

# Orientations

for the  
Professional Development  
of Teachers

*Taking  
an  
Active Approach  
to Change*



Québec 



# Orientations

for the  
Professional Development  
of Teachers



*Taking  
an  
Active Approach  
to Change*

*Direction de la formation  
et de la titularisation du  
personnel scolaire*

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# Foreword

Teacher training is recognized as a pivotal element in achieving the goal of the current education reform, which consists in “defining a new direction for success.” Following the last few years’ improvements in initial teacher training, changes are now being made to the regulatory and organizational framework of the education system. These changes should, among other things, give teachers a greater hand in their own professional development. The latest amendments to the *Education Act* give teachers a key role in the educational process and require that they identify their own professional development needs (s. 96.20). They introduce important adjustments to the configuration of the education system and place educational institutions on the front lines. They also allow school staff greater freedom to exercise their professional autonomy. A reform of the curriculum is underway and implementing the new programs will require new knowledge, diverse skills, and new teaching practices.

Encouraging teachers to acquire the knowledge they will need to teach the new programs entails developing strategies that are respectful of their professional autonomy. It also entails giving teachers the support they will need in order to develop the know-how that will enable them to integrate the new programs and to change their teaching practices as required by the education reform. It furthermore entails fostering a professional development culture in schools throughout Québec. Such a culture is essential if educational institutions are to become “communities of learners” where school teams are always learning how to help all students learn better.

These are the underpinnings of the principles and broad orientations presented in this document, which will guide the Ministère de l’Éducation’s actions in promoting and supporting the profes-

sional development of teachers. The Ministère invites the various organizations and individuals concerned to refer to these orientations in making the choices which are theirs to make, particularly in modifying certain structures and procedures likely to foster a professional development culture in educational institutions throughout Québec.

The last two years’ consultations have confirmed that these principles and orientations reflect convictions that are widely held in the education community. There are, of course, certain fears and even some disagreement about their application. The Ministère has taken note of these concerns and views and has, where possible, amended the text submitted for consultation. However, no text of this nature can possibly cover all of the issues from all of their different angles. The Ministère urges the organizations and individuals concerned to take into account the changes made necessary by the current situation and, when applying the following principles and orientations, to keep in mind the stated goal of the education reform, in other words, to see professional development as one of the preferred ways of “defining a new direction for success.”

The real challenge lies in developing strategies conducive to fostering a professional development culture in schools throughout Québec. This statement is but part of a broader process and will be followed by concrete actions to implement the reform and more specifically the new programs, and by a consultation on the professional development of school principals and centre directors. In the medium term, it should also influence certain aspects of work organization in schools.

Like many other education systems around the world, our education system is going through a number of changes which can no longer be tagged as “administrative whims.” Today’s society demands, and will continue to demand of all of us, that we be able to adapt to frequent change. The choice is ours either to bow to events that appear inevitable or to take a hand in

shaping them. Therefore, this orientation statement expresses a common will to give teachers the opportunity to take a hand in their own professional development as individuals and as a body, and by the same token, to shape the future of their profession. Teachers are seen here, not as receivers of knowledge, but as the architects of their own professional growth.

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# Introduction

In-service teacher training has a long tradition in Québec. Therefore, this document does not claim to establish guidelines for a totally new concept, but rather aims to revitalize a process in need of change, given the current context. It is important to revitalize this process now because the ability of schools to meet the enormous challenges facing them is keyed to the professional growth of their human resources.

Because teachers are in daily contact with students who must prepare for tomorrow's world, they are likely to feel the need for professional development more acutely. Their role is changing. They must, for example, develop the skills needed to ready students for life in a knowledge-based society where varied and complex skills will be expected of individuals, citizens and workers alike.

In such a constantly changing environment, teaching professionals must of course teach, but they must also learn in order to be able to take up the new challenges before them. In short, they must choose to take an active rather than a passive approach to change.

This document sets forth the principles and orientations which will provide the framework for the establishment of a policy on the professional development of teachers in Québec.

