



7 Educational Projects
and Success Plans:
Showing the Way to Success

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This information leaflet is intended for parent members of a Governing Board or a Parent Participation Organization (PPO) who would like to know more about Educational Projects and Success Plans and about the role that parents can play in them.

To get a better understanding of the various participation organizations and how the education system operates, consult the other leaflets already produced by the FCPQ, in particular:

- No. 1 The Parent Participation Organization, Helping schools be their best
- No. 6 Schools and their World
- No. 12 The Governing Board at the Heart of the School
- No. 18 Chairing a Governing Board

Resources

To obtain reference material and to find useful tools or competent resource persons, please contact the FCPQ.

We offer:

- Advice;
- References;
- Information brochures;
- Training workshops.

Consultez notre site Internet www.fcpgq.qc.ca ou entrez en communication avec votre association régionale par l'entremise du comité de parents de votre commission scolaire.

Acknowledgments

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Educational Projects now taking their rightful place



Educational Projects have been part of the school scene for nearly twenty-five years. It was in 1977 that the Ministère de l'Éducation first put forward this inspired idea to adapt each school to its own environment.

The changes made to the Education Act in 2002 with the adoption of Bill 124 gave new life to this idea by ensuring its implementation through Success Plans.

All of the driving forces of a school such as its mission, its Educational Project and its Success Plan are now closely linked.

Further, the whole community is now invited to participate in the schools. As well, the community is informed of the choices made by the school and the results obtained by its Success Plan.

A short history

Educational Projects met with mitigated success when they first arrived in the education milieu. For a long time, the concept remained unclear for many people and resulted in a long period of trial and error.

Nevertheless, the concept was reintroduced in the Education Act through Bill 107, which came into force in 1989 and defined the notion of an Educational Project. From then on, the focus of a school's Educational Project has been on identifying the values it wants to promote or a specific educational project it wants to put in place.

The Education Reform of 1997 reaffirmed the principle that an Educational Project is an essential and indispensable tool. The Education Act prescribes that a school "shall pursue its mission within the framework of an educational project" (Section 36).

Through each of these legislative changes, Parents' Committees, with the assistance of their Federation, achieved significant gains. Gradually, the Educational Project has become a tool that enables every group to have a school that corresponds to its own expectations and characteristics.

What the Education Act says



The Education Act makes the Educational Project the central element in a school's constitution. Chapter III of the Act opens with these words:

Section 36

"A school is an educational institution whose object is to provide to the persons entitled thereto under section 1 [residents of Québec of school age] the educational services provided for by this Act and prescribed by the basic school regulation established by the Government (...) and to contribute to the social and cultural development of the community. A school shall, in particular, facilitate the spiritual development of students so as to promote self-fulfilment.

In keeping with the principle of equality of opportunity, the mission of a school is to impart knowledge to students, foster their social development and give them qualifications, while enabling them to undertake and achieve success in a course of study.

A school shall pursue its mission within the framework of an educational project implemented by means of a success plan."

The section that follows shows that the Educational Project is a collective process that cannot be prepared by one person or one small group or by an external resource:

Section 36.1

"The educational project shall be defined, implemented and periodically evaluated with the participation of the students, the parents, the principal, the teachers and other school staff members, representatives of the community and the school board."

Through a number of amendments to the Act, the content of the Educational Project has been clarified:

Section 37

The Education Act thus comprises a real constitution for a school. It even states some principles similar to a charter of rights: equality of opportunity, respect for freedom of conscience and of religion.

"A school's educational project shall set out the specific aims and objectives of the school, and objectives for improving student success. It may include actions to promote those aims and objectives and integrate them into the life of the school. The aims and objectives shall be designed to ensure that the provincial educational policy defined by law, the basic school regulation and the programs of studies established by the Minister are implemented, adapted and enriched. The educational project of the school must respect the freedom of conscience and of religion of the students, the parents and the school staff."

The Success Plan is a much more recent addition and an administrative obligation for schools. In 2002, with Bill 124, it became the logical follow up to the Educational Project:

Section 37.1 : The Success Plan comprises:

- 1° the measures to be taken based on the aims and objectives of the educational project, in particular those relating to the supervision of students;*
- 2° the methods for evaluating the implementation of the success plan.*

The success plan shall be reviewed each year and updated, if necessary.

The remainder of this part of the Act specifies in particular that a school is established by a school board, which gives the school a deed of establishment. This deed states the name of the school, the level of instruction it provides and the immovables or premises placed at its disposal.



