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collection

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Foreword

The *Dossiers de l'enseignement scolaire* (Files on School Education) review the key stances and projects marking French education policy, as well as their pedagogical implementation by the Directorate general for Schools (DGESCO / *direction générale de l'enseignement scolaire*). This new file, *Current Issues 2006-2007*, examines a number of topical themes, or in respect of which there have been recent innovations. More specifically, it presents the changes made to school education (with effect from September 2006) by the April 2005 Education Act.

For each theme, there are:

- details covering the data, challenges and opportunities, and specifying the spirit and objectives of current changes;
- contacts with the key people for the subject covered, in the Directorate general for Schools;
- documentary resources.

The *Dossiers de l'enseignement scolaire*, which are published by the international relations unit, are aimed notably at international education partners, as well as at those with responsibility for international relations in school education.

The files are published in a number of languages and made available:

- in France, through the Education Ministry's institutional network - *rectorats* (regional education authority [*académie*] headquarters), *IUFMs* (*Instituts universitaires de formation des maîtres* / university teacher-training institutes), etc. - and through other entities concerned with education;
- abroad, through French embassies' cultural services.

They are also available online at eduscol.education.fr/dossiers.

Previous publications in the "Files on School Education" series

- **Primary and Secondary Education in France** - volume 1, 2000
available in English and French
- **Primary and Secondary Education in France** - volume 2, 2001
available in English and French
- **Priority Education in France**, 2001
available in English and French
- **Innovative Policies in Europe**, 2001
available in French
- **Modern Language Education Policies in France**, 2002
available in English and French
- **Affirmative Action in Great Britain and France**, 2002
available in French
- **Primary and Secondary Education in France** - volume 3, 2002
available in English and French
- **Vocational Education in France**, 2003
available in English, French and German
- **Continued-learning strategies**, 2004
available in English and Spanish
- **Infant school in France**, 2004
available in English, French, German and Spanish
- **Baccalauréat, A-levels, Abitur, Bachillerato, secondary schools education certification systems in Europe** - no. 11, 2005
available in English, French and Spanish
- **Current Issues 2005** - no. 12, 2005
available in English and French
- **Act against Racism and Antisemitism** - no. 13, 2005
available in English and French
- **Schooling in France** - no. 14, 2006
available in English and French
- **Current Issues 2006-2007** - no. 15, 2006
available in English and French

01. The common core curriculum of knowledge and skills

Defined by the April 2005 Education Act, the common core curriculum covers a body of knowledge, skills, values and practices that pupils must have acquired or mastered by the end of their compulsory schooling in order to ensure that their education and their lives as individuals and as citizens can be a success. The core curriculum comprises seven skills.

THE CORNERSTONE OF COMPULSORY SCHOOLING

The Act states that compulsory schooling must at least provide pupils with the knowledge and skills that are essential if they are to “successfully complete their schooling, pursue their education, build their personal and professional futures and make a success of their lives in society”. The common core curriculum - which is the cornerstone of compulsory schooling - covers the basic knowledge and skills required. The common core curriculum is also designed to strengthen the links between the various disciplines.

Since the Act requires the education system to “ensure that pupils share the values of the Republic”, the common core curriculum also binds the Nation together by providing a set of values, knowledge and practices that form a common reference for parents, pupils and teachers alike.

The definition of the common core curriculum is also based on European recommendations concerning “key skills for education and lifelong learning”.

The common core curriculum may be broken down into seven skills areas, each of which covers basic knowledge, concrete application skills and attitudes. Pupils’ progress towards mastery of the common core curriculum is evaluated periodically. Three levels have been defined:

- the first level, which is to be reached at the end of the second year in primary school (Grade 2), notably concerns the acquisition of writing skills and reading proficiency;
- the second level, which is to be reached at the end of primary school, concerns, in particular, the acquisition of the fundamental rules of grammar and basic arithmetic;
- at the end of lower secondary school, the *brevet des collèges* diploma is awarded to pupils who have acquired the seven skills of the common core curriculum.

SEVEN SKILLS

1. Mastery of the French language

Command of French, which is the key priority for schools, means adequate knowledge of reading, writing, spelling and grammar, as well as constant broadening of the pupil's vocabulary.

