



QUEBEC PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS

PRACTICAL GUIDE

L'ASSOCIATION PROVINCIALE DES ENSEIGNANTES ET ENSEIGNANTS DU QUÉBEC



ADULT EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

What you need to know about
governing boards in centres

MARCH 2001

Introduction

So, you've been elected to the governing board of your centre. Congratulations! You have accepted a very important responsibility that involves not only representing your colleagues but promoting the interests of the students of your centre as well.

To help you in your new role, your provincial association, the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT) has prepared this booklet containing general information about the functioning of governing boards and adapted to the reality of adult and vocational education centres.

Participating on the governing board: It's to our advantage

The Education Act specifies that the number of positions for representatives of staff must not exceed the total number of the positions for the representatives of other groups (see composition on page 12).

Parity—that is equal representation for staff and representatives of other groups—is possible, but not assured. This should be demanded of the school board, which, in consultation with the various groups, determines the number of representatives from each.

The Education Act specifies that the GB may be constituted and function even without the requisite number of representatives of a group (see composition on page 12).



Note that:

- Being a member of the GB allows you to voice the concerns of your colleagues, to ask questions, to express opinions and to comment on various topics. It is a means for sharing our experience and professional expertise.
- Serving on the GB in the required number (parity) gives us a measure of control over the direction taken on various subjects that have an impact on the education of our students and the life of the centre. The staff of the centre are the front-line service providers who have to live with the decisions taken by the GB.
- The GB is an exceptional forum for partnership between those providing educational services and those receiving them.

Your colleagues' views are essential

The views you present at the GB should reflect the opinions of your colleagues. That's what democracy is all about!



This involves:

- Including the people you represent in the formulation of any positions and before a decision has been made.

Depending on the size of the centre and the nature of the issue, different approaches to this are possible: consultations by department or sector, a system in which each GB member is responsible for consulting a certain number of staff members, general meetings, etc.

- Devising mechanisms for keeping in contact with your group: posting of minutes, small informal meetings, etc.
- Maintaining close contact with union representative bodies in the case of all union and pedagogical matters (participatory bodies such as the school council, union delegates, etc.).

For example, a teacher member of the GB could be responsible for liaison with the school council of the centre.

- Assuring collaboration among the different categories of personnel in the centre.

For example, as prior meetings could be arranged with or phone calls made to representatives of other categories of personnel in order to co-ordinate as much as possible any positions you are defending.

- Attempting to ensure a measure of coherence at the level of the school board by participating in activities for discussion, information and training organized by your union.

Knowing the rules

It is important to be familiar with the principal rules concerning the GB to ensure effective participation and smooth functioning (Art. 102 to 108 and Art. 57 to 73 of the Education Act).



- The chair of the GB is named from the ranks of the socio-economic or community groups, the parents (in vocational education) or the business community. He or she is elected by the voting members of the GB and must not be an employee of the school board.
- The decisions of the GB are by majority vote of members present. Abstentions are not counted. In the case of a tie, the vote of the chair is preponderant (that is, the chairperson may vote twice on the same motion).

This power should only be used in exceptional cases.

- The appointment of representatives of community groups and the business sector is a school board responsibility. In practice, it is generally the centres who take the initiative in submitting names to the school board.

You should ensure that every effort is made to appoint these representatives!

- The representatives of staff, students and parents are elected by their peers.

Note that parents elected to the GB in vocational education must not be employees of the centre.

- The quorum is a majority of serving members of the GB.
- The representatives of the various groups are all entitled to vote on the GB.
- The director of the centre is not a member of the GB, but participates in the meetings without the right to vote.

- The mandate of all members of the GB is for 2 years.

- Any vacancy as a result of a member's no longer qualifying for the GB (e.g., a student no longer attending the centre) is filled immediately to complete the mandate.