Why an Educational Project?

To define what we want for our children

The act of producing an Educational Project is not just a theoretical exercise to satisfy legal requirements. On the contrary, its first aim is to define the education we want to give our children: the children of our family, our community, our school, our class, our day care, and so on.

What do we have to offer them? What do we expect of them?

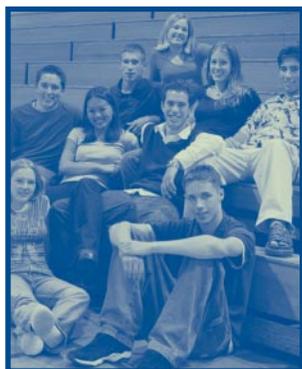
Naturally, as a Quebec society, we have fixed goals to be achieved through the education of Quebec's citizens: the Act, the Basic School Regulation and the programs of studies are there to procure equal instruction for all citizens. This is called the provincial educational policy.

However, beyond that, taking into account the diversity of Quebec society, an Educational Project provides an opportunity to give local colour to the instruction of the students in one's own school.

To develop a shared vision of the school

We said the Educational Project is a collective process. It allows people involved in education to share their vision of things. Do we have the same expectations in regard to the students? What values do we have in common? What general **aims and objectives** given to our school would best correspond to the needs of our community? What attention do we give to special needs students? Do all our children succeed in school? If not, what objectives for success will we set up? What about the level of caring in our school, or the level of dropout? And what have we done so far?

Isn't it important to have a shared vision of what has to be done? Right here, in our school, now and for the future.



To adopt a global, vital and stimulating project

In the 50s, all schools were built along the same architectural plan: they were called Duplessis schools. Since then, each school has its own unique architectural appearance. The aim of the Educational Project within the school is to give the school a life of its own, a personality and an image that are different from other schools. These things are chosen by those who "make" the school from day to day: students, parents, the principal, teachers and other staff members to whom it is important that the community and the school board be linked.

The distinctive identity of a school is called "a project" for good reason. It must be stimulating, vital and hold promise for the future, and combat the image of the boring, uncaring school that too many students can't wait to leave!

To all work together for the same ends

With clear and precise aims and objectives, everyone's actions are directed to the same ends. There is greater consistency between the day-to-day actions and greater cohesiveness between the efforts of parents and those of the staff.

In short, it is a unifying project, the product of consensus among people on the same work objectives.

We know where we are going and we act together, accordingly!

Yes, an Educational Project comprises one part dream, the one we have for our children!

The Governing Board's main challenge

To successfully impart knowledge to, foster social development of and give qualifications to every student

Its primary function

No mistake about it: the primary function of the Governing Board is to provide the school with an Educational Project. This board must ensure that everyone participates in the different stages of development coordinated by the principal and oversee the implementation of this project that will serve as a beacon to guide the school's actions.

Once this work is done, we may say that the Governing Board has accomplished the essentials of its mission: it has allowed people to work together, to pursue the same goals and to share a vision of their school's future.

A Success Plan that is faithful to the Educational Project

The second function of the Governing Board is to approve a Success Plan that ensures implementation of the Educational Project. The measures for achieving the aims and objectives of success are found in this document that is submitted to the Governing Board for approval. This board must ensure that the plan will permit implementation of the goals of the Educational Project.

A reference at all times

The Governing Board should then be consistent with the overall aims and objectives for success that it adopts. All its subsequent decisions, influenced by the Educational Project, should support the project, not be in conflict with it or reduce its impact.

Some twenty other major functions in the school are entrusted to the Governing Board. They should all be subordinate to what is set out in the Educational Project. As regards the budget for example, we should ask how the allocations would enable us to attain the chosen objectives. The same is true for the profusion of projects in the schools. Those directly tied to the Educational Project should be the ones that capture the attention of the Governing Board.



How to proceed?

What the Education Act says

Provisions in the Act concerning the implementation of the Educational Project and the Success Plan are found in the functions and powers of the Governing Board: in fact, it is their responsibility.

Section 74

The governing board shall analyse the situation prevailing at the school, principally the needs of the students, the challenges tied to student success and the characteristics and expectations of the community served by the school. Based on this analysis and the strategic plan of the school board, the governing board shall adopt, oversee the implementation of and periodically evaluate the school's educational project.

In exercising such functions, the governing board shall encourage the collaboration of persons having an interest in the school.

To that end, the governing board shall encourage the communication of information, dialogue and concerted action between students, parents, the principal, teachers, other school staff members and community representatives, and their collaboration in helping students to achieve success.