2. Command of a modern foreign language

Achievement of basic-user Waystage level (A2), as defined by the Council of Europe in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), is required. The pupil must be able to use common expressions, understand a brief oral text and a short simple written text, and make him or herself understood orally and in writing.

3. The key elements of mathematics and of scientific & technological knowledge

In mathematics, the pupil must be capable of performing arithmetic, including mental arithmetic, from primary level. The aim, more generally, is to prepare pupils for mathematical reasoning.

The "scientific knowledge" skill is related to the previous skill: pupils must be aware that the universe has a structure, understand how it operates, know that matter has many different forms, and be familiar with the characteristics of living organisms.

4. Mastery of common information and communication techniques

Each pupil must be capable of making efficient, responsible, critical use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). The aim is to obtain the *Brevet Informatique et Internet* (IT and Internet qualification) or *B2i*, of which there are three versions: *B2i école*, *B2i collègue* and *B2i lycée*, for primary school, lower secondary school and upper secondary school, respectively.

5. General culture

The aim is to acquire basic knowledge of history (key events), geography (characteristics of the major physical and human entities) and literature & the arts (familiarity with major works).

6. Social and civic skills

These cover the basic rules governing interaction in society, and the fundamentals of civics: pupils must gain an awareness of their status as citizens, and of the links between rights and duties and between freedom and responsibility. They must also learn about the State, the European Union and the rule of law.

7. Independence and initiative

Independence and initiative contribute to pupils' success in school, and help them to choose their career paths and to adapt to changes in their personal, social and professional lives. These skills are acquired through the various learning situations encountered. The aim is for pupils to be able to make the transition from ideas to acts, which presupposes an ability to set priorities, take account of other people's opinions, make choices and accept the attendant risks.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS

+ Contacts at the Directorate general for Schools

Curriculum unit: T. +33(0)1 55 55 22 80

Documentary resources: <http://eduscol.education.fr/soclecommun>

02. Learning to read

The April 2005 Education Act makes learning to read a priority. The circular “*Apprendre à lire*”⁽¹⁾ (learning to read) , which became applicable in September 2006, states that learning to read requires the analysis and identification of words, and their subsequent comprehension. The syllable is therefore an essential component. The circular also emphasises the need for special training for teachers dealing with beginner readers and the importance of increasing the effectiveness of pupil evaluation.

FOCUS ON BREAKING DOWN WORDS

Systematically teaching pupils to break down and identify words from the start of the first year in primary school or Grade 1 is now recognised as the most effective way of helping them to become independent readers. This approach rules out early global memorisation of complete words (i.e. guessing rather than reading). During the first year in primary school, children regularly learn about the relationship between letters and sounds. This follows on from the work done in infant school on the sounds of the language.

WORKING WITH THE MEANINGS OF WORDS AND SENTENCES

The ability to break units down is inextricably linked to a focus on the meanings of words and sentences:

- **the meaning of words:** meaning is often made inaccessible by lack of vocabulary. Starting in the last year of infant school, children must therefore learn a large amount of new vocabulary (one or two new words daily), so as to be able to understand the written words that they break down;
- **the meaning of sentences:** when reading a sentence or text, it is not enough to recognise the words. Pupils must learn to handle combinations of words that make up sentences and texts.

During the first year in primary school, all pupils should learn to understand sentences and short texts quickly and clearly, thanks to an excellent knowledge of the alphabetic code.

On this particular point, the curricula state that pupils should read and write every day for two and a half hours in cycle 2 and for two hours in cycle 3 (*see box overleaf*).

(1) published in the *Bulletin officiel de l'éducation nationale* (official Education Ministry gazette) on 3 January 2006.

OPTIMISING PUPIL EVALUATION AND TEACHER TRAINING

At the end of Grade 1, all pupils should have learnt how to break down words and acquired the habits that enable them to enjoy reading independently. The evaluation of reading skills is brought forward from Grade 3 to the start of Grade 2 so that any remaining difficulties can be identified and personalised educational-success programmes (*see sheet 2*) put in place where applicable.

