

THE QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME & SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

A POSITION PAPER

ON

MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

TO

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PROVINCE OF QUEBEC

MONTREAL, OCTOBER 1974

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations

welcomes the opportunity to express its concerns on the subject of Measurement and Evaluation. It is pleased that the Department of Education desires to assume a greater role in facilitating communication among "the various members of the educational community" as well as providing them with services to aid them in their individual responsibilities.

We propose to comment briefly on the propositions advanced by the department and then to make our statement of general concern. All comments are made in the light of our conviction already stated in our brief on cumulative records "that the welfare and progress of children in the school system is paramount and that all regulations and procedures must be of benefit to the children". Measurement and Evaluation cannot be implemented as a distinct speciality but must be integrated with a pedagogical concept embracing all aspects of education. It must constantly be judged by its effectiveness as a SERVICE to the child.

FROM COMMENTS

Document for Consultation Of these four objectives, No. 4

Objectives and Policies of the Department of Education in Measurement and Evaluation for Students at the Elementary and Secondary Levels is the most important and dynamic with emphasis on facilitating pedagogical action rather than on labelling and data collecting. No. 3 follows in importance, also implying follow-up action. When

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Measurement and Evaluation have as their objectives:

1) To furnish indications of the abilities, interests, and general development of students; use of Measurement and Evaluation as a step towards remedial action. No. 2 indicating administrative needs, though necessary, is of lesser priority and we would not include general development in this, not accepting that data in this area be routinely and uniformly collected for administrative purposes. As for No. 1, it is doubtful to what extent the

2) To provide data regarding the scholastic achievement and the general development of students;

3) To assist in diagnosing individual or group learning difficulties or problems in students' general development;

4) To provide data which will enable pedagogical activity to be properly directed and to

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give a good idea of the quality of students' training.

general development of students can be usefully recorded and interpreted. In the school context these indications remain contingent to the effective direction of pedagogical activity.

(No. 4)

These objectives pertain to the quality of learning only. The quality and efficacy of programs offered must also be evaluated and the two in practice closely integrated.

The principle objectives of the Department of Education for the elementary and secondary school levels ought to be the following:

A) To promote the application of recognized principles in measurement and evaluation;

These are key functions of the department; research directed toward improving the process of

B) To establish a general policy in measurement and

measurement and evaluation, pedagogical days in measurement

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evaluation for all students at the elementary and secondary levels;

C) To ensure that the various educational agents (parents, teachers, administrators, students) are informed as to measurement and evaluation.

and evaluation for both administrators and teachers financed by the department, information guides and technical aid particularly with the purpose of facilitating the teachers' use of formative measurement and evaluation are all valid services.

The parent has been the neglected partner in the educational process and, especially in the realm of measurement and evaluation, mistrusted for fear of his misinterpreting and misusing information. Only in the phase of school reporting has he been recognized, but in a passive role. With increasing emphasis upon formative, continuous and comprehensive measurement and evaluation he has not only the right to know results but also an

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active role to assume. A much greater effort must be made to inform him and engage his collaboration.

D) To foster the use of valid measurement and evaluation instruments

Valid instruments should be available where and when required to meet specific student needs as determined by informed personnel. Any standardized tests used must be proven first over a number of years and applied only gradually. Recognition must be given to valid instruments already used on the regional level. The department may offer a variety of sound instruments along with aids to promote their correct use and interpretation but regions should be encouraged to define their own needs and use only those tests they require.

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E) To make certain evaluations of the general quality of learning;

The Department could most usefully evaluate the quality of learning by region on a sampling basis while allowing the regional and local levels to evaluate their individual students. Provincial scholastic achievement tests in which students remain anonymous but schools are coded might enable schools to compare their performance at different levels.

F) To assist school organizations in evaluating the quality of learning of their students.

This may be done by the provision of services. Since these are general objectives, mention should be made of assisting school organizations in evaluating the quality of their own services as well to determine areas requiring improvement.

