



Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers

l'Association provinciale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec



HANDBOOK FOR NEW TEACHERS

A guide for new teachers working in English-language public schools in the province of Quebec

Printed on recycled paper



100%



Message from the President to New Teachers and New Members

Welcome to teaching and welcome to your union. You are now a member of both one of the most important professions and of Canada's oldest union, the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers.

You may already know QPAT because of our annual teachers' convention. Although we are certainly proud of hosting one of the biggest and the longest running educational convention in North America, QPAT is much more than Convention every November. We are the tremendously accomplished 7,500 teachers in Quebec's English public education system.

Teachers are charged with a rather significant assignment, the forming of well-rounded future citizens. For our students to be fully engaged as citizens of a democracy, they must become wholly educated members of an ever-changing society. We at QPAT know that you, as a new teacher in Quebec's English public education system, will do great things. As you already know from your student teaching, the classroom can be an incredibly inspiring setting to work in. One of our aims is to provide you with some of the practical pedagogical and professional knowledge you need as you carry out your work.

As you progress along your career path, it is important that you be aware of both your individual and collective rights. As your professional organization, QPAT, with the support of your local union, strives to provide you with the contractual help that you might need throughout your career. Under the QPAT banner, we all come together, not just to protect individual rights, but also to work towards the collective good of all teachers across the province.

There is a lot to know when first starting out. Having the right tools helps to overcome the hurdles. We offer you this *Handbook for New Teachers* as an important part of your toolbox. Many new teachers had a hand in developing this handbook so that it would truly reflect the needs of beginning teachers. Our hope is that this handbook will become a trusted friend as you continue to develop the professional skills of your chosen career.

Yours in solidarity,

Richard Goldfinch
President

THE PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is designed to help any teacher who is new to the teaching profession in Quebec. One of the priorities of the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers is to help make the transition into the profession as smooth as possible. Copies of this handbook are available at the QPAT office, through our website at <http://www.qpat-apeq.qc.ca> or through your local union.

November 2012

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What is the Role of the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers?

QPAT is the organization which represents approximately 7,500 teachers in the English school boards of Quebec as well as the teachers in the English schools of the Littoral School Board. Our mission is to promote and develop the professional, social, and economic interests of teachers. Founded in 1864, QPAT is Canada's oldest teaching association. Over the years, teachers have gone from having poor working conditions to having negotiated the many benefits enjoyed by members of the teaching profession today.

Here are some of the services provided by QPAT:

- Creating publications such as the *Liaison*, a regular bulletin for all members that describes what is happening within QPAT and teaching in English public schools.
- Organizing the annual teachers' convention which takes place in the fall in Montreal. The entrance fee is included in the union dues of teachers working in the Anglophone public sector of Quebec. There are all-day pre-convention workshops as well as shorter workshops which cover a wide range of interests. The Thursday evening of convention always wraps up with a social event.
- Working in close partnership with the *Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement* (FSE) and the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec* (CSQ) to negotiate the key components of your working conditions in a provincial agreement.
- Representing teachers' views on pedagogical dossiers to the *ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sports* (MELS) and the Quebec English School Boards' Association (QESBA) as well as representing teachers at the MELS. This includes preparing briefs and having internal debates regarding our position.
- Assisting local unions (see page 18) in supporting their members. This includes grievances and the costs related to arbitration, as well as parental rights including preventative leaves, salary insurance during pregnancy, extensions of parental leaves, and adoption.
- Negotiating insurance contracts and advising members approaching retirement.
- Providing professional development opportunities and resources including sustainability education and Brundtland Green Establishments (BGE)/Établissements verts Brundtland (EVB).
- Partnering with the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) to collaborate with other provinces throughout the country. QPAT works with teachers all over the world by contributing to *Project Overseas*, which gives professional assistance to fellow teachers in developing countries. We believe in supporting the teaching profession movement worldwide.

What is the difference between your local union and the provincial association?