- The GB adopts its own internal rules. These rules **must** provide for at least 5 meetings a year. They could also include:

- the procedure for the convocation of regular and special meetings (who, when, what, how);
- the procedural rules for meetings: location, schedule, rules of procedure for meetings (including public question period);
- the agenda and minutes: content, who is responsible for drafting and distributing;

- the use of administrative support services and centre equipment;
- the principles and procedures for the management of the operating budget of the GB.
- The meetings of the GB are public. However, the public may not participate in the deliberations of the GB except during the period provided for in the procedural rules.
- The GB may go into closed session to study any matter which might cause prejudice to any person.

Respecting the law: a mutual responsibility

The GB's powers are exercised differently depending on the nature of the matters it deals with, and certain responsibilities are clearly not within its mandate. It is important to have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each party (GB, administration, staff).



- The GB has the power to approve certain proposals that are made to it. **Approval implies that the GB may not amend the proposal.** It may, however, refuse to approve a proposal, if, for example, it does not respect the centre's action plan or is not in conformity with a position already adopted. In such a case, a new proposal must be submitted (see table on page 11 for examples).
- The administration must develop proposals to be submitted to the GB in collaboration with the entire staff or, depending on the subject, with only the teaching personnel (see table on page 11 for examples).

"To develop in collaboration with" is a dynamic, interactive process which goes beyond simple consultation. The law reinforces, in principle, the administration's role as pedagogical animator and **requires close collaboration with the staff of the centre.**

The law stipulates that the procedures for collaboration are those established by the interested parties in general assembly convened for this purpose by the director or, failing that, those established by the director (Art. 110.2 of the Education Act). **It is important to ensure that these procedures are clearly defined.**

- The GB has the power to adopt certain proposals, that is, to develop a proposal and modify it, or to modify a proposal submitted by the administration. This is the case with the centre budget and the annual report of activities to be transmitted to the school board (Art. 110.4-95, 110.4-82 of the Education Act) (see table on page 11 for examples).
- The school board must consult the GB prior to making a decision on certain matters (see the table on page 11 for examples).
- Certain pedagogical questions are of specific concern to teachers and the administration. These matters do not fall under the mandate of the GB. An example is the standards and procedures for the evaluation of learning (Art. 110.12 of the Education Act).

APPROVE:

to accept or reject a proposal without the possibility of making changes (the power to say *yes* or *no*). If rejected, a new proposal must be requested.

BE CONSULTED:

provide an opinion on a matter with the possibility of influencing the final decision.

ADOPT:

to change, add, remove one or more elements of a proposal.

On these pedagogical matters, the teachers develop proposals which the administration may approve or reject. In the latter case, the reasons for the rejection must be provided.

- The GB has no power to define needs or propose activities for teachers' professional improvement.
- The centre administration is responsible for the application of decisions of the GB.
- Any matters concerning personnel management, labour relations or the collective agreement are not within the mandate of the GB. The employer and the union are responsible for dealing with these matters.

BE INFORMED:

to receive information after a decision is made with no possibility to reconsider the decision.

REQUEST:

to initiate consideration of a subject or to request information.

PROPOSE:

to submit and defend an idea.

DECIDE OR DETERMINE:

to make a decision without necessarily having received a proposal.

Tips to improve operations of the GB

Advice and suggestions from members of governing boards.

1. Choice of items for the GB agenda

The first question you should ask in considering agenda items for the GB is “Will discussion of this help Peter or Carol to succeed?”.



If the answer is *no*, perhaps the question should be discussed in some other forum. The principal goal of the education reform is to ensure success for the greatest number of students. The institution of governing boards is one aspect of the reform and is intended, in particular, to help achieve this general objective.

The second question to ask is “Is the GB the appropriate place to deal with this matter?”.



If the answer is *no*, the members of the GB may agree to refer the item or items to a more appropriate body, such as the teachers' council, the administration, or the school board. The GB is not the only place where matters affecting the centre can be dealt with. And it is clearly not the place for discussing matters related to members of staff or individual students.

The third question to ask is “Should we spend a lot of time on items where the GB has no control over the final decision?”.



If the answer is *no*, there should be agreement to limit the time spent on consultations initiated by the school board. The GB can offer its opinion on all questions referred to it by the school board. But too much is as bad as too little.

