

QUEBEC PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS

GOVERNING BOARD

L'ASSOCIATION PROVINCIALE DES ENSEIGNANTES ET ENSEIGNANTS DU QUÉBEC



PRACTICAL GUIDE

**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
GOVERNING BOARDS IN SCHOOLS**

Introduction

So, you've been elected to the governing board (GB) of your school. Congratulations! You have accepted a very important responsibility that not only involves representing your colleagues but also promoting the interests of the students in your school.

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 how governing boards function.



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**Please note that the Education Act
is the legal document referred to in this guide.**

Participating on the Governing Board: It's to Our Advantage

The Education Act specifies that the number of positions for representatives of staff (including the person assigned to childcare) must be equal to the number of the positions for parents. The school board determines the number of representatives on the GB, after consulting each group concerned (art. 43). *You may request a modification of your representation (composition, number) from your school board for the following year.*

However, the law permits the GB to function even if the number of members from the school staff is inferior (i.e., is not equal) to that of the parents (art. 52). It is important to designate the total representatives of staff during the month of September. Any later is too late (art. 48)!



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 with parents) 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 school.
- The proper functioning of the GB permits co-operation between those providing educational services and those receiving them. The parity representation that the law provides for should be respected as a fundamental principle.

The school staff are the front-line service providers who have to live with the decisions made by the GB.

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.

Depending on the size of the school and the nature of the issue, different approaches to this are possible: general meetings, consultations by department, a system in which **each** GB member is responsible for consulting a certain number of teachers to ensure everyone has a say, etc.
- Devising mechanisms for keeping in contact with your group: posting of minutes, small informal meetings, etc.
- Maintaining close contact with the other union representative bodies in the case of all union and pedagogical matters (participatory bodies such as the school council, union delegates, etc.).
- Assuring collaboration among the different categories of personnel, for example, through a prior meeting or telephone call, in order to co-ordinate as much as possible any points of views.
- 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 and by contacting your union with any problems or questions.

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

As for parents, the parent participation organization (PPO) can communicate its views to parent representatives on the GB (art. 96.3). However, since this is a consultative body, it has no right to intervene in the GB's deliberations.

Knowing the Rules

It is important to be familiar with the principal rules concerning the GB to ensure effective participation and smooth functioning (art. 42 to 73).



- The chairperson of the GB must be a parent member of the GB and not an employee of the **school board**. He or she is elected by the voting members every year.
- The voting members are the representatives of the parents, the school staff and the secondary-level students. The non-voting members are the representatives from the community nominated by the GB.
- The parents elected as members of the GB may not be members of the **school staff**.
- The quorum is a majority of the members of the GB (voting and non-voting). At least half of the parent members must be present.
- The school principal is not a member of the GB, but participates in the meetings and assists the GB in its functions and powers.
- The decisions of the GB are taken by a majority of votes cast* by voting members present. In the case of a tie, the chairperson has the casting vote.

The casting vote should only be used in exceptional cases.
- The mandate for the parents is two years, and the mandate for all other members is one year.
- The GB adopts its own internal rules. These rules **must** provide for at least five meetings a year. They **could** also include:
 - the procedure for the calling 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 school 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 (without the public) to study any matter which might cause prejudice to any person.

* Abstention does not qualify as a vote.

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).



- In cases where the staff's professional expertise must be employed, 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 such a proposal, if, for example, it does not respect the school's educational project or is not in conformity with a position already adopted. In such a case, a new proposal must be submitted (see table on page 8 for examples).
- The school principal 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 8 for examples).

"Developed in collaboration with" is a dynamic, interactive process which goes beyond simple consultation. The law reinforces, in principle, the school principal's role as pedagogical animator and close collaboration with the school staff.
- The law stipulates that the procedures for collaboration are those established by the interested parties in a general assembly convened for this purpose by the principal or, failing that, those established by the principal (art. 77 and 89). It is important to ensure that these procedures are clearly defined. *They are, in the majority of cases, defined in the local collective agreement negotiated between the union and the school board.*
- 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 school principal. This is the case with the educational project and the school budget.
- The school board must consult the GB prior to making a decision on certain matters (see table on page 8 for examples).