It is also planned to dedicate significant time to the teaching of reading in initial and continuing teacher training:

- the specifications for initial teacher training contains new requirements in terms of time and content for the teaching of reading;
- at least one third of the continuing-training resources earmarked for primary teachers must be allocated to this.

A DVD entitled “*Apprendre à lire*” (learning to read) will be distributed to all teacher trainers for use in the provision of information and explanations, and in teacher training.

THE THREE PRIMARY SCHOOL CYCLES

Infant school and primary school are divided into three pedagogical cycles:

- **Cycle 1** (the initial learning period - *cycle des apprentissages premiers*) takes place in infant school;
- **Cycle 2** (the fundamental learning period - *cycle des apprentissages fondamentaux*) starts in the last year of infant school and continues for the two first years of primary school (Grades 1 and 2);
- **Cycle 3** (the in-depth learning period - *cycle des approfondissements*) covers the last three years in primary school (Grades 3, 4 and 5), and leads on to lower secondary school.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS

+ Contacts at the Directorate general for Schools

Primary-school unit: T. +33(0)01 55 55 36 86

+ Documentary resources

<http://eduscol.education.fr/ecole>

03. The personalised educational-success programme

Where a pupil in primary school or lower secondary school seems unlikely to acquire essential knowledge and skills by the end of a cycle, the April 2005 Education Act makes provision for the head teacher to suggest a personalised educational-success programme to the parents. This involves a coordinated action plan designed to address the pupil's difficulties.

THE TARGET GROUP

The personalised educational-success programme (*PPRE / programme personnalisé de réussite éducative*) is aimed at pupils, in primary school or lower secondary school, who seem unlikely to acquire the knowledge and skills set out in the common core curriculum by the end of a cycle (*see sheet 4*). The difficulties encountered must be such as to endanger pupils' educational futures, and may be either severe or moderate. Particular attention is paid to educational difficulties concerning French, mathematics and modern languages. To identify pupils who should be allowed access to a *PPRE*, teachers may use the national evaluation & diagnosis systems (*dispositifs nationaux d'évaluation diagnostique*), notably for pupils in the second year of primary school (Grade 2), in the first year of lower secondary school (Grade 6), and during meetings between primary-school and lower secondary school teachers (*liaison CM2 - sixième*).

A COORDINATED, PERSONALISED ACTION PLAN

The *PPRE* comprises remedial actions targeting specific knowledge and skills. In order to be efficient, these actions must be short-term and intensive. They are designed to either control or eliminate difficulties.

This programme is personalised, because it is:

- **modular and adapted to take account of pupils' needs:** its content and intensity can be modified to suit individual cases;
- **temporary:** its duration varies depending on the extent of the pupil's difficulties and progress;
- **cooperative:** it is a team initiative, the success of which requires the participation of the pupil and his or her parents.

The implementation of the *PPRE* is accompanied by an evaluation designed to compare the skills acquired to the objectives to be reached at the end of the cycle.

A FORMAL PROGRAMME

The coordinated action plan is presented in a clear contract document. This document specifies the *PPRE*'s objectives, conditions, deadlines and evaluation procedures. It comprises two parts:

- the document signed by the pupil's parents, specifying the objectives and the corresponding time frame;
- the pedagogical team's document, which comprises a dossier setting out the pupil's situation, the evaluations used when setting up the *PPRE* and the strategy drawn up to meet the objectives defined.

IMPLEMENTING THE PPRE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In primary school, assistance is usually provided by a pedagogical team headed by the class teacher. In cooperation with the latter, the head teacher looks after relations with the parents. Teachers from the local specialist-assistance network for pupils in difficulty or RASED ⁽¹⁾ can also be involved, as can teachers from introductory classes (*CLINs /classes d'initiation*)⁽²⁾ and additional teachers (*maîtres supplémentaires*).

In 2006-2007, the development of *PPREs* concerns the first two primary school classes (Grades 1 and 2) and repeat pupils, regardless of level. In 2007-2008, *PPREs* will be extended to cover all three years of this cycle.