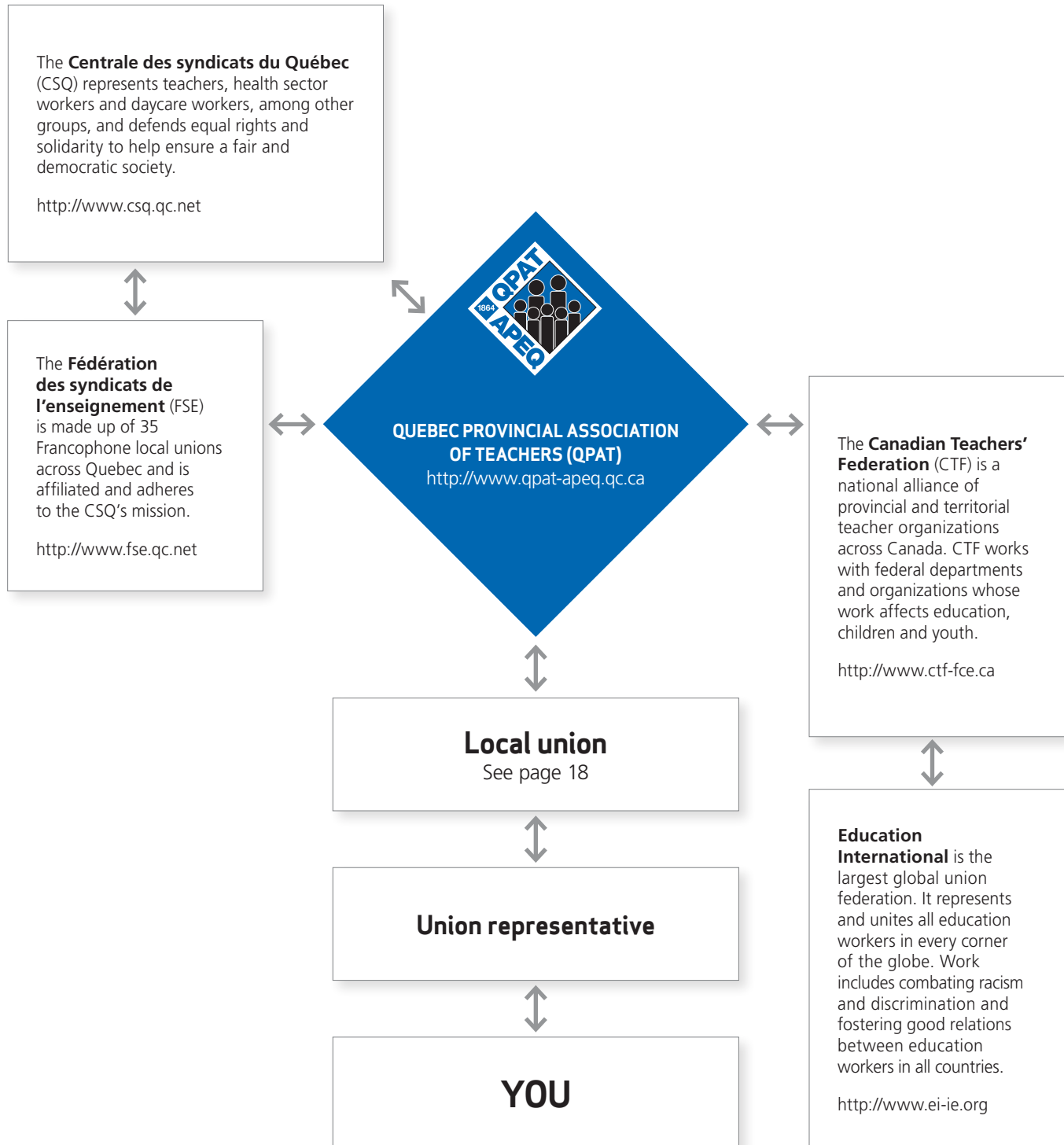
Once you are employed by a school board, you will automatically become a member of a local union. If you have any questions, this is the first place to call.

Your local union is one of ten local unions affiliated with QPAT, the provincial association. Every local union is represented at the QPAT Board of Directors and takes part in the decision-making process of provincial issues.