- Any matters concerning personnel management, professional development, 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 (art. 96.20 and 96.21).
- A number of pedagogical issues directly concern the teaching staff and the administration of the school (art. 96.15). Among these are the criteria for implementing new instructional methods. For those subjects, teachers develop proposals and the principal approves or rejects those proposals. In the latter case, the principal must provide reasons for the rejection.
- However, when it comes to the choice of textbooks and procedures for communicating with parents as it concerns the student's progress, the GB must be consulted before the principal approves the proposal.
- The school principal is responsible for the application of decisions made by the GB. It ensures the academic and administrative management of the school.

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.

BE INFORMED:

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

REQUEST:

to initiate consideration of a subject or to request information.

PROPOSE:

to submit an idea with a view to supporting it.

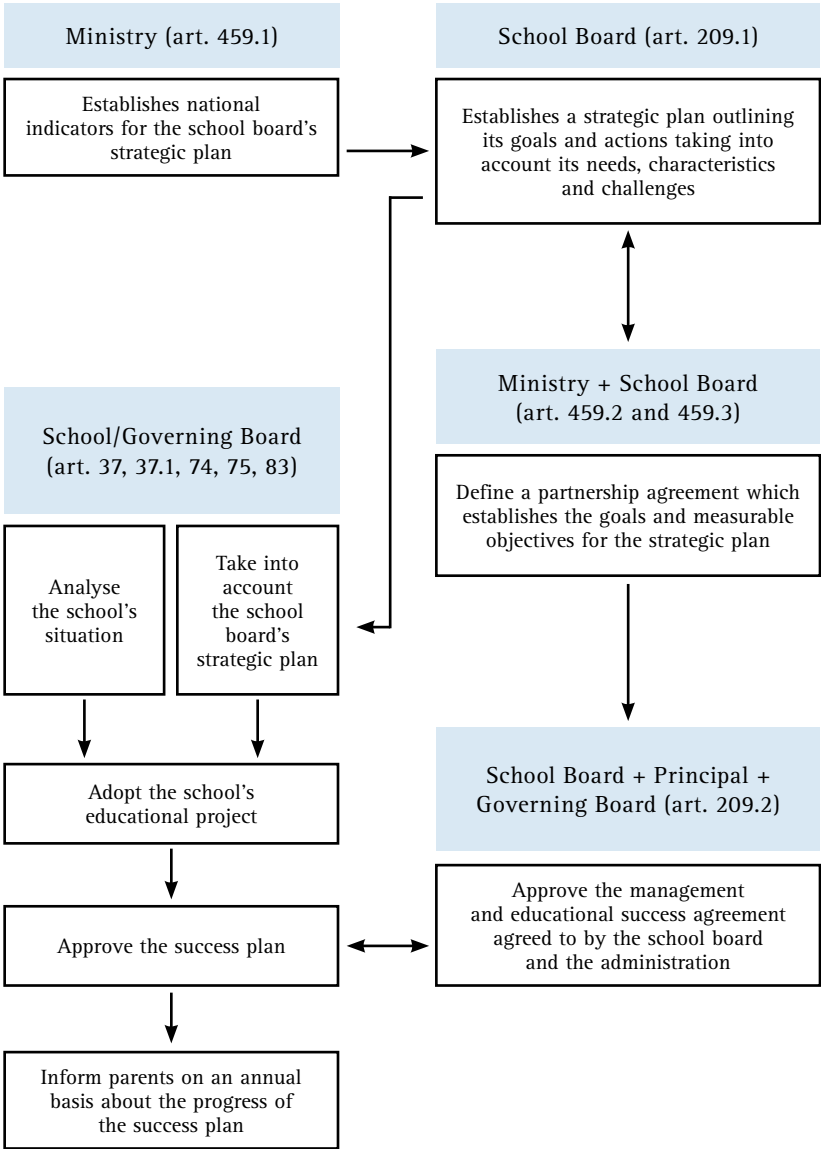
DECIDE:

make a decision without necessarily having received a proposal.