In lower secondary school, all of the teachers are concerned, and the class teacher plays a key role. In "success-oriented" lower secondary school (*collèges ambition réussite - see sheet 5*), the class teachers implement the *PPREs* in collaboration with the additional teachers, who are allocated thanks to the network. The head teacher coordinates the whole. The organisational arrangements depend on the school's policy, since the *PPRE* is central to the school plan.

In 2006-2007, there is special focus on Grade 6. The pupils concerned are those who have not surmounted all of their difficulties on arrival in Grade 6. During the school year, pupils who should be allowed access to a *PPRE* are identified during class council meetings. In 2007-2008, *PPREs* will be gradually extended to cover the central cycle (Grades 7 and 8), with diversification options being offered to pupils from Grade 8 onwards.

(1) The RASED (*Réseau d'Aides Spécialisées aux Elèves en Difficulté*), is a specialist-assistance network that works in collaboration with the teachers to prevent difficulties and to address difficulties that have become entrenched. It is composed of a school psychologist, a pedagogical specialist (*maître E*) in primary school, and a remedial specialist (*maître G*) focusing on emotional, physical and intellectual difficulties.

(2) Introductory classes: classes designed to optimise the integration of non-French-speaking children and adolescents who have recently arrived in France.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS

+ Contacts at the Directorate general for Schools

Primary-school office: T. +33(0)01 55 55 36 86

Lower secondary school unit: T. +33(0)01 55 55 13 86

+ Documentary resources

<http://eduscol.education.fr/ecole>

<http://eduscol.education.fr/college>

04. Priority-education development plan

In 2006, the aims of priority education are redefined by a development plan which redistributes resources in order to “give more to those really in need”. By personalising education paths and assistance, the new organisation aims to ensure that the pupils concerned acquire the knowledge and skills set out in the common core curriculum and that schools become more dynamic and success-oriented. To make equal opportunities a reality, 249 “success-oriented” networks were created in September 2006.

NEW ORGANISATION

There are now three distinct levels for priority education:

- level EP 1⁽¹⁾ covers schools taking pupils faced with the greatest educational and social difficulties; along with their partner primary schools, the “success-oriented” lower secondary schools form the “success-oriented” network, on the basis of the following criteria:
 - the proportion of pupils coming from underprivileged backgrounds (more than two thirds);
 - evaluation of results at the start of Grade 6;
 - the proportion of pupils more than two years behind at the start of lower secondary school;
- level EP 2⁽¹⁾ covers schools with a greater social mix than those in level EP 1, but which still need priority-education measures: these will receive the same assistance as before;
- level EP 3⁽¹⁾ covers primary schools and lower secondary schools which now have pupils from more privileged backgrounds and will therefore be scheduled to leave the priority-education system over a three-year period.

A PUPIL-CENTRED APPROACH

The creation of “success-oriented” networks reflects the fact that the focus is no longer on zones, but on target groups: since difficulty levels were not homogeneous in the Priority Action Zones (*ZEPs / Zones d'éducation prioritaire*), the focus is now on pupils and on the associated “priority-education” primary schools and lower secondary schools.

To ensure that the “success-oriented” networks work together in harmony, each is provided with an “executive committee” - a coordination team comprising the head teacher and assistant head teacher of the lower secondary school and the head teachers of all of the primary schools attached to that lower secondary school.

(1) *Éducation prioritaire* 1 or 2 or 3.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To ensure that pupils receive significant assistance, the 249 networks comprised of 249 “success-oriented” schools and the associated 1,600 local primary schools are provided with additional resources:

- 1,000 additional experienced teachers to teach part-time and provide support for pupils and young teachers;
- 3,000 pedagogical assistants (*see sheet 10*), training to become teachers, who will help with homework and provide educational assistance to pupils ⁽²⁾ as required;
- one full-time school nurse per lower secondary school.

Two hundred additional remedial teams will also be created, essentially for “success-oriented” lower secondary schools. These will take charge of pupils whose behaviour is such that they need to spend some time away from their usual classes before returning to the normal course.

BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUPILS

The “success-oriented” networks are characterised by their dynamism and their commitment to success.