# Overview of the Situation

## *More Schooling and In-Service Training*

On average, today's teachers have four more years of schooling than those who taught at the time of the Parent Report (17 years as compared with 13).

This increase is partly due to the recent entry into the teaching force of new practitioners who are the product of longer initial teacher training programs. It is also largely due to the high number of teachers participating in in-service training activities. The Ministère's decision, in the 1970s, to recognize university credits as a basis for salary advancement bore fruit. Generalists and subject specialists from preschool to the end of secondary school took part in various in-service activities that were recognized for classification purposes. The overall average number of years of schooling rose as a result. Some teachers chose to enrol in university programs and thereby improved their disciplinary and pedagogical skills as well as their general education. However, university-based continuing education, dubbed "the credit race" by some, has also had the drawback of overshadowing other very effective types of professional development.

The implementation of "new programs of study" and the revision of others since the early 1980s have prompted the Ministère and the school boards to offer numerous in-service training sessions. In addition to these, they offered information and training sessions introducing new policies on aspects of pedagogical organization or on major social issues affecting schools, such as the evaluation of learning, special education, violence and drugs, to name but a few. These activities were intended to ensure the application of a common curriculum and greater access to the same high-quality educational services throughout Québec. Most of them, however, were not recognized as formal schooling and did not count toward salary advancement.

The different sectors of the education system adopted various methods of increasing their personnel's schooling and of improving the quality and consistency of services offered.

In the youth sector, most teachers opted for university-based training. The universities offered programs which gave teachers the opportunity to specialize in a specific discipline or to acquire training in a second discipline at the undergraduate or graduate level. The universities also designed continuing education programs to meet the specific requirements of the Ministère de l'Éducation and needs of the school boards. The courses and programs offered by the universities complemented the many in-service training activities organized by the Ministère and the school boards for the purposes of implementing programs of study and educational policies.

In the vocational education sector, varied needs with respect to both teaching methodology and occupational skills led to a diversification of professional development options so that teachers now have access to university-based, school-based and industry-based activities. Initial training in educational psychology was and is still today a major need. Also, constant updating is a necessity, given the rapid pace at which occupations are changing due to the advancement of knowledge and technology.

Adult education teachers, for their part, have not had access to as many opportunities to upgrade their disciplinary and teaching skills. However, since June 1993, adult education teachers must hold a teaching licence, a requirement which has encouraged many to pursue university studies in adult education.

## *Unsatisfied Needs*

Within the context of a far-reaching reform of the school system, teacher in-service training and its impact on teaching in the classroom are also being questioned. Many are convinced that in-service training does not really improve the quality and effectiveness of educational services. Others note that educational research hardly ever yields practical applications which can be transferred to the classroom.

In-service training often fails to take teachers' needs into consideration and little provision is made for the evaluation and follow-up of activities. Also, as pointed out by the Commission for the Estates General, a percentage of teachers take part in only a few in-service training activities and some, in none at all.

The traditional challenges of professional development are compounded by the ambitious goals of the current education reform and the consequent need to implement change faster, to use recent advancements to the fullest, and to involve all school staff in a process of continuous professional growth. The traditional forms of professional development, which only partially met previous needs, will not suffice to meet today's greater challenges.

## *New Challenges*

This overview would not be complete without a look at the positive aspects of the current situation, particularly the growing involvement of teachers in activities which they feel have a significant impact on their professional growth.

- Training centres in educational technology (known as CEMIS, from the French Centre d'enrichissement en micro informatique scolaire) and a teachers' centre, the Centre d'enseignantes et d'enseignants (CEE), provide teachers with a forum to share their expertise. These centres help teachers apply new teaching approaches and integrate information and communications technologies into their teaching practices.

- Action research and university outreach courses provide opportunities for collaboration between academics and school teams.
- Several organizations and professional associations hold annual conferences with a pedagogical focus. These conferences provide teachers with the opportunity to discuss problems defined by and solutions suggested by school staff and researchers.
- Many teachers are generously partaking in assisting the new generation of teachers (student teachers and novice teachers). In doing so, they come to reflect on their own teaching practices as they develop mentoring skills. Thus, by cooperating with the universities, these teachers further their own professional growth while learning to become mentors to their peers.