Principal Powers of the Governing Board in Schools

Subject	Article of Education Act	Proposal	Role of GB	Timing
Educational project (see page 10)	74	GB	Adopts	Spring
Success plan (see page 11)	75/77	Principal with staff	Approves	Spring
Rules of conduct	76/77	Principal with staff	Approves	Spring
Accountability (see page 13)	83	GB	Decides	Spring
Time allocation for each subject	86/89	Principal with teaching staff	Approves	February-March
Extra-curricular or extra-mural activities (see page 18)	87/89	Principal with staff	Approves	Any time
Implementation of student and special education services (see page 19)	88/89	Principal with staff	Approves	Spring
Use of premises (see page 17)	93	Principal	Approves	Any time
School funds (see page 16)	94	GB	Decides	Any time
School budget (see page 15)	95	Principal	Adopts	Spring
Communications with parents (see page 20)	96.15	Principal with teaching staff	Consults	Spring
Various needs of the school in goods and services as well as needs related to premises or buildings (see page 14)	96.22	—	Consulted by the SB	Winter
Management and educational success agreement (see page 12)	209.2	Principal with staff	Approves	Spring

Levels of Accountability



Educational Project

The GB **adopts**, oversees the implementation of and periodically evaluates the school's educational project (not necessarily annually) (art. 74).



Analysis of the school situation (art. 74)

Prior to the adoption of the school's educational project, the GB analyzes the situation prevailing at the school, principally:

- the needs of the students;
- the challenges tied to student success;
- characteristics and expectations of the community served by the school.

This analysis must be conducted by the GB under the principal's coordination. The requisite data for this analysis may come from various sources: MELS database, school board, school data, staff or parents' opinions. *The idea is to ensure the collaboration of persons who have an interest in the school.*

This analysis does not have to be adopted; its purpose is to provide GB members with a common understanding.

The review of the content of the educational project shall be made based on this analysis and taking into account the school board's strategic plan. *It is the GB's responsibility to assess which elements of the plan are relevant to the school's situation.*

Content of the educational project (art. 36, 36.1, 37)

The educational project must contain the specific aims and objectives of the school, and objectives to improve students' success. It **may** contain actions to enhance those aims and objectives (e.g.: reminder in the student's agenda, information for parents' meetings, etc.). It must respect the freedom of conscience and of religion of students, parents and school staff.

The objectives indicated need not necessarily be quantifiable. The "success" spoken of is not just academic success, but educational success in terms of the school's broader mission (to instruct, socialize and qualify). For example, setting an objective of the reduction of violence in school could be as relevant as setting an objective of increasing the number of diplomas awarded. The progress made concerning reduction of violence can be assessed in various ways: meetings, observation of the staff, etc.

Defining the objectives of the educational project in such a way that progress can be readily measured will facilitate development and any updates to the plan.

Success Plan

The GB **approves** the success plan developed by the principal in collaboration with staff members. The GB also **approves** its updates (art. 75).



The success plan is the instrument by which the educational project is implemented and is established taking into account the strategic plan of the school board. It must include (art. 37.1):

- The measures to be taken in accordance with the aims and objectives of the educational project; **in particular**, the provisions for supervision of the students;
- The methods for evaluating the implementation of the success plan.

The plan is normally drawn up for a period of several years, but it must be reviewed annually. An evaluation is made as to whether the measures called for in the plan have actually been implemented and updated, as required.

The plan should focus on factors over which the school has some control.

Management and Educational Success Agreement (art. 209.2)

The GB **approves** the management and educational success agreement agreed to by the school board and the administration and submitted for **consultation** to the staff of the school (art. 209.2).



The school board and the principal of each school **agree each year**, in the framework of a management and educational success agreement, on measures to ensure the achievement of the goals and measurable objectives of the **partnership agreement** (see organigram on page 9).

The management and educational success agreement is determined taking into account the success plan and the particular situation of the school. It can include:

- The directions and goals of the educational project as well as the measures already provided in the success plan, since they already take into account the school board's strategic plan.
- The **resources** the school board specifically allocates to the school to enable it to achieve its goals and objectives.