The fourth question to ask is “Is this a question of discussing and making a decision on general orientations?”.



If the answer is *no* and the discussion focuses on details which could be taken care of at another level, the matter could be referred to, for example, the centre administration. The GB's mandate should deal with general orientations and avoid getting bogged down in details.

2. Preparation of the agenda

- Mandate a sub-committee of the GB (chairperson, administration, teacher).
- Discuss and develop the agenda for the next GB together at the end of each meeting of the GB.
- Establish the priority of items on the agenda in order of their importance.
- Limit the number of items on the agenda, limit the time devoted to each item, and identify the nature of the item (information, consultation, decision).
- Draw up a calendar of items to be dealt with throughout the year and in the coming months.

Receiving the agenda sufficiently in advance of the meeting allows people to prepare and to request additions to the agenda.

3. Some guidelines for decision-making

- Respect the best interests of the students.
- Respect the centre's action plan.
- Respect the principle of equality of opportunity to permit success for the greatest number.
- Respect the mission of the centre, which is to provide educational services that:
 - encourage students to function independently;
 - permit integration into society and the labour market;
 - enable students to find or maintain a job or to rejoin the labour force;
 - contribute to economic, social and cultural development;
 - include training as approved by the Ministry.

For more information...

Participate in discussion, information and training sessions organized by QPAT and your local union.

Refer to the publication “How Does the Québec Education System Work—A Primer for Schools and Governing Boards,” which was sent out to centres in April 2000.

At all times, there is a QPAT resource person working with your local union to answer any questions you may have, to forward pertinent information and to meet with you in your centre.

IF YOU NEED TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US:

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The principal powers of the Governing Board (GB) in centres

Subject	Article of Education Act	Proposal	Role of GB	Timing
Implementation of programs of study	110.2 (2)	Admin. with teaching staff	Approves	January, February
Centre budget	110.4 (95)	Centre admin.	Adopts	Spring
Action plan	109	GB	Determines	Spring
Info. on quality of services	110.4 (83)	GB	Decides	Spring
Operating rules for the centre	110.2 (4)	Admin. with staff	Approves	Spring
Implementation of student and popular education services	110.2 (3)	Admin. with staff	Approves	Spring
Use of premises	110.4 (93)	Admin.	Approves	Any time
Procedures for implementing the basic regulation	110.2 (1)	Admin. with staff	Approves	Any time
Solicit or receive contributions	110.4 (94)	GB	Decides	Any time
Organisation of social or cultural activities	110.3	GB	Decides	Any time
Amendment or revocation of the deed of establishment of the centre	110.1 (1)	—	Consulted by the school board	Winter
Various needs of the centre in goods and services as well as needs related to premises or buildings	110.13 (96.22)	—	Consulted by the school board	Winter

Composition of the Governing Board

Adult Education

- Students.
- At least four members of staff, including:
 - At least two teachers;
 - At least one member of the non-teaching professional staff and at least one member of support staff, if the interested parties so decide.
- At least two persons chosen from socio-economic and community groups of the territory principally served by the centre.
- At least two representatives of the area's business community.

Examples of socio-economic groups are:

- youth employment centres (Carrefours jeunesse-emploi);
- chambers of commerce.

Vocational Education

- Students.
- At least four members of staff, including:
 - At least two teachers;
 - At least one member of the non-teaching professional staff and at least one member of support staff, if the interested parties so decide.
- At least two parents of students.
- At least two persons chosen from socio-economic and community groups of the territory principally served by the centre.
- At least two representatives of the area's business community working in the sectors of economic activity corresponding to the vocational specialties offered by the centre.

Examples of community groups are:

- Centraide;
- groups for the integration of immigrants into Québec society;
- women's centres.

The participation of various representatives from outside the centre encourages familiarity with local organisations as well as making those organisations aware of the services provided by the centre. It can also facilitate the implementation of work-study programs and integration into the labour force. Representatives should be selected on the basis of their reputation or their social involvement or on the basis of their particular skills as these relate to the orientations and the action plan of the centre.