In sum, teachers are clearly willing to participate in activities that help make them better teachers.

Between 1991 and 1996, school boards in the various regions of Québec took part in ministry-funded pilot projects to develop local, school-based teacher in-service training. These projects opened up new horizons by providing a broader perspective on the professional development process. They highlighted the need:

- to move beyond the concept of in-service training to that of professional development, that is, to plan activities as part of an integrated process, rather than offer them on an ad hoc basis;
- to stop viewing professional development as a way of adjusting to "bureaucratic idiosyncrasies" but to see it instead as an opportunity to develop the skills needed to meet the new challenges facing today's schools;
- to shift the focus from individual skills to qualified school teams and to the creation of a "community of learners";

- to not consider one's professional development as ever being complete but rather to consider it as being ongoing and ever responsive to the learning needs of students;
- to move beyond providing access to in-service training to some school staff to providing access to professional development to all school staff;
- to organize in-service training activities on the basis of the expressed needs of teachers rather than having them choose from a predetermined selection of offerings;
- to move beyond a passive model of in-service delivery where the teacher receives training from an expert, to a model where the teacher is at times an active learner and at other times a resource to his or her peers;
- to move beyond in-service training geared to the acquisition of compartmentalized knowledge to in-service training geared to the development of integrated teaching practices;
- to move beyond evaluation where participants merely state what they liked or disliked about an activity to evaluation based on their perceptions of the medium- and long-term usefulness of what they learned, and the monitoring of progress on an individual and team basis.

## *Wider Access*

In June 1995, the government approved the *Act to foster the development of manpower training* (Bill 90). This piece of legislation reflected a common will to promote occupational training among the general population. It has implications for school boards; as employers, they are expected to ensure the implementation of professional development plans for all their personnel.

In the education sector, the reform provides educational institutions with a major incentive to offer adequate training to their staff, given that its goals cannot be attained unless school staff receive the training they need. Recent amendments to the *Education Act* defined certain parameters likely to ensure more responsive training. They give teachers a key role in identifying their professional development needs (s. 96.20) and principals and centre directors, the responsibility of organizing professional development activities to meet these needs (s. 96.21).

# Professional Development—A Broad Concept

## *A Changing Reality*

The situation as we have just described it calls for an in-depth review of the concept and practice of in-service training. In-service training and upgrading activities are part of a broader process—which we will refer to as continuous professional development—whose ultimate goal is a better adaptation of educational services to today's challenges.

The knowledge and skills teachers need to acquire are increasingly diverse. The time available for formal training activities is, however, limited. Ad hoc activities, though relevant and necessary, will not suffice to ensure the professional development of staff who are required to adapt to numerous changes. In-service training must instead be part of a broader process of continuous professional development where opportunities for professional growth and independent learning are embedded in the teaching task.

University courses toward credits, undergraduate certificates or graduate diplomas, as well as upgrading activities or symposia, are currently the most common forms of professional development among teachers. These courses and activities still serve their purpose. However, they seem to be shifting away from the traditional models, where participants passively receive information and examine given problems, to models that leave more room for the active involvement of participants and therefore better meet their needs and recognize their professional expertise. Independent learning, peer training, pedagogical development projects, action research, and the use of new information and communications technologies are but a few examples of new forms of professional development that are gaining popularity in the workplace.

## *The Continuation of Initial Training*

Teaching requires a number of skills and abilities which are acquired gradually over the various stages involved in initial training, student teaching, and induction into the profession, and then consolidated through day-to-day practice of the profession. Once teachers have acquired the basic skills and obtained a teaching licence, they continue to learn in the field and occasionally return to more formal types of professional development activities. These activities are all the more relevant when they are based on teachers' expressed individual or collective needs. The choice of activities must, however, be guided by an overall vision of the main skills teachers need in order to effectively and confidently carry out the complex duties that are part of their workload. The list of these main skills will vary, depending on the underlying conception of the teacher's role. Debate on this question is resolved here by viewing the objectives of initial teacher training as the beginning of a continuum along which teachers must progress throughout their teaching careers.