Reading this section, we become aware of the importance the legislature gives to the collective process associated with establishing the Educational Project.

Article 75 :

The governing board is responsible for approving the school's success plan, and any updated version of the plan, proposed by the principal.

Article 83

Each year, the governing board shall inform the parents and the community served by the school of the services provided by the school and report on the level of quality of such services.

The governing board shall make public the educational project and the success plan of the school.

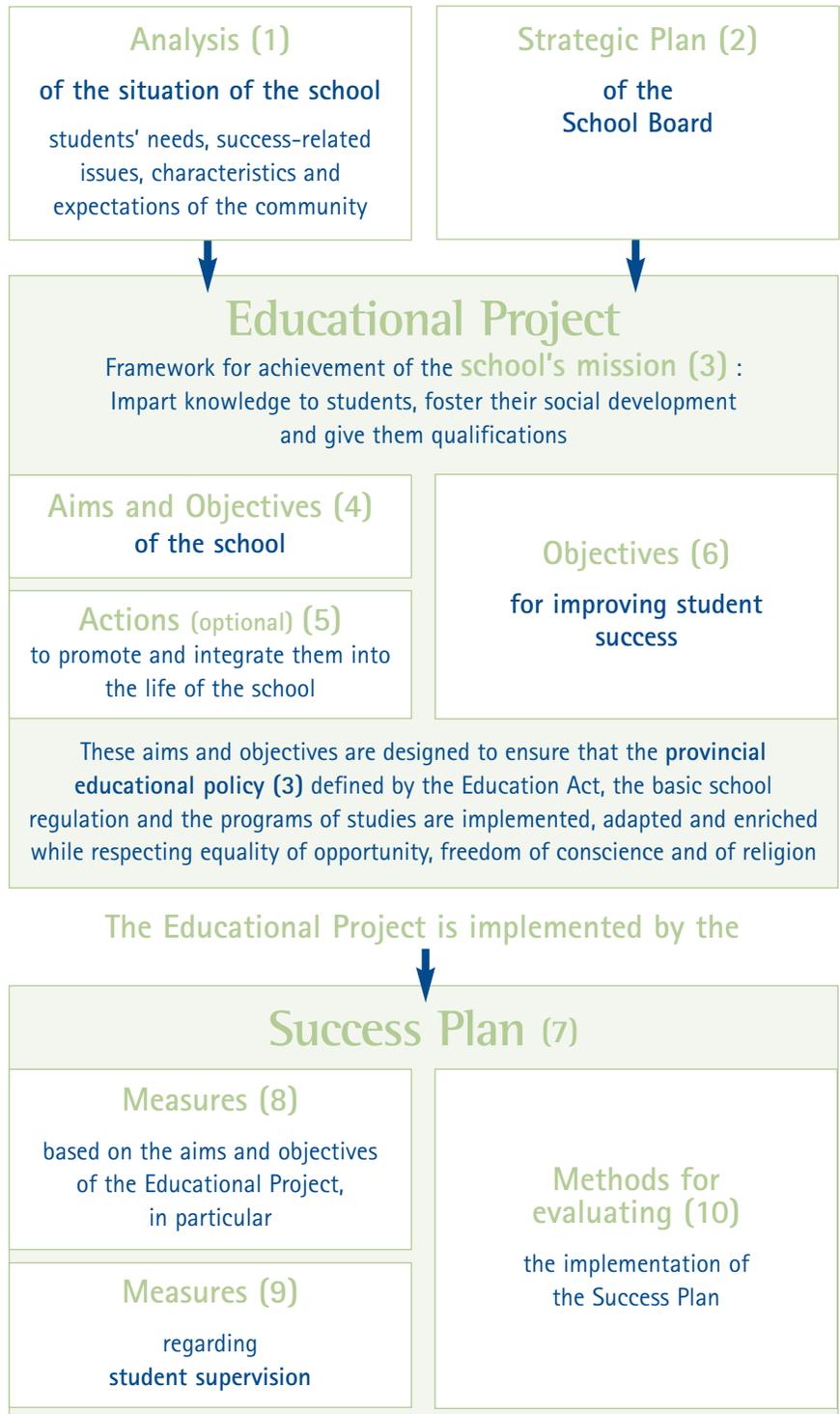
Each year, the governing board shall report on the evaluation of the implementation of the success plan.

A document explaining the educational project and reporting on the evaluation of the implementation of the success plan shall be distributed to the parents and the school staff. The governing board shall see to it that the wording of the document is clear and accessible.

