



Development and evaluation of cross-curricular competencies: Where do we stand?

According to parents and students, schools have been teaching and evaluating cross-curricular competencies. In addition, many school administrators and education consultants agree that cross-curricular competencies play a role in helping students adjust to life in society.

These are the findings to come out of an assessment of data on the implementation of Education Reform (ER) at the secondary level collected as part of the ERES Project. More specifically, we analyzed the content of 1,616 progress reports of Secondary Two students exposed to ER, as well as the responses of 2,650 parents to a survey on their perceptions of the cross-curricular competencies taught at their children's schools, and those of 2,503 students to a survey on how teachers were giving them the opportunity to use these competencies. Furthermore, 360 school administrators and 204 education consultants shared their views on cross-curricular competencies in the Education Program. Details on the composition of the samples and the ERES questionnaires are available at this address: http://www.eres.fse.ulaval.ca/en/high_school/participants.

Evaluating cross-curricular competencies in the new Education Program

The Québec Education Program promotes the development of what is referred to as "cross-curricular competencies." These competencies "cut across subject boundaries" and entail "the capacity to act effectively by mobilizing a variety of resources."¹ They have been grouped in four categories:

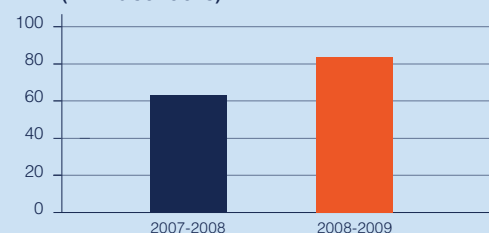
Categories	Cross-curricular competencies
Intellectual	Uses information Solves problems Exercises critical judgment Uses creativity
Methodological	Adopts effective work methods Uses information and communications technologies
Personal and social	Achieves his/her potential Cooperates with others
Communication	Communicates appropriately

The Program also adds that these competencies "should be used and worked on, first of all, in the subject-specific programs and in activities that are part of school life."² Cross-curricular competencies are integrated to subject-specific learning and their evaluation is based on a descriptive method in keeping with the *Basic school regulation*. This regulation stipulates that an assessment of cross-curriculum competencies should be conducted at the end of Secondary Cycle One. Each school's administration, following recommendations from its teachers, is responsible for selecting the competencies to be evaluated. This decision is then submitted to the governing board for consultation.

Where do we stand on the evaluation of these competencies in our schools?

Graph A indicates that many schools have engaged in the process of evaluating cross-curricular competencies and the number of schools doing so has increased over the last two years. In fact, an analysis of end-of-cycle progress reports sent to us by schools demonstrated that in 2007-2008, 192 of the 289 schools (66.4%) to respond had assessed at least one cross-curricular competency. In 2008-2009, that number stood at 183 out of 210 schools (87.1%).

Graph A
PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS THAT HAVE EVALUATED
AT LEAST ONE CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCY
IN 2007-2008 (N = 289 SCHOOLS) AND IN 2008-2009
(N = 210 SCHOOLS)



¹ Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (2007). *Québec Education Program. Secondary Cycle Two*.

Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, p. 1 http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/programmeFormation/seconaire2/medias/3-pfeq_chap3.pdf

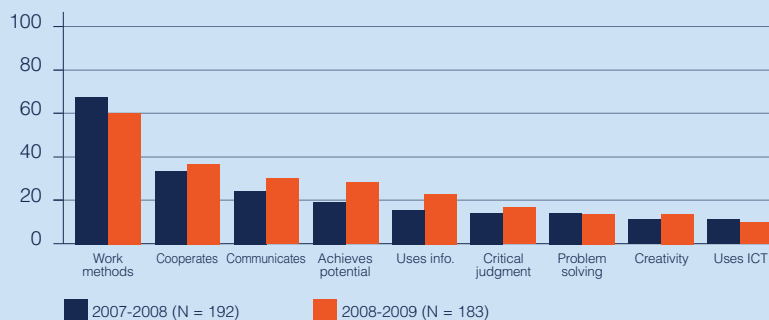
² Ibid., p. 2



It should also be noted that the number of competencies evaluated varies from one school to another. Among schools that assessed cross-curricular competencies in the 2007-2008 progress reports, 65.6% evaluated one competency, 13.5% evaluated two and 20.9%, three or more. In 2008-2009, 54.6% of schools that evaluated cross-curricular competencies assessed only one, 19.7% two and 25.7% more than three.

Given that the choice of cross-curricular competencies subjected to evaluation differs from one school to another, we conducted further analysis to identify the competencies most often assessed. Graph B presents results for each year under study. It shows that the competencies "adopts effective work methods," "cooperates with others," and "communicates appropriately" were most often evaluated by schools.

Graph B
PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS BASED ON THE TYPE
OF CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES EVALUATED



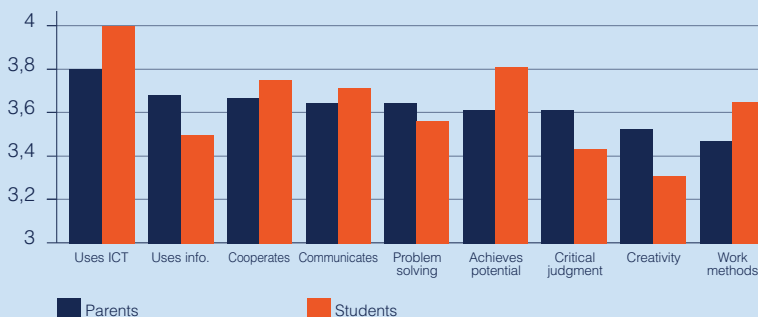
Which competencies are most often promoted according to students, parents and school officials?

According to students and parents, cross-curricular competencies are included in everyday life at school, but one is not promoted more than another. In fact, when surveyed, students were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed cross-curricular competencies had been required in performing their work. As for parents, they were asked to indicate the extent to which the school had enabled their children to develop the competencies in question³. Results showed that all the competencies were "sometimes" or "often" used according to students, with averages ranging from 3.3/5 (*uses creativity*) to 4/5 (*uses information and communications technologies*).

For their part, parents reported that schools enabled their children to "sometimes" to "often" develop their cross-curricular competencies, with averages varying from 3.5/5 for the competency "*adopts effective work methods*" to 3.8/5 for "*uses information and communications technologies*." Graph C illustrates the averages for each competency evaluated by students and their parents.

Finally, regarding school officials, 78.9% of school administrators and 89.3% of education consultants who participated in the study somewhat agree or totally agree with the statement "The application of an education program focused on the development of cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies enables students to effectively adapt to the requirements of today's society (by developing cross-curricular competencies)?"

Graph C
AVERAGE FROM PARENT AND STUDENT
EVALUATIONS ON A 5-POINT SCALE



In summary, it would seem that schools are providing young people with the opportunity to develop cross-curricular competencies, as reported by students and parents, even if these competencies are not systematically evaluated through formal means. In addition, leading educators believe that cross-curricular competencies play a role in helping young people adjust to today's world.

³ Five-point scales were used for the 18 items pertaining to cross-curricular competencies in the surveys administered to students and parents, where 5 meant always or very strongly and 1 never or not at all.



UNIVERSITÉ
LAVAL

Pavillon des Sciences de l'éducation
Bureau 956
Québec (Québec) G1K 7P4
CANADA

Faculté des sciences de l'éducation
Département d'études sur l'enseignement et l'apprentissage

Éducation,
Loisir et Sport

Québec