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General policy in Measurement and Evaluation for elementary and secondary level students:

Considering that:

A) All measurement of a student's general development and school achievement is relative and indirect;

This consideration should be central and situate measurement and evaluation in a larger pedagogical context.

B) Measurement is limited to those areas which can be measured by valid means;

"Valid means" must not be synonymous with mechanically corrected means. Clear thought process, oral and written expression and creative ability must not be ignored simply because they elude charting and mechanical correction. A great flexibility in types of measurement and evaluation must be encouraged.

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C) Measurement is conditioned by the fields which must be necessity be measured in order to make an intelligent evaluation;

Choice of instruments are best made at levels closest to the child. Greatest caution must be used in attempting measurement and evaluation of physical, intellectual, social and emotional dimensions to avoid detrimental results to the child. The type of instrument also conditions "what" is actually measured and must be interpreted with great care.

D) Evaluation of school achievement or of general development is more valid when the results of as many repeated and diversified measurements as possible are taken into account;

FREQUENCY CANNOT MAKE UP FOR LACK OF RELEVANCE TO THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF PUPILS AND EXTERNAL IMPOSITION MAY HINDER AND TEND TO DIRECT PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITY. IF RESULTS BECOME TOO COMPLEX TO BE MANAGEABLE OR ARE TOO DELAYED THEN THEY ARE OF

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NEGATIVE VALUE.

Repeated and diversified measurement need not imply only formal encoded means but must include continuous informal assessment based on direct teacher-student interaction.

E) For purposes of grouping, promotion or certification, more equitable results are afforded when equivalent norms and criteria are used for the entire population involved;

Grouping students is generally temporary with formative intent and need not be standardized or recorded in order that it remain as flexible as possible. On the other hand, certification should be based upon equivalent criteria throughout the Province.

Therefore:

FORMATIVE MEASURE SHOULD BE PREFERRED, THOUGH THE

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VALUE OF SUMMATIVE MEASUREMENT SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED.

This policy will promote individual learning and continuous progress if it means encouraging teachers and schools to develop their own program for evaluating the progress of their students as well as assisting them in cooperation with the Department's program service to promote formative measurement.

CONTINUED AND COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION SHOULD BE PREFERRED WHILE CONTINUING TO RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF EVALUATION AT A SPECIFIC POINT.

We wish here to restate our concern about normative evaluation of general development.

FORMATIVE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION ARE THE IMMEDIATE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL ORGAN-

These three considerations do not form a useful policy in that they oppose formative and summative measurement without

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IZATIONS; THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S DIRECT INVOLVEMENT LIES PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA OF SUMMATIVE MEASUREMENT.	defining how these may interact at the levels of the school-room, the board and the department. The efficacy of any policy in measurement and evaluation rests on its application in the classroom where every means must be put at the teacher's disposal to facilitate his task. THE PRESENT STUDENT-TEACHER RATIOS, CREATING LARGE CLASSES, ARE ONE FACTOR WORKING AGAINST THIS.

INSTRUMENTS OF MEASURE:

1) THE EXAMINATION

The department's examples of computerized exams and the presence of computers at the regional level have encouraged the use of the multiple-choice exam format to the detriment of free-response and essay-type exams which demand clear exposition and creative thinking. Objectively scorable exams offer administrative convenience but we believe that the

examiner in continuous evaluation is also important in developing the child's ability to cope with varying judgements of his work.

In regional and departmental exams errors in computerized scoring often leave the scores open to question. The complex components required to make up a normalized mark minimize the significance of this mark to the child who feels he has not received credit for his year's work, and often results in a complete apathy towards the system.

2) THE TEST

WE QUESTION THE WISDOM AND DESIRABILITY OF THE PROVINCIAL-WIDE TESTING PROGRAM ENVISAGED BY THE DEPARTMENT, WHETHER THE BENEFITS OF THIS PROGRAM WOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO WARRANT THE COST AND TIME INVOLVED. Many students react in one of two possible ways to frequent testing: either they become "test wise", learning what to look for in tests and how to detect the right answers almost intuitively, or they become so bored with the process that they choose to make attractive patterns with the black marks on answer sheets rather than concentrating on finding

and marking the correct answer. In either case the results of the test will be invalid. A flourishing market exists for books of typical tests and answers at the grade 11 level and similar student "aids" may be expected at other levels. Teachers too may be inclined to adapt their teaching to the forms of testing so that emphasis will be placed on rapid arrival at answer rather than on logical thought processes.

STANDARDIZED TESTING SHOULD BE KEPT TO A MANAGEABLE MINIMUM. There must be a knowledgeable school-board person to ensure the correct application of tests and interpretation of results by school professionals with a view to improving the quality of instruction for the individual student. The welfare of the student must be the prime reason for testing, statistical analysis only secondary. The boards should encourage corrective action using test results on a continuing basis but THE DEPARTMENT MUST PROVIDE REMEDIAL TEACHERS AND ESTABLISH A LOWER PUPIL-TEACHER RATIO OUTSIDE THE NORMS TO HANDLE THE FOLLOW-UP WORK NECESSARY. Parents should be informed when tests are used of their objectives and results. These should be kept for short term only. If immediate action

cannot be taken on them then they are a waste of time.

Mental Ability Testing: should be applied individually by the board if at all. Although the Department stresses that results of these tests be interpreted only as they relate to other factors, in practice they are all too often used to definitely label the child. Any results should be strictly short term.

Physical Testing: We would prefer that instructors be trained to recognize cases requiring referral to a specialist, that he assess individual differences informally in order to encourage each to engage in activities best suited to his needs.

Aptitude Tests: should be carried out by the regions at secondary level but it is imperative that results be relayed to student and parent for effective orientation.

3) THE OBSERVATION FORM

This is not an instrument of measurement and we doubt if satisfactory evaluation can or should be made by normative measure. It imposes another clerical task upon the teacher whereas time is better spent with the student than with a form describing him. More constructive would be frequent teacher

meetings with parent and child together. No written observations should be kept beyond the school year. The only exception might be some notation of salient positive traits at the end of secondary in order to accord recognition of strong non-academic qualities.

4) THE RATING FORM FOR PRACTICAL WORK

Standardized measurement criteria are difficult to predetermine due to the diversity in this area: vocational training, art work, musical or physical performance, and teachers are not trained in evaluating the results. Of greater benefit to the student would be evaluation by a third party knowledgeable in the field, involving discussion with the student about the process as well as the end results of his effort. Such a dialogue would sharpen the student's understanding of the goals of his activity and encourage a more realistic self-evaluation.

Voluntary student activities should never be marked.

INSTRUMENTS OF EVALUATION:

1) THE SCHOOL REPORT

The reporting system should reflect the needs of the students and families in each region. We support the idea that the Department school reports not be compulsory. The proposed form for elementary level is incomprehensible to the student and the letter rating not necessarily objective as it is interpreted and applied differently, for example by the teacher who does not believe in giving "A"s. At elementary level emphasis should be given to criterion reference evaluation, informing parents of objectives and methods employed as well making use of some anecdotal reporting to facilitate a parents more active cooperation.

2) THE PROGRESS REPORT

An effective tool to promote individual learning if flexible enough to allow for variation in content and if results are clearly criterion referenced.

3) STUDENT'S SELF-APPRAISAL FORM

Self-evaluation must be integrated in the learning process and students taught progressively to set their personal criteria for evaluating their performance in order to free themselves from total reliance upon the judgment of others.

The proposed form is fallacious in that it obliges the student to adopt the arbitrary abstraction of rating scale, encouraging self-appraisal by comparison with others under exterior norms rather than progressively personal criteria. Teachers should be trained to encourage a continuous, positive and realistic self-evaluation but this must be kept out of any written record.