As a new teacher, how can you get involved with your union?

You are your union. Sharing your ideas and convictions is one of the best things you can do for yourself and for your union. In addition to this, there are several ways for new teachers to become involved in union life. A first step would be to speak to the union representative in your school. Some schools need more than one representative and therefore a position in your school may be available. Also, you can contact your local union and volunteer to join committees at either the local or provincial level. Examples of QPAT committees include the New Teachers' Committee and the Human Rights and Social Justice Committee.

It is also recommended to attend workshops or meetings given by the union to ensure that you are aware of all current and important information regarding your profession. Other places to become involved are your school council and the school's governing board.



Teachers' Rights

Your Contract

Teachers can be granted different kinds of contracts:

Full-time contract: The contract that leads to tenure is a full-time contract, and a teacher in this position is considered on tenure track. These contracts are renewed automatically.

Part-time contract: The part-time contract is granted to teachers who are working part of the week and/or part of the school year.

Replacement contract: This contract is for the replacement of another teacher, perhaps due to a parental leave or other leave.

A teacher can also be a **casual supply teacher**. This is when a teacher works as a replacement for another teacher without having a contract.

There are other types of employment opportunities for teachers entering the profession. For additional information regarding the different types of teachers and contracts, as well as how the recall list works in your school board, please contact your local union. Note that it is advisable to check with your local union before signing your contract because contracts are binding.

Workload

The specifications regarding a teacher's workload are stipulated in chapter 8 of the provincial collective agreement which includes teaching, supervision, and time given to attend meetings for all teachers in our system. The workload varies depending on several factors such as the sector you are teaching in, and the percentage of your contract. Contact your local union for any clarifications regarding your workload.

Seniority and Recognized Experience

These two are often confused but are different concepts.

Seniority is the period of employment under contract that a teacher has had with the school board.

Experience (i.e., your total teaching experience) serves for salary purposes. The amount a teacher is paid is based upon where a teacher falls on the salary scale.

Your education will be evaluated and expressed in terms of years of schooling (**scolarity**). This, along with teaching experience, will determine your place on the salary scale.

Step	As of the 141st workday of the 2011-2012 school year	As of the 141st workday of the 2012-2013 school year
1	\$37,298	\$37,951
2	\$38,884	\$39,564
3	\$40,537	\$41,246
4	\$42,259	\$42,999
5	\$44,057	\$44,828
6	\$45,930	\$46,734
7	\$47,882	\$48,720
8	\$49,918	\$50,792
9	\$52,040	\$52,951
10	\$54,252	\$55,201
11	\$56,559	\$57,549
12	\$58,964	\$59,996
13	\$61,470	\$62,546
14	\$64,082	\$65,203
15	\$66,806	\$67,975
16	\$69,647	\$70,866
17	\$72,608	\$73,879

*For an updated version of the salary scale, visit the QPAT website.

A teacher shall be placed at a step based on his or her experience. That placement will be increased by:

- two steps if schooling is evaluated at 17 years or less;
- four steps if schooling is evaluated at 18 years;
- six steps if schooling is evaluated at 19 years or more.

How is your salary calculated and what are those deductions?

A teacher receives 26 pays extended over the summer months if under a full-time contract (contract that is automatically renewed). However, if the contract is a part-time contract (one which ends), the amount that would have been paid over the summer will be paid in one lump sum when the contract comes to an end.

	Deductions
26 pay periods	RREGOP (Pension)
	QPP (Pension)
	QPIP (Parental Insurance)
	EI (Employment Insurance)
	Union Dues
	Insurance (Industrial Alliance): Health, Life, Dental (EMSB only), Long-term disability
	Provincial Income Tax
	Federal Income Tax

It is your responsibility to provide your school board with all documents attesting to your previous experience and your level of schooling; this includes official transcripts. By doing this, you will ensure that you are being paid the correct salary.

Teacher Certification

There are many ways to be legally qualified. The most common way is to have been a recent graduate from a four-year education program in Quebec. Any such recent graduate is given permanent qualification.