The needs expressed by the schools should take precedence as these resources are essential to the achievement of whatever obligations arise from the partnership agreement.

- The support and assistance measures provided to the school.

Additional needs could arise from the management and educational success agreement and should be clearly indicated to the school board.

- The monitoring and accountability procedures instituted by the school.

Whatever is already in the success plan could be restated in order to avoid reinvention of the wheel and complication of the process.

The GB must refer to the educational project, the success plan and the strategic plan of the school board as well as the partnership agreement in its consideration of the management and educational success agreement.

It is important to include provision in the management and educational success agreement for the school's budgetary surplus to be credited to the school for the subsequent financial school year. Otherwise, the school's surplus reverts automatically to the school board each year.

Accountability

The GB should **report annually** to parents and the community on the quality of services it provides. It must distribute a clear and accessible document explaining the educational project, giving an assessment of the implementation of the success plan to parents and the school staff (art. 83).



In order to help this procedure, only one report could be produced. It is up to the GB to decide what information needs to be included.

For example, the report could be divided into two sections to reflect the following elements:

a) Quality of services:

- Data on the school;
- A summary of the educational project and the chosen aims and objectives;
- An introduction to the services provided (childcare, support services...);
- A summary of special activities conducted during school hours or at other times;
- Information on the means provided related to the needs indicated;
- Information on equipment upgrades.

b) An assessment of the success plan to review the implementation of the measures stipulated.

It is entirely possible to report on the improvements observed, without it leading to comparison with other schools or among teachers.

Identifying the Needs of the School

a) Staffing needs

The **school staff members** (not the GB) must be **consulted** by the school principal on the needs of each category of staff (art. 96.20).



During this consultation, you should:

- Ensure the involvement of the school staff;
- Set out the school's **actual** needs without being limited by budgetary constraints;
- Guarantee students access to the various services to which they are entitled, in particular in the case of special needs students;
- Rely on the needs arising from the educational project and an assessment of the existing situation.

The results of these consultations must be sent to the school board by the school principal by the date and in the form determined by the school board.

This stage **precedes** the process leading to the adoption of the budget. In fact, the school board, in allocating money among its schools, must consider the needs expressed above (see annual budget on page 15).

These two consultations are closely related; therefore, proper coordination is required so that the staff expresses one point of view in both consultations.

b) Needs for goods and services

The **GB** must be **consulted** by the school principal on the needs for goods and services and also on the needs relating to premises made available to the school (art. 96.22).

Particular attention may be paid to:

- Listing needs for school daycare services, furnishings, equipment, schoolyards and the school building itself;
- Services needed for students;
- Recalling the results of the consultation on **staffing needs** [see a) above] because many services require the use of staff.

School's Annual Budget

The GB **adopts** the school's annual budget as proposed by the school principal (art. 95) and **monitors** its administration (art. 96.24).



In order for each school to adopt its budget, the Act calls for each school board to distribute much of its budget equitably between its schools, taking into account their social and economic inequalities and the needs expressed by the staff and by the GB of each establishment.

The partnership agreement and the management and educational success agreement must both be taken into consideration. The school board must consult the GB regarding the objectives and principles governing the allocation of its budget (art. 275).

The main obstacle each GB must overcome in exercising this important power is the failure to actually exercise it, which may occur for numerous reasons. Therefore, the main objective of the GB should be to seek a consensus on the following aspects:

- A timeline, over the course of the year, to follow up on the school budget on a regular basis;
- A clear and simple model for presentation of the budget: amounts which can and cannot be transferred, school's own revenues and school fund, the real discretionary amounts available to the school;
- A deadline that allows sufficient time for study, attempt to understand (listing questions, if necessary) and consultation with colleagues before adoption of the budget;
- A clear demonstration on how the proposed budget will facilitate the objectives of the educational project.

Any school surplus becomes the property of the school board. However, if the management and educational success agreement specifies it, the surplus can be credited to the school for the following school financial year.

You should proceed with this task step by step, taking into consideration its importance and that it leads to the adoption of the school's annual budget.