Therefore, to be diversified and well-balanced, a professional development plan must focus on needs in the same areas as those targeted in initial teacher training:

- a solid general education;
- interpersonal skills, attitudes of openness and tolerance toward all students;
- mastery of subject disciplines and of the related programs of study;

- teaching, classroom management and evaluation skills;
- knowledge of the history of the profession (awareness of its social role and ethical dimension), a sense of belonging to the profession, and a desire to contribute to the profession;
- skills related to action research and innovation;
- autonomy, creativity and a capacity for critical thought and reflective practice.

## A Wider Scope

*Professional development refers to all activities in which practising teachers participate individually or as a group in order to upgrade and enrich their professional practice.*

Professional development refers to any kind of training in which teachers participate throughout their careers. It includes refresher training and specific in-service training activities but goes much beyond them. The idea of continuity or of an ongoing process is what differentiates professional development from in-service training as it has been understood to date.

Professional development refers to any kind of training in which teachers participate once they have obtained their teaching licence. It therefore includes studies toward a certificate or another university diploma in a second discipline as well as the further development of teaching skills.

This definition of professional development is at the heart of the new *Regulation respecting teaching licences* adopted in August 1997. In this regulation, the Ministère maintains its authority over the licensing of general education teachers in the youth sector. The recognition of all subsequent training for hiring

or for personnel assignment purposes becomes the responsibility of the employer. Changes to the conditions for the licensing of vocational education teachers and general education teachers in the adult sector are forthcoming.

Professional development activities can take many forms. However, they should be guided by objectives that can be broken down into three broad categories: the improvement of teaching practices; adjustment to organizational change; and personal development.

Professional development activities must enable teachers to refresh their knowledge and skills with respect to the basics of teaching (teaching approaches, developments in their subject area or trade specialty, and the teaching/learning process). They must provide teachers with opportunities to take a critical look at their teaching methods and to familiarize themselves with school-based action research.

Professional development activities must also allow teachers to keep abreast of changes affecting the framework within which they perform their duties. For example, teachers need to update their knowledge of laws, regulations, policies and programs of study. They must also learn to adapt to organizational change and must therefore develop the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to take part in the educational choices made by the school, to work with students' parents, to sit on the school governing board, and to collaborate with other school staff when educational services are organized by cycle of education (rather than by grade level).

Finally, given that teaching is a profession where all aspects of the personality come into play and that confidence in one's ability to do the job, in spite of demanding conditions, has an impact on the quality of the teacher/student relationship, it is important that professional development plans take into account the personal development needs of individual teachers.

# A Consensus on Principles

A few simple, universally recognized principles can provide useful guidelines for choosing means of fostering a professional development culture in each educational institution. These principles are outlined below, in three brief statements.

## *Professional Development—A Necessity*

The education system will be able to meet the challenges ahead only if its human resources take part in continuous professional development. Professional development has a dual fundamental purpose: to equip teachers to confidently fulfil the complex responsibilities entrusted to them and to help create optimal learning conditions for students.

The different models of professional development are all the more necessary because of their impact on the quality of the educational services provided by teachers in the classroom or in the workshop and on teachers' ability to help the educational institution fulfil its responsibilities. For this reason, professional development activities must enable teachers to apply not only the tricks of the trade, but also the main pedagogical theories.

## *Professional Development—An Individual Responsibility*

Teachers are responsible for keeping up to date in order to maintain both their knowledge of their particular discipline or disciplines and their teaching skills. Belonging to any profession implies a commitment to a professional development process. In the case of teachers, their duty to engage in professional development is explicitly set out in the *Education Act*.

Recognizing teachers as professionals who are responsible for their own professional development implies that they must enjoy a large measure of autonomy in choosing the goals, content and form of their professional development activities. Just as students must be actively involved in their own learning in order to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes, teachers must play a leading role in their own professional development.