The process in brief

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1- Encourage collaboration | Before undertaking any action concerning the Educational Project, it is worthwhile to establish a work plan that will encourage the collaboration of all persons concerned. |
| 2- Analyse the situation | Analysis of the prevailing situation is essential. The more care taken with it, the greater the chance the Educational Project will target the right goals. Tools can be varied: opinion polls, round table discussions, statistical data collection, etc. |
| 3- Adopt the Educational Project | Adoption of the Educational Project is a critical time in the process. It should have the assent of the greatest possible number if it is really to become part of school life. |
| 4- Approve the Success Plan | The Success Plan that serves to implement the Educational Project is prepared by the school staff and submitted by the principal to the Governing Board for approval. Before giving its approval, this board must ensure that it will allow the Educational Project to be implemented. |
| 5- Inform | The Educational Project and the Success Plan must be made public, that is, made accessible if not widely distributed. The Act even requires that the Educational Project and the evaluation of the implementation of the Success Plan be distributed to parents and staff in a document that the Governing Board deems to be clear and accessible. |
| 6- Oversee the implementation | The Governing Board must follow the development of the Educational Project and the Success Plan. It should expect periodically to receive information about them and it may include these items in the agenda of its meetings. |
| 7- Evaluate | The Success Plan is reviewed each year. Any modifications are approved by the Governing Board. The board must also periodically review the Educational Project to ensure that its aims and objectives still suit the school's situation. |
| 8- Report | Like any other public institution, the school is required to report to the community it serves. Parents and the community must know the quality of the services provided. They must also be informed of the school's progress concerning the success of its students. |

Contents of the Educational Project and the Success Plan





We see in the preceding diagram that the Educational Project and the Success Plan include a certain number of quite complex ingredients. These have been accumulated over years and through different legislative or educational reforms. Let us review each of these elements.

1 Analysis of the situation prevailing at the school

Schools have always analysed their situation before defining their aims and objectives. At least four elements must now be clearly analysed:

- **Needs of the students**, in all their aspects: personal, social, school life, etc.
- **Student success-related issues**: for example, socio-economic and family conditions, students' work outside of the school, parental support, available services, factors related to school dropout.
- **Characteristics of the community**: for example, ethno-cultural diversity, the perception of education as a social value, other values on which there is consensus in the community.
- **Community expectations**: the concern for success, the desire for improved training in a given area (language instruction, physical education, arts and music, computer skills), the wish for a different type of student supervision, etc.

These elements identified in the Act cannot on their own, account for all of the school's day-to-day reality. We must also conduct a complete and realistic analysis of the factors that characterize the existing school: its strengths and weaknesses as well as the risks and opportunities coming from outside the school.

We must take a clear-headed look at the administrative, instructional, learning, financial and material aspects of school life. Without this awareness, the chosen aims and objectives might encounter unexpected obstacles that interfere with their implementation.



The provincial educational policy contains the particulars of the rights to education that can be claimed by all residents of Quebec.

2 The school board's strategic plan

School boards are now required to adopt a strategic development plan that mainly targets student success. This plan somewhat resembles the Educational Project since it contains aims and objectives based on an analysis of the characteristics and issues of the community. It also takes into account province-wide indicators provided by the Ministère de l'Éducation for each region.

When it is time to review the Educational Project, the Governing Board should carefully examine the related points in the school board's strategic plan. In some cases, it will find in this plan aims and objectives that should automatically be integrated into its own Educational Project.

3 The school's mission and the provincial educational policy

We saw earlier that the Educational Project is the framework in which a school achieves its mission to impart knowledge to students, foster their social development and give them qualifications while respecting equality of opportunity and following a course of study suited to each student. We also mentioned that the aim of the Educational Project is to implement, adapt and enrich the provincial educational policy, that is, the Education Act, the Basic School Regulation and the programs of study.

This is quite a challenge, one that must be met with the help of the Educational Project.

By taking these elements one by one, we can ask ourselves what can be improved in respect to the school's mission. For example, is it the social development of the students, the success rate, or the quality of some instruction?

We can also ask questions relating to the application of the Act: What services are provided to the community? Are the measures for day care and student transportation, for example, appropriate for our community?

If we examine the elements of the Basic School Regulation, the following questions can also be pertinent: Are student and special services appropriate or sufficient? Is the student timetable appropriate? Does the report card meet expectations?

4 Aims and objectives of the school

All these questions should lead to choices about aims and objectives. What are the important points that we should now take into account to succeed as an educational institution within the community?

To adopt aims and objectives is to give direction, choose a path and establish a meaning for our mission.

We have to draw a portrait of the school's future that is comprehensive enough to contain the essential elements of the preceding analysis. However, the choices will be specific enough to guide actions for some years. Too many educational projects have been forgotten because they were not anchored in the day-to-day reality. The new provisions in the Act requiring that aims and objectives be implemented in a Success Plan will help us to overcome this difficulty.

5 Actions to promote aims and objectives

The Educational Project does not include measures to ensure its implementation: these are now part of the Success Plan.

However, the Governing Board has the possibility of determining the actions that will promote the Educational Project or that will ensure the chosen aims and objectives are properly integrated into school life. For example, we may consider concrete things that could directly affect students' or parents' perceptions of the school: decoration, communication, image of the institution, web site and so on.

6 Objectives for success

The success of all students represents a major challenge for Quebec's education system. The Educational Project is now the tool used to define the objectives of each institution to ensure success for all.

To adopt an objective is to direct our work towards a result.

This is not exclusively about the academic success on report cards, but about everything that is included in the school's mission. For example, we might target the rate of academic delay or grade repetition, the difference between boys and girls, violence, school dropout and return to school, reading levels, extracurricular activities, and so on.



7 The Success Plan

The Success Plan must now be implemented.

It can be presented in the form of a plan of action or a work plan and must be reviewed each year.

The Governing Board must approve the Success Plan but does not have the power to change it at will. If it does not agree with the document, it can ask that a modified version be submitted to the Governing Board before the plan comes into effect. This allows staff to be involved in choosing measures that are part of its professional responsibility.

8 The measures

Because the Success Plan deals mostly with measures, it is not surprising that the Act leaves the principal in charge of submitting the plan to the Governing Board, after having prepared it with the staff of the school.

The more these measures are directly aligned with the aims and objectives of the Educational Project, the more quickly it all will succeed.

9 Measures in the school's Success Plan

Several schools have policies on student supervision, as the Education Act again requested in its revised version. The work that went into preparing these policies is still valuable. These measures can most likely be transferred to the Success Plan.

Other schools that do not have this type of policy to turn to may consider measures that are related to the climate of the school, the feeling of belonging, the welcome provided, extracurricular or special activities, relations with students, relations among students, and so on.

10 Methods for evaluating

Any good planning requires that we first establish how to evaluate results. How can we know if the measures in the school's Success Plan achieve and promote the chosen aims and objectives? Simple qualitative or quantitative yardsticks can be established: level of user satisfaction, quantity of interventions, increase in the rate of participation, and so on.

We may also simply complete the following statement: We will be satisfied with this work, this method or this measure provided that...for example, such and such a result is obtained.



Well-defined roles

The Educational Project is built in partnership to reflect the community and the people it affects. However, each group of actors plays a well-defined role in the project. It is important that they all make their own contributions while respecting the competency of others.

The Governing Board

As we have seen, the Governing Board's paramount responsibility is the Educational Project. The design of the Governing Board is similar to an Issue Table at which the various agents are represented and work in partnership.

The principal

The principal is the project manager for the Educational Project. Without him/her, there is no point in trying to develop, implement and evaluate an Educational Project. The principal is the captain, steering the ship to port following the route chosen by the Governing Board and proposed by other partners of the school. Section 96.13 of the Act, provides that the principal shall assist the governing board in the exercise of its functions and powers and, for that purpose, the principal shall:

1° coordinate the analysis of the situation prevailing at the school and the development, implementation and periodical evaluation of the school's educational project;

1.1 coordinate the development, the review and any updating of the school's success plan;

3° encourage concerted action between the parents, the students and the staff, their participation in the life of the school and their collaboration in fostering success.



Teaching staff

Teachers must refer to the Educational Project in their day-to-day activities, since they "make" the school every day. Their experience is essential. The Educational Project cannot be developed or implemented without their contribution to and participation in choosing the aims and objectives.

Sections 36.1 and 74 of the Act state:

- *An educational project shall be defined, implemented and periodically evaluated with the participation of the teachers.*

By virtue of section 22, subsection 7, teachers are also expected to:

- *Comply with the educational project of the school.*

Support staff

The Educational Project represents a unique opportunity for support staff to make choices that will affect their day-to-day work. Since it aims for consistency, this project is put into effect not only in the classroom, but also throughout the school. Each person involved with it feels more responsible for what takes place in his/her milieu.