School Funds

The GB **may solicit** or receive sums of money (gifts, legacies, grants and other voluntary contributions) to support school activities. The donation should be made on a voluntary basis and not be attached to particular conditions relative to any form of commercial solicitation (art. 94).



Some province-wide guidelines have been established by the MELS; in addition, rulings by the *Office de la protection du consommateur* have forbidden advertising directed at persons under 13 years of age. Among other things, it is forbidden to:

- Encourage purchase of a product;
- Accept a contribution connected to an eventual rebate on a product.
- Use a logo known by the students;

Contributions received must be deposited in the school's account at the school board. Determination of the activities to be funded shall be the responsibility of the GB.

The GB may establish a framework defining the following aspects:

- A plan for fund-raising activities and the times of year when these activities would occur;
- Criteria for determining the school activities that will receive funding (e.g.: educational project);
- Procedures for the participation of the PPO, students, teachers, etc.;
- Identifying those school activities that will receive funding.

This framework should be reviewed at the end of the year for the following year.

Use of School Premises

The GB **approves** the use of school premises or buildings proposed by the school principal. If the agreement is for more than one year, it should be authorized by the school board (art. 93).



Before making a decision, the following concerns should be considered:

- The use of premises for purposes other than teaching does not have an impact on the school's normal activities, and does not have a negative impact on the quality of life of students and staff (cleanliness of premises, equipment storage requirements);
- Care must be taken that there is sufficient maintenance personnel and that this does not lead to poorly maintained premises;
- The school premises are not used for activities incompatible with its educational mission.
- Request detailed information regarding cleaning and security;

The GB **approves** the organization of services by the school board on the school's premises (art. 93). Prior to its approval, the GB should consider the rational use of public equipment and insist that the rental revenues be attributed to the school.

Extra-curricular or Extra-mural Activities

The GB **approves** the **programming** of the educational activities, as presented by the school principal, which entail changes in the students' regular time of arrival and departure, or which require the students to leave the school premises. The school principal, in collaboration with the staff members, develops the proposal (art. 87).



The GB deals with the global programming of activities, i.e., an overview for the whole year. It **does not deal with details** for each activity. Therefore, the proposal presented to the GB should be general in nature and include a list of activities foreseen for each level, along with an indication of when each activity would normally occur. *This is the practice that is followed in many schools.*

The GB may, among other things, decide whether such activities are acceptable on the basis of their frequency, highway-travelling distances, and possible dangers associated with the activity, etc. It has **no jurisdiction** over the content or the educational aspects of activities, since this is a matter related to the professional autonomy of teachers, in conjunction with the school principal.

There are usually a number of activities that take place as early as September. Therefore, it is suggested that the program of educational activities for the school year be approved at the end of the previous year (May-June) for the following year.

Implementing Student Services

The GB **approves** the proposal related to the implementation of student services as presented by the school principal. This proposal is developed by the school principal in collaboration with the staff members (art. 88).



First of all, the services that require a program stipulated in the Basic School Regulation are the following: learning support, school activities to contribute to students' autonomy and sense of belonging at school, help for the student (in his or her academic choices), promotion and prevention services relating to lifestyle, health and well-being.

For each service, the school board must establish a program (art. 224) and determine the educational services provided in each school (art. 236). The implementation of these services is related to the resources devoted to the school and its annual budget. Even though they are for everyone, these programs do include services intended specifically for special needs students. In implementing them, the GB may:

- Ensure that students requiring special assistance receive the appropriate services to guarantee them equality of opportunity to succeed;
- Identify needs and request appropriate services and necessary resources.

It is important to respect both the job and the professional autonomy of every category of staff.

Communications with Parents

The GB is consulted on the procedures for communicating to parents their child's progress **before** those procedures are approved by the principal. The proposal for the communications procedures is developed by the teaching staff (art. 96.15).



These communications procedures include the report cards and the competency reports provided in the Basic School Regulation along with other communications.

a) Report cards

The report card includes a variety of information, including, in particular, a percentage grade for each competency that has been evaluated in a given term.

b) Competency reports at the end of the cycle

For the competency reports, the student's grade in all **subject competencies** must be indicated using a percentage.