## *Professional Development—A Collective Responsibility*

Education is a joint venture. Teachers are sometimes seen as virtuosos whose talent shines through in their solo performances in the classroom. This image, however, is not true to reality, for the development of each student depends on the concerted efforts of many players. Teachers are therefore more akin to musicians in a symphony orchestra.

Teachers are more likely to participate in professional development activities if they have the opportunity to learn as a team. The educational institution should in essence become a "community of learners" where each person can give and receive the necessary support to acquire and develop skills individually and as a team.

To give a melodious performance, the members of an orchestra must play in the same key and follow the conductor's baton. In other words, being part of a group involves a certain number of constraints. Professional development choices must take into account the individual and collective needs identified by teachers and include activities suggested by the principal or centre director to further develop certain talents or to resolve certain difficulties.

The corollary of teachers' duty to take part in professional development, which is stated in the *Education Act*, is the duty of educational institutions to facilitate access to professional development. Under sections 96.20 and 96.21, principals and centre directors must, after consulting the school staff, inform the school board of the professional development needs of its staff and "see to the organization of such professional development

activities for the school staff as agreed with the staff, in accordance with the provisions of the applicable collective agreements." Professional development is thus a joint venture which requires the participation of the main partners involved, that is, the teachers, the school principal or centre director, and the school board.



# Orientations for Action

Although the foundations of a professional development culture are already present in many educational institutions, there must be a framework for the development and generalization of such a culture in the short and medium terms. This framework must reflect a unified vision which takes the needs of individual teachers, of the school team and of the school system into proper account.

The following orientations provide guidelines for action and for the sharing of responsibilities with respect to teachers' professional development.

## *Professional Development Must Be Accessible to All Teachers*

In all likelihood, the resources (time and funding) available for in-service training activities will always be insufficient to meet expressed needs. It will therefore be necessary to find a way of sharing resources so that no one is left out in the cold. In a context where employment can take a variety of forms—supply teaching, hourly wage work, part-time or full-time contracts—restricting in-service training to permanent employees would exclude a significant number of teachers. This, however, would not be in keeping with the *Act to foster the development of manpower training*, which states that employers have an obligation to ensure the professional development of all categories of employees in their establishments.

## *Professional Development Must Be Part of a Responsive Plan*

The concept of professional development includes the ideas of progression and of a common thread uniting training activities in a structured and consistent whole. Professional development activities must therefore be an integral part of an individual plan and of a collective plan. The professional development process involves a number of steps: needs analysis; short-, medium- and long-term planning; delivery of the planned activities; evaluation; and revision of the overall plan. Particular attention should be paid to needs analysis, a more exacting step than one would think at first glance. Some flexibility must be built into the process so that it will always be responsive to changing needs and so that staff may seize any professional development opportunities that arise.

## *Professional Development Must Meet the Needs of the Individuals within an Organization*

Learning is an individual activity, but education is a collective undertaking. Professional development must meet the needs of both the individual and the organization. It must allow individuals and school teams to acquire skills, enhance them and thereby contribute to student success, which is the overall goal of school services. Professional development must therefore be based on personal motivations and needs, but also take into account the particular characteristics of the targeted school population, local priorities and the framework required to ensure integrated educational services at the pedagogical and administrative levels.

Recent research, including the ministry-funded pilot projects to develop local, school-based teacher in-service training, has shown the expedience of satisfying the expressed needs of school teams. Changes in teaching practices which stem from training received in a team context are supported by the team. Similarly, any difficulties that arise may be resolved with the help of the team.

In professional development as in any type of education, it is important to always keep in mind the ultimate goal of teaching, which is to help learners acquire as complete an education as possible in an academic setting. However, this goal should not be restrictive: any activities that help teachers to develop a broad variety of skills and to assume their complex duties confidently and effectively should be equally emphasized.

Furthermore, the necessary focus on educational objectives must be seen in broad enough terms to leave room for professional development activities whose purpose is to allow teachers to acquire and develop the skills necessary to assume other responsibilities in the education system. Should the rules governing work organization be made more flexible following a review, these other responsibilities could be included in a new definition of the teacher's workload.

Professional development should be the outcome of an approach based on partnership and consultation, an approach that takes into account teachers' autonomy and professional status as well as the needs of the organization. The amended *Education Act* provides an official basis for this approach to professional development (s. 96.21, par. 3). It recognizes that teachers are responsible for defining their professional development needs. Such recognition can only encourage them to play a more active role in their own professional development.

## *Professional Development Must Be a Lever for Adapting Educational Services to Social Imperatives with Respect to Education*

A society's choices with respect to education evolve over time. This entails that school staff must learn new skills and adjust to change. To implement changes affecting one or several aspects of educational services, the staff concerned must understand the new goals being pursued and acquire the requisite knowledge and skills. Adjustments of this nature cannot be dictated in a ministerial directive. The various authorities involved in the provision of professional development must work together and allow the necessary time.

## *Professional Development Must Be Based on a Variety of Methods and, More Specifically, on the Expertise of Teachers*

Over the course of their careers, teachers acquire knowledge and experience that allow them to meet their own needs, as well as the constantly changing needs of the education system. However, knowledge and experience do not automatically translate into broader skills. Rather, broader skills are the outcome of reflective practice, whereby teachers take a critical look at their own teaching practices. The sharing of pedagogical experiences, peer observation in the classroom, and team teaching are examples of reflective practice. Action research is a particularly effective form of active learning and should be considered on an equal footing with more traditional approaches such as lectures and reading in the field.

Measures should be implemented to allow teachers to share their experience with the new generations of teachers. Twinning, the mentoring of new teachers by experienced teachers, as well as the supervision of student teachers by associate teachers, are effective means of ensuring the competency of young teachers.

Furthermore, each educational institution should be an open community that draws on various external resources. Staff members should, according to their respective interests, further their professional growth by working with partners from other educational institutions.

In short, the objectives of professional development can be attained in a variety of ways. Peer training is one very effective form of professional development, though it cannot, of course, replace other models such as university courses, action research, conventions and symposia, industry-based training, or the sharing of pedagogical experiences. These are examples of the different ways in which professional development can be adapted to the specific needs of a given school community. In many cases, it is possible to both offer professional development activities on site and provide broader access to the wealth of knowledge and experience available in the field by calling on outside resources. Universities, for example, can contribute to the dissemination and expansion of knowledge in a significant way through research. The sharing of ideas between schools and businesses and among different educational institutions should also be strongly encouraged.

## *Professional Development Must Undergo Formative Evaluation*

The importance of taking a critical look at professional development activities, that is, of assessing their relevance, their effectiveness and even their efficiency, cannot be overemphasized. Professional development activities should be evaluated not according to a strict procedure but rather as a part of reflective practice, in terms of how they help participants to become better teachers both individually and as a team.

## *Professional Development Must Be Recognized*

Teachers must receive more recognition for their professional development. Recognition of the various models of professional development will serve a dual purpose: it will show appreciation for teachers by emphasizing their professional achievements and it will keep administrators apprised of the skills acquired by teachers. It will also contribute to the advancement of teachers and improve their job mobility.

There is also a need for a more flexible procedure for recognizing the skills acquired and developed by teachers to meet organizational needs. The current procedure focuses solely on adding up years of schooling for the purposes of salary advancement. Having teachers submit portfolio-type curriculum vitae that provide details on their experience might be an option to consider.

Finally, it should be remembered that although such means of recognition have their place, they should not overshadow the importance of intrinsic motivation.

# Sharing Roles and Responsibilities

*Given the increasing complexity of the problems facing each school and the fact that each school must try to solve them in its own way, it is now even more important that professional development focus on the school and become more and more of a cooperative effort. This implies that those in authority must set up solid support structures.<sup>1</sup>*

The amendments to the Education Act introduced significant changes with respect to the professional development of school staff. Roles and responsibilities in this matter, as in many other matters related to teaching competence, were redefined in light of the professional status of teachers and the management responsibilities of school administrators.

All educators have a role to play in the implementation of orientations for the professional development of teachers. In order to give professional development a truly professional character and to ensure quality training, the educational community should base itself on the regulatory framework to promote various types of partnerships.

## Teachers

Teachers are, first and foremost, responsible for their own professional development. Their role is to:

- identify their professional development needs on an individual and a team basis;
- participate in the design of individual and team professional development strategies;

- participate in the implementation of the planned strategies in their capacity as the designers and main beneficiaries of the planned activities;
- evaluate the implementation and impact of the planned strategies in order to determine the appropriate follow-up.

In short, by choosing ever more effective activities, teachers play a pivotal role in the professional development process.

## Principals and Centre Directors

Principals and centre directors are responsible for the implementation of professional development. To this end, they manage professional development activities, taking into account teachers' professional needs, as well as the needs of the education system and society in general. Their role is to:

- consult teachers and staff on their individual and collective needs (s. 96.20 of the *Education Act*);
- inform the school board of the professional development needs of the staff (s. 96.20);
- organize such professional development activities as agreed with the staff in accordance with the provisions of the applicable collective agreements (s. 96.21);
- ensure the evaluation and follow-up of individual and collective professional development plans.

1. Centre pour la recherche et l'innovation dans l'enseignement, *La formation en cours de service des enseignants – Condition du changement de l'école* (Paris: OECD, 1982), p. 5. (Free translation)

## *School Boards*

School boards are responsible for supporting the management of professional development. Their role is to:

- develop, in cooperation with the schools or centres and their partners, local guidelines for professional development;
- provide information on their guidelines and criteria for the distribution of the available human and material resources;
- distribute the resources allocated for the implementation of the professional development plans designed by the various educational institutions in their territories to the institutions;
- help principals and centre directors carry out their responsibilities with respect to the professional development of their staff, by organizing professional development activities at their request.

## *The Ministère de l'Éducation*

The Ministère de l'Éducation is responsible for the development of orientations for professional development. Its role is to:

- identify, in cooperation with those concerned, orientations for professional development;
- provide the necessary human, material and financial resources;
- support research and development projects in the area of professional development and disseminate information about them;

- see to the evaluation of the way in which the orientations are implemented;
- cooperate with the school boards and unions in finding ways of giving teachers more recognition for the learning acquired through professional development.

## *Universities*

Given that universities play a key role in the advancement of knowledge and since research is an integral part of their mission, they can provide teachers with numerous opportunities to refresh their knowledge and improve their skills. To even better respond to the needs of schools, the universities will be called upon to relax certain rules and requirements, particularly with respect to recognition of the credentials of teachers who wish to enrol in university courses.

Therefore, the role of universities is to:

- take part in the joint efforts currently underway between educational institutions, school boards and the Ministère de l'Éducation;
- offer professional development activities;
- participate in joint research with teachers.

## *Professional Associations and Unions*

Other participants, such as professional associations and unions, also have an important role to play in the professional development of teachers. Professional associations, which bring teachers together on the basis of common fields of interest—disciplines taught or other themes, such as the use of new information and communication technologies—provide their members with a variety of opportunities to broaden their expertise: symposia, workshops, magazines, web sites, and so on. Teachers' unions also offer a variety of services to meet the professional development needs of their members.

The role of the professional associations and unions is to:

- meet the needs of their members as well as those of educational institutions;
- take part in the joint efforts currently underway between educational institutions, school boards and the Ministère de l'Éducation.

# Conclusion

Teachers must continue learning throughout their careers. The advancement of knowledge, changes in the profile of the student population and in the labour market, the emergence of new expectations among parents, and ongoing change in the education system constitute professional challenges that compel teachers to adapt constantly in order to *maintain an educational environment that is conducive to learning and to quality teacher/student interaction.*

Professional development will enable teachers to meet these challenges provided that two conditions are satisfied. First, professional development activities must allow teachers to keep up

with new developments in their own discipline. Second, they must help them to acquire and develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the challenge of teaching, which essentially consists in helping students to learn.

In closing, it is important to remember that participating in professional development activities is a pedagogical act in itself, for in so doing, teachers show students that, in today's knowledge-based society, lifelong learning has become a vital necessity for all.