Other people may go through a period of probation in order for certification to become permanent.

A number of other legal qualifications exist (temporary permits, provisional teaching authorisations). If you are unsure of your situation, it is highly recommended that you contact your local union or QPAT. More information can also be found on page 17.

Illness

As teachers, you have good coverage when it comes to illness, particularly when it comes to long-term illness.

The collective agreement provides teachers with six days every school year to cover illnesses. The unused days (minus one day) are put into a bank at the end of every school year and become moneyable upon retirement or resignation, at the salary rate applicable at that time.

By virtue of the collective agreement, any teacher who signs a *new* full-time contract has those six days (referred to above) and, in addition, has six non-moneyable days. These non-moneyable days are banked for later use when the total of all moneyable days has been used. Teachers with part-time contracts are given the appropriate proportion of the six moneyable and six non-moneyable days. In the case of a part-time contract, the moneyable days that have not been used are paid to the teacher at the end of the contract or year.

Short-term illness (first five days)

The first five days of any illness are paid at 100% of salary and are taken from the teacher's bank of sick days; if the bank is empty, these days are taken at the teacher's expense.

Long-term illness (next two years)

After the first five days of an illness, the employer pays 75% of salary for the first year, and 66⅔% of salary for the second year that the illness continues.

Long-term disability (more than two years)

Illness that extends beyond two years is covered by the QPAT long-term disability plan, depending on certain criteria; every full-time contract teacher is automatically enrolled in this plan.

For more information, please contact your union representative or local union.

Special Leaves

There are different possible special leaves, e.g., death in the family, marriage, etc. Consult your local union for more information as the conditions are different in each school board.

Parental Rights

For information pertaining to parental rights and the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP), please refer to the booklet prepared by QPAT entitled *My Parental Rights and the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan*, available from the QPAT office, on the QPAT website and from your local union.

Insurance

You will automatically be enrolled for individual health insurance and long-term disability. You may be exempted from paying health insurance premiums if you are covered elsewhere (i.e., with your spouse).

You may add spousal, single-parent or family health insurance, but long-term disability applies only to you. Optional life insurance and accidental death and dismemberment insurance are also available.

For more information on your insurance plan, contact your school board. If you would like information regarding a claim, contact Industrial Alliance (<http://www.inalco.com> or at 514-499-3800 or 800-363-3540). If you have a problem, contact your local union or refer to the QPAT website.

Pension

All public sector workers contribute to the *Régime de retraite des employés du gouvernement et des organismes publics* (RREGOP). In addition, contributions are made to the Quebec Pension Plan (QPP). These two plans are combined to provide a total pension benefit of 2% for each year of service. A non-reduced pension, based on your years of contribution to the plan, may be collected as of age 60 or after 35 years of eligible service. A reduced pension, based on your years of contributions, minus a penalty, may be collected as of age 55.

For more information regarding your pension plan, contact the *Commission administrative des régimes de retraite et d'assurances* (CARRA) at 800-463-5533 or through its website (<http://www.carra.gouv.qc.ca>). Any problems should be referred to your local union or QPAT. In addition, QPAT can be of assistance by providing copies of CARRA publications, upon request.

Getting Started

Starting Out

Starting your teaching career is an amazing time; however, it is also a very busy time. In your first few years, you will continually discover who you are as a teacher, as a member of your school community, and the role you play in your union.

Know Your Curriculum

One of the best things you can do is know your curriculum inside out. Teaching is your number one priority. Planning is the key to successful classroom management. You will need to plan for both the content and behavioural aspects of your students' learning. With thoughtful planning in place, you will be more confident in providing quality learning experiences for your students.

Many experienced teachers remember their initial experience in the classroom as a time of survival. It can generally take some time to bridge the gap between being a student to teaching students. If you are a teacher from elsewhere, you must adapt to the different reality of teaching in a different place with a different way of doing things. In fact, every school has its own culture, and to find your place within that culture may take some time. Check with your school or local union if there is a mentoring program in place from which you could benefit.

The good news is that after a while, you will likely have some positive experiences among the challenges you initially faced. Experience is truly a great teacher. At this time, you can evaluate what worked and how you can use that to help create more positive learning experiences for you and your students.

If possible, try to seek out peers who are perhaps going through the same challenges you are facing in order to support each other. Often an experienced teacher can provide the educational support you may be lacking, such as tools for teaching or ideas for lessons. Other colleagues may be of assistance to you simply for much needed moral support. Colleagues are also one of the best sources of information regarding how the school functions, where to find school resources, and about school life in general. In short, do not hesitate to ask for help. Seek help immediately if a situation that is out of the ordinary arises. Deal with it from the start so that it does not escalate.

In addition, many local unions organize new teacher workshops at the start of the year; some are even given on-line for teachers who are teaching and living in more remote areas. Contact your local union for more information.

The QPAT publication *Liaison*, regularly profiles a new teacher. Read about these teachers and their experiences. Also, if you wish to be profiled in a future edition of the *Liaison*, please contact QPAT.

In the Classroom

You may find that the reality of teaching is different from how you had imagined it. Many factors impact that reality including the students in your class and the courses you teach.

Useful and Important Information for New Teachers

- Your union representative and your local union;
- Your teaching and supervision schedule with dismissal times, recesses and breaks;
- A list of staff members and assignments;
- The name and telephone number of your colleagues who are willing to be of assistance;
- School discipline policy;
- School mission statement or philosophy;
- The location of supplies, photocopier, computers, and telephones;

- A school calendar, with dates indicated for report cards, parent-teacher interviews, pedagogical days, and holidays;
- The location of student records (i.e., contact telephone numbers and medical information);
- The names and job descriptions of all professional support staff, such as school psychologists, speech pathologists, etc.;
- Access to keys you will need for rooms you will be teaching in;
- Workshops that have been set up for new teachers by your local union, a mentoring program in your school, etc.

Meeting Your Students

First impressions are important. Be prepared and be deliberate in your planning so that the first impression you make is a positive one.

Organizing Your Classroom

To help ensure a successful learning environment, make sure that you have prepared anything that you will need beforehand and that you have properly thought out the logistics of the space the students will be working in.

For Your Consideration

- Establishing routines with your students;
- Distributing materials;
- Recording absences;
- Dealing with tardiness;
- Setting up procedures on how to leave the classroom as a group;
- Discussing expectations regarding students' work;
- Communicating with parents;
- Creating a file with some "emergency lessons" that can be used when a planned lesson runs a little short or if you are absent;
- Considering becoming involved in extra-curricular activities. Not only are they fun, they can help you see your students in a different light. Remember to keep a balance between teaching responsibilities and extra-curricular activities. Your main responsibility is teaching. Do not overextend yourself;
- Using caution when considering photographing and videotaping students. Find out what kind of permission forms must be sent out to parents beforehand;
- Surprising parents (and students!) with a telephone call home sharing some good news such as something remarkable a student did that day;
- Keeping yourself informed by staying in contact with the governing board representative and the school council representative and by reading the school council minutes.

Handling Student Confidences

Should you have any suspicion of a possible danger to a student (suicide, abuse or neglect), you have an obligation to report that suspicion to an appropriate authority. This may involve a judgment call and it may be wise to seek advice from your principal, a colleague or your local union about what procedures to follow.

Substitution

You may be starting your professional career by doing substitution work. The main challenge when substituting consists of having to very quickly adapt to a new working environment on a regular basis. Despite this, it is often a very effective way of making contacts for future teaching opportunities. Before leaving at the end of the day, make sure you stop by the main office to sign any paperwork required to ensure that you are paid. Here's a tip: ask if the school is in need of any substitute teachers for the next day. You may just be at the right place at the right time!

Don't forget that you have certain rights and responsibilities as a teacher, whether you are doing substitution work or whether you are on contract. For more information, contact your local union.

Professionalism and Communication

As an educator, you have a responsibility to consider the ways in which you lead your public life, as it may impact your professional life. As teachers in the age of technology, it is especially important to consider and care for one's on-line presence. On-line representation, both in pictures and words, should be carefully controlled.

In order to maintain a professional image, it may be wise to use an e-mail address other than a personal one in communications with parents, students or other members of the school community. Consider keeping a record of important communications, including those that are electronic. Be aware that nothing is truly private when you use digital communication.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (<http://www.ctf-fce.ca>) has developed the booklet entitled *Cybertips for Teachers* which provides guidelines for professional behaviour.

Discipline

This may be the biggest challenge you will face in your career. If you have any discipline problems, seek help as soon as the problem has been identified. It is also a good idea to document any incidents including date, location, and details of events for future reference.

Communicating with Parents

When it comes to meeting with parents, it is important to be prepared. These meetings can be a great opportunity to find out more about your students and to share some vital information with parents about their children. Depending on the meeting, here are some tips:

- Prepare documents you may need for the meeting, such as examples of the student's work;
- Begin with something positive;
- Ask a colleague or an administrator to join you if, for whatever reason, you do not feel comfortable meeting with parents on your own;
- Be prepared to discuss the criteria for student evaluation;
- Keep the focus of the meeting on the student and not on the parent, guardian or other students in the class;
- Give parents the chance to express themselves;
- Develop an action plan to address any concerns, and be sure to indicate time frames;
- Invite parents to meet with you in the near future if a follow-up is needed;
- Thank the parents, guardians and students for taking the time to meet with you;
- Remind parents of the best way to contact you;
- Document any details which may be helpful in the future;
- Follow up on the areas that have been brought to your attention.

Wellness

If you have taken the time to take care of yourself, you will then be more equipped to help others who need you.

Here are some suggestions for maintaining your own well-being:

- Meet with your colleagues to share some ideas for the classroom;
- As previously mentioned in the handbook, consider finding a mentor or someone that you trust to talk about any challenges you may be facing;
- Be patient with yourself;
- Foster a positive relationship with your students;
- Be aware of the successes that you will encounter;
- Accept that your initial expectations and what you are actually able to do may not be one and the same;
- Strike a balance between your personal and your professional life;
- Realize that there may be students in your classroom with so many personal and home-related problems that no matter how well your lessons are planned or what you do, they will continue to challenge you. Try not to take this personally;
- Be realistic about what you are able and willing to commit to.

Resources for Teachers

Professional Development

There is a professional improvement committee (PIC) in your school board which is established by virtue of the collective agreement. How it functions varies greatly. Ask your union representative for information on how your PIC operates.

Employee Assistance Program

Most school boards offer an employee assistance program. This program provides a variety of services, such as counseling and psychological services. The services are free of charge (within limits) and confidential. For the Employee Assistance Program telephone number, please contact your local union.

Your School Board

Inform yourself about the resources available in your school board and see if they could be of benefit to you.

Your Local Union

Your local union is a source of support and information. Find out who your union representative is and what services are available through your local union. Read newsletters and other union material to find out how you can take part in your professional organization.

Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers

QPAT exists to support and protect you when facing a variety of challenges. Initially, you are encouraged to contact your local union which may then consult QPAT, if need be. If necessary, you can contact QPAT at 514-694-9777 or 800-361-9870; you can also obtain additional information through the QPAT website at <http://www.qpat-apeq.qc.ca>.

Legally Qualified Teachers from Other Canadian Provinces (Agreement on Internal Trade/AIT)

How to Obtain a Teaching Diploma (brevet) or Québec Teaching Permit

A teaching permit rather than a teaching diploma may, where appropriate, be granted if the teaching diploma issued elsewhere in Canada is subject to conditions and/or if the studies were completed outside Canada.

If **studies** were completed outside Canada, a certified copy of the *Comparative Evaluation for Studies Done Outside Québec* (*Évaluation comparative des études effectuées hors du Québec*) issued by the *ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles du Québec* must **first** be submitted to the MELS, as well as documents proving the right to residence.