The report at the end of the year or of the cycle must also include comments with regard to one or more **cross-curricular competencies**.

Along with the form communications may take, the dates for these communications can also be submitted for consultation.

The respective roles

The school staff should come to an agreement on all aspects of the standards and procedures for the evaluation of learning, particularly the instruments for communicating with parents. For example, they might decide on the frequency for the evaluation of competencies by cycle.

The GB, for its part, is consulted on the content and the presentation of the communication instruments as well as their frequency. While the GB does not make decisions on these matters, the teaching staff must be able to provide any required explanations and information.

Following consultation with the GB, the principal approves the evaluation standards and procedures proposed by the teaching staff.

Tips to Improve Operations of the Governing Board

Advice and suggestions from members of governing boards:

1. Choice of items for the GB agenda

- a) The first question you should ask in considering agenda items for the GB is: “Will a discussion about this help John or Mary 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 the GB is one aspect of the reform and is intended, in particular, to help achieve this general objective.

- b) The second question you should 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 school council, the parents’ participation organization, the school principal, or the school board. The GB is not the only place where matters affecting the school can be dealt with. It is not the place to address a student case or discuss staff members and issues on pedagogical methods.

- c) The third question you should 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 school principal. The GB’s mandate should deal with general orientations and avoid getting bogged down in details.

2. Preparation of the agenda

For example:

- Mandate a sub-committee of the GB (chairperson, school principal, teacher);
- At the end of each meeting of the GB, discuss and develop together the agenda for the next GB meeting;
- Establish the priority of items on the agenda in order of their importance;
- Limit the number of items on the agenda, limit the time spent on 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.

3. Role of the chairperson

In addition to ensuring respect for the internal rules of procedure, the role of the chairperson is to listen and encourage **all** members to speak up and explain their views in a fair and impartial manner. The chairperson must also make sure that discussions respect the mandate of the GB. If necessary, the chairperson represents the GB **on what was agreed by the majority of members**. When the nomination of the chairperson takes place, it is appropriate to pay attention to these aspects, which could be specified in a document concerning the rules of internal management developed by the GB.

4. Evaluation of GB meetings

To help establish a collaborative approach, discuss together, on a regular basis, the way in which the GB functions. To do this, an evaluation grid, including objective criteria, may be developed.

5. Some guidelines for decision-making

- Respect the best interests of the students;
- Respect the educational project;
- Respect the principle of equality of opportunity to permit success for the greatest number;
- Respect the three missions of the school: impart knowledge (development of intellectual activities and mastery of content); foster social development (among other things, preparation for responsible citizenship); provide qualifications (while enabling all students to undertake and achieve success in a course of study).

Possible Steps to Follow

The Education Act defines the responsibilities specific to the school staff, the school principal, the GB, the school board and the Minister. It also defines the conditions that must be complied with in developing proposals. However, infringements of the Act may occur.

Reminder about the role of the school principal

- Is the academic and administrative director of the school (art. 96.12);
- Ensures the implementation of the decisions of the GB and of the other provisions governing the school (art. 96.12);
- Ensures that the proposals to be submitted to the GB are developed according to the stipulated provisions and assists the GB in the exercise of its functions and powers (art. 96.13);
- Manages the school's physical resources and staff, and determines the duties and responsibilities of each staff member in accordance with the applicable collective agreement and regulations (art. 96.21 and 96.23).

Reminder about the role of the school board

The school board must ensure that schools comply with the Education Act. In the event that a school refuses to comply with the Act, the school board may substitute its decisions for the decisions of the institution (art. 218.2).

Suggestion

In the event that a decision made by the GB or the process leading to the decision does not comply with the Act, various steps may be taken. Therefore, a flexible, discussion-based approach is preferred.

As a staff member, you may report the problem to your union representative so that he or she can assess it. A meeting could then take place with the principal to report on the situation and discuss possible solutions. If the problem persists, **contact your local union**, which could, if necessary, give advice and take appropriate action.

In the majority of cases, problems encountered will be solved through discussion, with legal recourse being employed only as a last resort.

For More Information

I would like to obtain further information.

I should get in touch with my local union:

