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# RTU-SER Newsletter

## • BEING DOCKED FOR GIVING WORKSHOPS?

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According to a **new school board guideline** issued on September 30, 2009, any teacher who is asked to give a workshop on a pedagogical day is required to donate his/her salary to the school board. In fact, any **teacher who gives a workshop on a pedagogical day will be considered to be on unpaid leave** that day. We are unsure of the reason for this guideline, as we were not asked to take part in the consultation process. We therefore recommend that you decline any request to give workshops if it entails a loss of pay. Note that we are maintaining a dialogue with the school board on this issue.

## • NEGOTIATIONS

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Following the 2 consultations phases that were held last spring in all of Québec's schools, our demands have been deposited on October 30, in Québec City. QPAT will send a summary of those demands in November.

## • REFORM? WHAT REFORM?

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As you may already know, the reform once again has a new name: the MELS is no longer referring to the reform as the **Renouveau pédagogique (Pedagogical Renewal)**, but rather **École d'aujourd'hui (Today's School)**. It will likely take more than a euphemism to change people's perception of the reform, however. Incidentally, this year marks the tenth year of its implementation. It was back in 1999 that elementary schools were first introduced to the new programs. The first version was abandoned because of strong opposition from both teachers and the media. The following year, schools received a revised version of the program.

## • A FEW STATISTICS

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In Quebec's school system, teaching is a profession rife with precarity: **45% of teachers working for school boards do not have job security** (part-time, replacement). A mere **6% of teaching graduates obtain a regular position enabling them to gain permanent status**. In Quebec, 55,000 teachers hold a permanent position, whereas another 36,000 teachers are without such security (no permanent status, supply teaching, replacements). In the meantime at Riverside School Board, the rate of teachers without tenure is approximately 19%, which is very good. Interestingly, the graduation rate at the School Board is nearly always among the five highest in the province. Is there a connection?

## • MAJOR CHANGES TO THE EDUCATION ACT

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**Major changes have been made to the Education Act** to change how school boards are governed; most of the amendments took effect on **July 1, 2009**. It is important to be aware of these changes, since some new clauses could have repercussions for schools and pedagogical life. The MELS has set the objective to raise Quebec's graduation rate to 80% over the next 10 years.

In short, the Act stipulates an accountability approach based on school performance. The MELS will impose success rates on all school boards. In general, this means:

1. The MELS will set **MEASURABLE SUCCESS OBJECTIVES** for each school board, which will then be required to modify their **STRATEGIC PLAN** to reflect the new mission.

• **TEACHERS WILL  
BE CONSULTED**

• **ALFIE KOHN:  
GUEST SPEAKER**

2. The school boards will be required to respect the targets by signing a **PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT** with the MELS.
3. The school board will then ask the schools to sign a **MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS AGREEMENT**, which will drive schools to do everything they can to meet the measurable objectives set by the MELS. Interestingly, the *Management* is put first...
4. The schools will have to adjust their **PEDAGOGICAL PROJECT** and their **SUCCESS PLAN** to specify how they will meet the objectives set by the MELS and the school board. **For example**, if a school board's graduation rate hovers around 50%, the MELS could set the objective at 55% to force the schools under this school board to everything they can to meet the new objective.
5. The law stipulates that the MELS could take **CORRECTIVE MEASURES** against school boards that fail to meet the set objectives.
6. The Council of Commissioners can mandate a commissioner to attend Governing Board meetings and report back to the Council of Commissioners on any issue it deems relevant.
7. The composition of the Council of Commissioners will be reviewed.
8. A complaint-processing mechanism will be developed.
9. Each school board must hire a **CHILDREN'S ADVOCATE**, whose mandate will be to receive complaints from parents who were dissatisfied with the initial response they received.

**TEACHERS WILL BE CONSULTED:**

1. During the consultation period for the school board's **STRATEGIC PLAN**, through the **UNION**, which will take part in the consultation process.
2. During the development of the **EDUCATION PROJECT**, through the **SCHOOL COUNCIL**.
3. During the development of the **SUCCESS PLAN**, through the School Council.
4. During the development of the draft entitled **MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS AGREEMENT** through school **STAFF MEETINGS**.

**ALFIE KOHN: GUEST SPEAKER AT THE CONFERENCE ON NOVEMBER 19**

This year's speaker at the APEQ conference, **Alfie KOHN**, has a great deal to say on our school system's sudden obsession with performance and results; he speaks at conferences across the Western hemisphere on the issue. What would he think of our **MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS AGREEMENTS**? We don't know, but here is an interesting quote: *"Today, an ill-informed version of school reform has been embraced by politicians, corporate executives, and journalists, all demanding "accountability," which turns out to be a euphemism for more control over what happens in classrooms by people who are not in classrooms. The results: superb educators get tired or fired, and the intellectual life is squeezed out of schools as they are turned into giant test-prep centers."*

Michel Gagnon  
President