<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dftps/>

Toll free: 1-866-747-6626

Checklist for Required Documents

1. Declaration Concerning a Judicial Record ☐
2. Application for a Québec Teaching Permit ☐
3. Certified copy (use photocopy of original document) of the document authorizing you to teach in a Canadian province or territory..... ☐
4. Letter attesting that your authorization to teach has not been revoked, suspended or withdrawn, or if it is subject to any conditions. The *Letter of Good Standing* must be dated **less than three months** prior to the current date and must be sent to the MELS directly from the organization responsible..... ☐
5. Certified copy (use photocopy of original document) of each of the degrees supporting the request for authorization..... ☐
6. Original or certified copies of transcripts related to your degrees (no internet transcripts permitted)..... ☐
7. Certified copy (use photocopy of the original document) of your birth certificate or valid passport, and marriage certificate for women using their spouse's family name..... ☐

It is **your responsibility** to gather all the documents mentioned above as quickly as possible. The MELS will analyze the file **only if it has received all the required documents**.

Information regarding the language test will follow. The teaching diploma (brevet) or permit is issued within 60 days after successfully passing the language test.

Local Union Directory

Appalachian Teachers' Association (ATA)

ataunion@hotmail.com
http://www.ataunion.org

155 Principale Ouest, Suite 104
Magog (Quebec) J1X 2A7

Tel: 819-843-2630 Fax: 819-843-6297
Tel: 855-443-2630 Fax: 855-443-6297

Central Quebec Teachers' Association (CQTA)

secq-cqta@videotron.ca
http://www.cqta.qc.ca

P.O. Box 2022
Jonquière (Quebec) G7X 7X6

Tel: 418-344-4555 Fax: 888-240-5590
Tel: 877-543-6082 Fax: 877-542-5916

Châteauguay Valley Teachers' Association (CVTA)

cvta@qc.aibn.com

749 Saint-Jean-Baptiste Boulevard
Sainte-Martine (Quebec) J0S 1V0

Tel: 450-289-1050 Fax: 800-298-0690

Eastern Shores Teachers' Association (ESTA)

esta@globetrotter.net
http://www.esteachers.org

155 Mgr. Ross West, Suite 144
Chandler (Quebec) G0C 1K0

Tel: 418-680-0001 Fax: 800-517-3024
Tel: 888-584-0001

Laurier Teachers' Union (LTU)

laurierteachersunion@ltu.ca
http://www.ltu.ca

2292 Industrial Boulevard, Suite 210
Laval (Quebec) H7S 1P9

Tel: 450-667-7037 Fax: 450-667-9506
Tel: 800-301-1351

Lower North Shore English Teachers' Association (LNSETA)

lnseta@globetrotter.net

P.O. Box 59
Chevery (Quebec) G0G 1G0

Tel: 418-787-2000 Fax: 418-787-2000

Montreal Teachers' Association (MTA)

mta@mta-aeem.com
http://www.mta-aeem.com

4260 Girouard Avenue, Suite 200
Montreal (Quebec) H4A 3C9

Tel: 514-487-4580 Fax: 514-487-1678

Pearson Teachers' Union (PTU)

ptusep@bellnet.ca
http://www.pearsonteachersunion.com

17035 Brunswick Boulevard, Suite 2
Kirkland (Quebec) H9H 5G6

Tel: 514-426-4949 Fax: 514-426-4952

Riverside Teachers' Union (RTU)

rtu-ser@rtu-ser.ca
http://www.rtu-ser.ca

10 Churchill Boulevard, Suite 201
Greenfield Park (Quebec) J4V 2L5

Tel: 450-465-2523 Fax: 450-465-8384

Western Quebec Teachers' Association (WQTA)

wqta-aeoq@videotron.ca
http://www.wqta-aeoq.ca

50 Noel Street, Suite 4
Gatineau (Quebec) J8Z 2M4

Tel: 819-777-1475 Fax: 819-777-0016

For any additional information regarding QPAT, please contact:

Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers

http://www.qpat-apeq.qc.ca

17035 Brunswick Boulevard, Suite 1
Kirkland (Quebec) H9H 5G6

Tel: 514-694-9777 Fax: 514-694-0189
Tel: 800-361-9870