



QUEBEC PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS

PRACTICAL GUIDE

L'ASSOCIATION PROVINCIALE DES ENSEIGNANTES ET ENSEIGNANTS DU QUÉBEC



**What you need to know
about governing boards**

Introduction

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

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

The Education Act specifies that the number of positions for representatives of staff must be equal to the number of the positions for parents (Art. 44).

However, it 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).



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

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 staff members, 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.)

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

- Assuring collaboration among the different categories of personnel in the school, for example, through a prior meeting or phone call, 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 organization.

As for parents, the parent participation organization (PPO) can communicate its views to parent representatives on the GB. 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 of the Education Act).



- The chairperson of the GB must be a parent member of the GB and not an employee of the school board. The person is elected by the voting members.
- The voting members are the representatives of the parents and the staff of the school. The non-voting members are the representatives of the students and the community.
- 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) of which half must be parents.
- The school administrator is not a member of the GB, but participates in the meetings.
- The decisions of the GB are by majority vote of voting members present. In the case of a tie, the chairperson has the casting vote (the chairperson may vote twice on the same motion).
This power should only be used in exceptional cases.
- The mandate of the parents is for 2 years, and the mandate for all other members is for 1 year.
- 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 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 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 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 at the end 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 at the end for examples).

“Developed 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 school staff.

The law stipulates that the procedures for collaboration are those established by the interested parties in general assembly

convened for this purpose by the principal or, failing that, those established by the principal (ART. 77, 89 of the Education Act). It is important to ensure that these procedures are clearly defined by all.

- 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 educational project, the school budget, the annual report of activities to be transmitted to the school board (ART. 74, 95, 82 of the Education Act) (see table at the end for examples).
- The school board must consult the GB prior to making a decision on certain matters (see table at the end for examples).
- 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.

- Certain pedagogical questions are of direct 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. 96.15 of the Education Act).
- The GB has no power to define needs or propose activities for teachers' professional improvement.
- The school administration is responsible for the application of decisions of the GB.

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.

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 taken with no possibility to reconsider the decision.

REQUEST:

to initiate consideration of a subject or to request information.

PROPOSE:

to submit an idea with a view to participating in its consideration.

DECIDE:

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 governing board agenda

The first question you should ask in considering agenda items for the GB is “Will discussion of 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 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 school council, the parents’ participation organization, the administration, or the school board. The GB is not the only place where matters affecting the school can be dealt with.

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 school 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 or decision).
- Draw up a calendar of items to be dealt with throughout the year and in the coming months.

3. 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 (preparation for responsible citizenship).
 - Provide qualifications (while enabling all students to undertake and achieve success in a course of study).

For more information...

Participate in meetings 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 schools in April 2000.

Contact your QPAT resource person or your local union. At all times, we can answer any questions you may have, forward pertinent information and meet with you in your school.

IF YOU NEED TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US:

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

Subject	Article of Education Act	Proposal	Role of GB	Timing
Time allocation for each subject	86	Admin. with teaching staff	Approves	January February
School budget	95	School admin.	Adopts	Spring
Educational project	74	GB	Adopts	Spring
Information on quality of services	83	GB	Decides	Spring
Rules of conduct	76	Admin. with staff	Approves	Spring
Implementation of student and special education services	88	Admin. with staff	Approves	Spring
Student supervision policy	75	Admin. with staff	Approves	Spring
Use of premises	93	Admin.	Approves	Any time
Procedures for implementing the basic regulation	84	Admin. with staff	Approves	Any time
Solicit or receive contributions	94	GB	Decides	Any time
Extra-curricular or extra-mural activities	87	Admin. with staff	Approves	Any time
Amendment or revocation of the deed of establishment of the school	79 sub (1)	-	Consulted by the school board	Winter
Various needs of the school in goods and services as well as needs related to premises or buildings	96.22	-	Consulted by the school board	Winter

Notes



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