future; self-visualization in various roles; plans for the future based on his/her interests and aptitudes; strategies related to various aspects of carrying out a plan or project (gathering information, making decisions, planning and carrying out the plan)
- **Familiarity with the world of work, social roles, and trades and occupations:** the nature and demands of roles related to family or community responsibilities; occupations and ways of life related to different school subjects or to their immediate community; goods and services associated with these occupations; workplaces (factories, stores and businesses in the school's region); the main functions and working conditions in various occupations; the demands of reconciling career, family and social responsibilities; requirements of the world of work compared with those of being a student

Construction of a viable
environment based on
sustainable development



ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND CONSUMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The increasing importance of science and technology, the proliferation of consumer goods and the exponential growth of information and communications technologies have had a profound impact on our physical and social environment, our lifestyle and our world-view. More than ever, it is essential to exercise critical judgment regarding the pressure to purchase goods and services of all sorts, including media products. We must also measure their impact on the environment, on social relations, and on our physical and mental well-being.

As regards the **environment**, the school must develop students' ability to see, understand and take stock of the elements of their immediate environment. By reflecting on the characteristics of their environment, they will gradually come to realize how complex and fragile the ecosystem is. They will perceive that human beings and their environment are interdependent and will be able to make connections between the satisfaction of their needs and the use of resources in their environment. They will be able to evaluate the consequences of human action, including their own action, on the environment.

The **consumption** of goods and services is now an integral part of children's lifestyle and plays an important role in shaping their behaviour. It has a direct influence on health and well-being, interpersonal relations and the environment. It is therefore important that students acquire the learnings and attitudes necessary to act as informed consumers, making responsible use of goods and services in a spirit of equitable sharing of resources.

In *preschool*, children become open to external influences while they begin to affirm their personality. They learn to perceive their immediate surroundings as external to themselves, and to relate to their various elements. They use their senses to discover nature. They become aware of their needs and can express their tastes and preferences. Gradually they begin to understand certain problems related to their immediate environment, and by participating in age-appropriate projects, try to find ways to improve it. They also begin to perceive the influence of advertising and peer pressure on them, and to distinguish more clearly between their real needs and their wants.

The process begun in preschool continues and becomes more intense in *elementary school*, as students learn more about the elements of their environment, their curiosity grows and their capacity for critical reflection concerning themselves, events and society develops. They become more knowledgeable about various aspects of their environment and can understand the meaning of terms such as *heritage*, *ecosystem* and *biosphere*. They can express their perception of the environment and learn to evaluate the consequences of human actions for the local and regional environment. They realize that they themselves are both an integral part of the environment and agents of environmental change, and that they must play a role in the protection, conservation and rational use of resources.



To distinguish between
their real needs and
their wants

This evolving awareness also applies to their role as consumers. As they come to realize that consumption is never an isolated act, they see the connections between consumption and social and economic life. By observing their reactions to a new product, they can assess the positive and negative influences of members of their family, friends and the media on their behaviour as consumers. They also learn that they must pay for consumer goods they want, and gradually develop strategies of rational consumption. Finally, they become increasingly aware of the need for an equitable distribution of wealth.

EDUCATIONAL AIM

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.

FOCUSES OF DEVELOPMENT

– **Awareness of his/her environment:** sensitivity to the natural and human environment, understanding of certain characteristics and phenomena of his/her environment, spatial representation (orientation, location, drawing, map, etc.), identification of connections between elements characteristic of the local or regional environment or a season, awareness of interdependence between the environment and human activity

- **Construction of a viable environment based on sustainable development:** awareness of connections between the satisfaction of the needs of the members of a community and the territory in which they live, rational resource use in terms of the needs of all living beings, habits and attitudes that favour the protection, conservation and improvement of the environment (individual and collective efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle), critical attitude concerning the effects and uses of science and technology, respect for our heritage
- **Consumer strategies for the responsible use of goods and services:** distinction between wants and needs, awareness of sources of influence related to consumption (media, family, friends, etc.), steps in an effective strategy (establishing objectives, gathering information, determining his/her expenses and bringing them into line with his/her budget)
- **Awareness of social, economic and ethical aspects of consumption:** interdependence of individuals and peoples and their activities; origin of products consumed; consequences of globalization for cultures, ways of life and the distribution of wealth; working conditions of those who produce consumer goods or services and ways to improve them; consumer choices based on respect for the quality of personal and social life

MEDIA LITERACY

The media are omnipresent in children's daily lives. The press, books, audio and video cassettes, radio and television programs, multimedia games, the Internet, music, and so on, all play an important role in the cultural lives of students and give them access to a world of knowledge and impressions that need to be channeled. They also influence the development of students' personalities and their choice of values. To help students become autonomous, responsible citizens, schools must teach them to maintain a critical distance with regard to the media, to perceive the influence of the media on them, and to distinguish clearly between virtual and real situations.

