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Bill 180 (An Act to amend the Education Act and various legislative provisions), **assented to December 19, 1997, is a key component of the reform set out in *A New Direction for Success*.**

The purpose of the amendments made in Bill 180 is to give schools more responsibility so that they can better adapt their teaching and organization to the needs and characteristics of their students. Some of the duties and powers which currently lie with the school boards are transferred to the schools and, more specifically, to the governing boards. These amendments are also aimed at according more authority and professional autonomy to teachers, who will shoulder major pedagogical responsibilities under the authority of the school principal.

Other amendments provide for the creation of new types of educational institutions—adult education centres and vocational education centres—and of the Commission des programmes d'études and three ministerial committees. One of these committees will be responsible for the evaluation of instructional material, and the other two, for matters related to teacher training.

This issue focuses on the **new powers of the school** and the **responsibilities entrusted to school principals and teachers**. The governing board and the implementation calendar will be the subject of a future issue of *Education Reform Update*.

WHY AMEND THE EDUCATION ACT?

Responsibility for students' success rests first and foremost with the schools. In order to provide quality education across Québec and enable the greatest possible number of students to succeed, each school must have the means to adapt its teaching and organization to the needs and characteristics of its students, within the guidelines of the standard curriculum.

EMPOWERING SCHOOLS TO FULFIL THEIR MISSION

More specifically, schools must be given greater scope for independent action so that teachers can have a say in decisions which have an impact on classroom teaching or school life. Schools must be freed from the many rigid standards and guidelines restricting them.

SUPPORTING SCHOOLS THROUGH ACTIVE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Students' success is not only up to the school: it concerns the community as a whole and requires a collective effort. School staff must receive strong support from the community. Parents in particular must become true partners of the school and help set and implement policy directions.

GIVING SCHOOLS THE AUTONOMY THEY NEED

Bill 180 gives schools the leeway to set their own objectives and plan of action, and to carry out and evaluate their own educational projects. It transforms schools into institutions based on a partnership between users (i.e., parents) and the school staff, in which the role of each party is respected.

The main orientations of Bill 180 are to:

- give schools the autonomy and powers they need to fulfil their mission;
- create a partnership between users (i.e., parents) and school staff;
- promote the professional autonomy of teachers under the authority of the principal.

THE OUTCOME OF COLLECTIVE REFLECTION

The locus of responsibility for education must be as close as possible to the very place where education is dispensed, namely the schools. This view, often expressed by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation in its briefs and more recently by the Commission for the Estates General on Education, was supported by all those who took part in the process leading up to the approval of Bill 180.

The fifty or so organizations that were heard during the parliamentary commission on the draft bill in the fall of 1997 were of the same opinion. In December, the National Assembly's Committee on Education studied Bill 180 at length. The hearings it held gave the main partners in education an opportunity to reiterate their willingness to work with the government in order to give schools the autonomy they need.

GREATER POWERS FOR SCHOOLS

In order to reconfigure the education system around autonomous, accountable schools, Bill 180 gives each school all of the powers and means it needs to fulfil its mission in all areas of activity related to school organization.

GENERAL POWERS

Each school must first set its objectives on the basis of its students' needs and determine the measures required to achieve them. Thus, the governing board adopts, oversees the implementation of, and evaluates the school's educational project. It also approves the school's student supervision policy, rules of conduct and safety measures.

POWERS RELATED TO EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Very important powers are transferred to the school so that it may adapt its educational services to students' needs. Hence, the governing board will:

- approve the approach for the implementation of the basic school regulation;

- approve the overall approach for the enrichment or adaptation of the programs of study and the development of local programs;
- approve the time allocation for each subject and see that the minimum time prescribed for moral and religious education is respected;
- approve the approach for the implementation of student services and special education services;
- approve programming which entails changes in the time at which students arrive or leave, or which takes them off school premises.

POWERS RELATED TO HUMAN, MATERIAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The school must have control over the resources it needs in order to achieve its goals. To this end, Bill 180 gives the governing board the authority to:

- inform the school board of the school's needs in terms of human resources, goods, services, and premises;
- adopt the school's budget and submit it to the school board for approval;
- approve the use of school premises and enter into agreements regarding their use.

POWERS RELATED TO COMMUNITY SERVICES

So that the school can truly provide a stimulating environment which meets the needs of the community, the governing board is given the power to:



- organize educational services other than those prescribed by the basic school regulation and social, cultural or sports activities for its students or the community;
- contract with persons or organizations for the provision of goods and services related to community resources;
- require a financial contribution for community services and solicit contributions to be paid into a fund.

NEW POWERS FOR TEACHERS

The fact that teachers are represented on the school's governing board gives them a greater say in policy directions of a pedagogical nature.

Teacher representatives on the board will be entitled to vote on matters of importance such as the definition of the educational project, the approach for the implementation of the basic school regulation, the overall approach for the enrichment or adaptation of the programs of study and the development of local programs, the time allocation for each subject, and the implementation of student services. Before making any decisions on the above matters, the governing board must consider proposals made by the school staff.

Furthermore, Bill 180 fully recognizes the exclusive authority and professional autonomy of teachers by delimiting an area of responsibility that is specifically theirs. Teachers will be responsible for making proposals to the principal on the following points:

- the content of local programs and the standards for the introduction of new teaching methods;
- the choice of textbooks and instructional material;
- standards and procedures for the evaluation of student achievement as well as the rules for the placement of students and their promotion from one cycle to another in elementary school.

Finally, teachers will be consulted by the principal as regards the organization of professional development activities.

PROVISIONS FOR TEACHERS' AUTONOMY

The educational policy set out in *Québec Schools on Course* provides for teachers' professional autonomy by giving teachers more freedom in the classroom within the guidelines of the standard curriculum.

For example, at the elementary level, the new subject-time allocation will allow greater flexibility in the amount of time devoted to each subject within a given cycle. At the secondary level, all new programs will leave 25 percent of the allotted time open so that teachers may use it to enrich or adapt content as they see fit.

The next issue will look at:

- the governing board;
- the role of the school principal;
- the implementation calendar.



The purpose of *Education Reform Update* is to keep readers up-to-date on the progress of the reform set out in *A New Direction for Success: Ministerial Plan of Action for the Reform of the Education System*. The newsletter is published by the communications branch of the ministère de l'Éducation, in cooperation with the office of the Deputy Minister of Education.

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