4) CUMULATIVE SCHOOL RECORD

If this is to include global evaluation even on a temporary basis, it will be necessary to state clearly its relation to the personal file referred to in Articles 18 and 45 of

Resolution 7. Notations of physical or mental development, especially if these denote exception, should not be artificially separated from health and professional files.

How is a liaison to be effected between government departments to avoid duplication or oversight and facilitate effective action?

Parents must have access to all information as well as the right to request revision or deletion. No use must be made of data for non-educational purposes and when used for research, anonymity be assured. Only final results of elementary and secondary levels should be retained permanently.

5) THE STATEMENT OF MARKS

There should be a greater use of the school mark based on class tests, assignments and class work. Every effort must be made to guarantee that final marks will be available by August 1st which is the date set by most colleges, especially those outside the province. Because of language translations, typographical mistakes and general carelessness, costly errors occur each year in the examination system. THE STUDENT MUST FEEL CONFIDENT THAT HE HAS BEEN FAIRLY TREATED AND MUST NOT BE HURT BY THE SYSTEM.

6) THE CERTIFICATION OF COMPLETION OF SECONDARY STUDIES

More authority should be given the regional boards for certification of students and final decisions of success/failure left to the board's discretion in borderline cases.

Certification based on all courses taken throughout

secondary school might increase rigidity in program content and discourage creative innovation while reducing teaching to a factual level, an effect aggravated by Department intervention with exams of uniform content.

Whatever system is developed must encourage greater initiative on the part of teachers, greater motivation on the part of students and a fairer and better overall assessment of accomplishment. It must be perfected beyond all doubt and introduced gradually.

Allowance should be made for the student having difficulty with the second language. After two or three sittings of the final exam he should be granted the certificate with a statement of condition.

7) THE ROLE OF SCHOOL BOARDS

The critical inventory of educational measurement instruments (ICIME), as well as the institutional self-evaluation system should help school-boards assume their responsibilities in what we believe should be a decentralized system of measurement and evaluation. We agree that the

following responsibilities, as outlined in the document for consultation, should be given the boards: developing a local policy of measurement and evaluation, informing the professional teaching and non-teaching personnel, students and parents of these objectives and policies, preparing a policy for promotion and grouping of students, implementing and maintaining the cumulative school records, coordinating the administration of exams and tests, ensuring a system of school reports, issuing attestations of studies and applying a system of self evaluation.

This latter responsibility relates closely to a resolution made by QFHSA recommending "that the Department of Education cease to set high school leaving examinations, that school boards able to meet criteria for accreditation, which should be established in conjunction with the Department of Education, be permitted to design and apply high-school leaving examinations, or any alternate means of measuring student performance which may be judged to be pedagogically acceptable, to process the results of these and to report these results directly to their students and to the Department of Education".

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) That a decentralized system of measurement and evaluation be created in which boards set their criteria in cooperation with the department, receive accreditation for the purpose of setting their own high school leaving exams, and select and administer their own testing program.
- 2) That teachers receive training in formative measurement and continuous evaluation and that their own initiatives in this area be facilitated.
- 3) THAT A MORE REASONABLE STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO BE ACHIEVED GLOBALLY BEFORE ANY MORE FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE ALLOCATED TO MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION AND RECORDING OF RESULTS.
- 4) That all testing programs be accompanied by a follow-through program in order that results be of maximum benefit to the child.
- 5) That the objectives and results of all tests be explained to students and/or parents, and when necessary, a qualified professional financed by the department be provided for consultation with both in order to prepare remedial action.

6) That all information kept on a child be the property of the student/parent and be ensured appropriate confidentiality with adequate provision for revision or deletion.

In conclusion, while we welcome a rational study and implementation of sound measurement and evaluation practices at all levels, we wish a system so flexible and functional that regulations and directives do not hinder the board, the school or the teacher in meeting the needs of their pupils and experimenting new approaches. Testing and recording in uniform manner on a provincial scale can only result in a proliferation of data which would be difficult to use effectively.

The Department's most urgent role is to provide needed services, coordinate effort and facilitate cooperation at all levels.