Sections 36.1 and 74 of the Act stipulate that an educational project shall be defined, implemented and periodically evaluated with the participation of other school staff members.

Parents

The school ensures that *an educational project shall be defined, implemented and periodically evaluated with the participation of parents (Section 36.1).*

To that end, it makes use of the **Parent Participation Organization (PPO)**, if this representative committee has been formed. It is the ideal place for those who want to explain their vision and express their concerns, objectives and aspirations regarding the education of their children. In some places, public consultation or a general assembly is held for this purpose.

According to Section 96.2 of the Act, the purpose of the PPO is *to encourage the collaboration of parents in developing, implementing and periodically evaluating the school's educational project and their participation in fostering their child's success.*

The school must be open to the community, recognizing that the educational success of students is a collective responsibility that requires the active participation of all concerned. Parents lead the way towards this success. The Educational Project is their opportunity to make their voices heard and to be part of the decision-making process.



Students

The Educational Project also offers primary and secondary students the chance to express what they like, dislike and hope for in their own school experience (Section 36.1).

According to the Act (Section 96.6), the purpose of the student committee in the second cycle of the secondary level *“is to encourage the collaboration of [students] in developing, implementing and periodically evaluating the school’s educational project and their participation in fostering success and in school activities.”*

Community Representatives

One of the objectives of the Education Reform is to foster closer ties between the school and the community. That is why representatives of the community sit on the Governing Board. They are also invited to participate in producing the Educational Project.

The Education Act stipulates that *an educational project shall be defined, implemented and periodically evaluated with the participation of representatives of the community (Section 36.1).*

The school board

The school board has three levels of responsibility.

First, the school board can be among the agents working to set up the Educational Project: in fact, it is named in the list of agents that must work together in order to produce *an Educational Project: an educational project shall be defined, implemented and periodically evaluated with the participation of the school board (Section 36.1).*

The legislature remembered to entrust the school board with the task of supporting schools in the act of producing the Educational Project. This support is extremely valuable and may take different forms: training, resources, technical and operational support, and so on.

The school board facilitates the implementation, by means of the success plan, of the educational project of each school (Section 218).

Third, the legislature gave the school board a new responsibility, that of ensuring that each school carries out its duty in respect to the Educational Project and the Success Plan. Since the schools have increased responsibilities, the school board must ensure that they are well and truly carried out in each of its schools. The Educational Project and the Success Plan are now part of this list of responsibilities overseen by the school board.

The school board shall ensure, without encroaching upon the functions and powers conferred on schools, that each school has adopted an educational project to be implemented by means of a success plan. (Section 221.1)



The secret of success

For the Educational Project and the Success Plan to succeed, they must become part of everyday life, giving meaning to the actions taken by those who ensure the mission of the school is achieved.

It is thus of the utmost importance that those involved in the school show a **strong determination** to make the Educational Project, implemented by means of the Success Plan, the central tool for promoting the school's development. They must be willing to look at the school in a new way, reflect on the issues and challenge their own ideas, if necessary. They must overcome the resistance that accompanies change. Above all, they must **have confidence** in themselves and their ability to implement a unifying and promising project.

Tools and resources

The principal's job is to bring to the school the means and resources available in the school network that will support implementation of the Educational Project: analytical instruments, measurement tools, survey questionnaires, etc.

Already available in the milieu, you can find reference material about writing an Educational Project, communication, institutional evaluation and so on. Schools may also use external resources such as the school board, the *Fédération des comités de parents* (FCPQ) or the Ministère de l'Éducation, which offer support and suggest procedural models.

The Education Reform of 1997 gave schools an autonomy and increased powers to carry out their mission: to impart knowledge to, foster social development of and qualify students. While the goal of all educational establishments is student success, each establishment is now called upon to choose their own route to achieve this common goal.

The Educational Project is the instrument promoted by the Education Act for constructing this route. Schools are called upon to define their own aims and objectives for success, taking into account student needs and community priorities. By means of the Success Plan, schools determine the measures to be introduced and formulate a plan of action to reach their goals. The choice of aims and objectives and the implementation of this plan are based on a dynamic process that solicits the participation of many different people involved with the school.

By creating an Educational Project and a Success Plan, a school is, in a sense, drawing its own road map, deciding its itinerary, identifying obstacles and easy pathways, choosing one or several modes of travel and locating supply points along the way. The school ensures that its passengers have all the necessary baggage to continue their journey. As true travel companions, everyone can make the most of this magnificent adventure.