In *preschool*, children are fascinated by the media, which are a source of pleasure and discovery for them. Their conversations, symbolic games and creations testify to their fascination with the main characters of the software programs they use and the films and television shows they watch. Gradually they establish a certain distance regarding media productions and can express their fears, joys and discoveries regarding this fictional world.

In *elementary school*, students are still fascinated by media productions, but they are beginning to be capable of reflection about them. They learn to measure the amount of time they spend consuming various media and to compare it with the amount of time they devote to their other activities. They can distinguish between differ-

ent media, discuss the content of messages conveyed and compare the goals of different media. They explore the elements of media language, and become aware of the effects it has on them. They can distinguish between virtual situations, such as those presented in video games, and real situations. They learn to judge the place and role of the media in their lives and in society and become aware of their influence on their own values. In this way, they learn to maintain contact with reality and develop their critical, ethical and esthetic judgment.

The media are also sources of knowledge, and schools must show students how to use them to seek information and to communicate. Students learn to determine their documentation requirements, to consult various media, to check the accuracy of their sources and to organize their information. They learn to send media messages, to try out different aspects of media language and to select the appropriate techniques for their intended effect. They must also recognize the importance of respecting individual and collective rights, both as consumers and as producers.



EDUCATIONAL AIM

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.

To become autonomous, responsible citizens, students must learn to maintain a critical distance with regard to the media.



FOCUSES OF DEVELOPMENT

- **Awareness of the place and influence of the media in his/her daily life and in society:** media functions (information, entertainment, promotion, influence, propaganda); media consumption habits and criteria for media consumption; positive or negative influence of media messages on his/her worldview and everyday environment
- **Understanding of the way the media portray reality:** elements of media language (sound, image, movement, message); comparison between facts and opinions; recognition of sexist, stereotypical and violent messages; the difference between reality and its virtual or fictional representations; esthetic qualities of media productions; relationships between media productions using different techniques and forms of artistic expression
- **Use of media-related materials and communication codes:** procedure for producing, constructing and distributing media products; use of various techniques, technologies and languages
- **Knowledge of and respect for individual and collective rights and responsibilities regarding the media:** intellectual property, freedom of expression, privacy and reputation

CITIZENSHIP AND COMMUNITY LIFE

As learning communities and microcosms of society, schools bring together students of diverse social and cultural origins. This makes the school an ideal place to learn to respect others and accept their differences, to be receptive to pluralism, to maintain egalitarian relationships with others and to reject all forms of exclusion. The school places students in situations that confront them on a daily basis with challenges related to cooperation in a spirit of mutual aid, solidarity, openness to others and self-respect. It gives them an opportunity to experience the democratic principles and values that form the basis for equal rights in our society. This preparation for playing an active role as citizens also includes cognitive learnings, particularly those in the social sciences.

Children of *preschool* age have already had some experience of socialization. Now they must adapt to a group of children their own age in a context with which they are not yet very familiar. They learn to take other people into account and gradually recognize the importance of rules of conduct in ensuring harmony in their interpersonal relations and the classroom. They also begin to take responsibility.

Students in *elementary school* become increasingly aware of the requirements of life in a group and understand the importance of adopting behaviour based on the democratic process. They participate willingly in making rules of conduct based on the principle of equal rights, and respect rules established by groups they belong to. They become familiar with negotiation and learn to value this way of problem solving in order to achieve compromises acceptable both to themselves and

to the group as a whole. They gradually realize that they too are citizens of the world and become aware of the importance of human rights. They participate in activities to support solidarity or peace, which help them in their ongoing quest for meaning.

EDUCATIONAL AIM

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.

FOCUSES OF DEVELOPMENT

- **Awareness of the importance of rules of social conduct and democratic institutions:** democratic process of making rules of conduct for school, municipal and national life; actors in the democratic process (individuals, elected representatives, ethnic and civic communities, etc.); respect for the role of each individual; rights and responsibilities associated with democratic institutions
- **Involvement in action in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity:** principles, rules and strategies based on teamwork; decision-making process based on consensus, compromise, etc.; establishment of egalitarian relationships; debate and defense of opinions; leadership; interaction with peers in a spirit of mutual help; projects related to community life

- **Culture of peace:** interdependence of individuals and peoples and their activities; recognition of the principle of equal rights for all and of the right of individuals and groups to express their differences; recognition of the negative consequences of stereotypes, discrimination and exclusion; action to combat poverty and illiteracy; familiarization with situations of cooperation and of aggression; peaceful resolution of conflicts; procedures based on agreement or contract

To experience the democratic principles and values that form the basis for equal rights in our society