- They design a project that involves a contract of four or five years with the district inspector. This contract specifies the pedagogical objectives and, where applicable, makes provision for experimentation.
- The inspectors conduct regular evaluations to check pupils’ progress. These evaluations take account of reading skills, of progress in the acquisition of the knowledge and skills set out in the common core curriculum (*see sheet 1*) and of pupils’ behaviour.
- A skills booklet (*livret de compétences*) is used for recording each pupil’s individual path starting in primary school. This allows pupils to see their initial levels and the objectives to be reached if they are to acquire the knowledge and skills set out in the common core curriculum. The aim is to boost pupils’ confidence and avoid repeat the need to repeat classes, thanks to personalised assistance.
- All lower secondary school pupils are given access to supervised study periods. These periods - which are supervised by voluntary teachers, or by trainee teachers such as pedagogical assistants - are intended, first and foremost, for *PPRE* ⁽³⁾ pupils.
- The “100,000 students for 100,000 pupils” operation is under way: it enables students to sponsor pupils from priority-education schools.

(2) primary and secondary.

(3) *PPRE*: (*programme personnalisé de réussite éducative* / personalised educational-success programme) : see sheet 3.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS

+ Contacts at the Directorate general for Schools

School network unit: T. +33(0)01 55 55 30 63

+ Documentary resources

<http://www.educationprioritaire.education.fr>

<http://eduscol.education.fr/educationprioritaire>

05. Junior-apprentice training

The equal-opportunities Act of 21 March 2006 introduced a new training option for interested 14 to 16-year-olds: junior-apprentice training. This system helps diversify the range of training options available during the last two years of compulsory schooling. Junior apprenticeship comprises two phases - one in which the pupil attends school, and the other during which he or she works under an apprenticeship contract. It is a risk-free path.

THE TARGET GROUPS

Junior-apprentice training is aimed at voluntary pupils aged between 14 and 16. It constitutes a response to the needs expressed by three school target groups:

- pupils who are attracted by less abstract teaching than that often provided in lower secondary school, are keen to learn in a different manner and are interested in an approach whereby time would be divided between school and in-company training;
- pupils who have specific personal and professional plans, and are keen to start vocational training early through apprenticeship;
- pupils receiving special education who wish to train through apprenticeship.

THE AIMS OF THE TRAINING

Junior-apprentice training is designed to:

- provide an additional way of acquiring the knowledge and skills set out in the common core curriculum (*see sheet 1*) while receiving vocational training through apprenticeship;
- provide additional safeguards for the first part of the apprenticeship contract by giving the junior apprentice rights not provided for in the “standard” apprenticeship contract: the right to return to school, and to terminate the apprenticeship contract without justification.

TWO PHASES

Junior-apprentice training comprises two phases:

- **one phase during which the pupil attends school:** this phase, which is known as the introductory path to the trades (*parcours d’initiation aux métiers*), is open to pupils aged 14 and over, and takes place in a vocational upper secondary school or in an apprentice-training centre. It allows pupils to:

- learn about a variety of trades and the associated apprenticeship courses;
- continue to acquire the knowledge and skills set out in the common core curriculum, which constitute a prerequisite to entry to the vocational path;
- **a second phase during which the pupil works under an apprenticeship contract:** this phase, which is open to pupils aged 15 and over, takes place in a company and in an apprentice-training centre. This phase:
 - prepares pupils for a vocational qualification through apprenticeship;
 - comprises alternate periods in a company and in an apprentice-training centre.

A RISK-FREE PERSONALISED PATH

When junior-apprentice training objectives are being set, account is taken of knowledge and experience acquired previously by the young person. At the start of the training period, the pupil is provided with a personalised pedagogical project drawn up by the pedagogical team. Through this project, the training is organised on the basis of the pupil's needs as detected, and stage reviews are scheduled so that the knowledge and experience acquired can be validated.

All of the knowledge and experience acquired during the training is recorded in a junior-apprentice booklet, which constitutes the basis of a skills portfolio that will be added to over time.

Junior-apprentice training constitutes a risk-free path, since it is:

- **voluntary:** the training is freely requested by the pupil, and the initiative is taken by the young person and his or her family - not by the class council;
- **reversible:** the junior apprentice may, at his or her own request, resume standard lower secondary school classes at any time (preferably at the end of one of the training periods in the personalised pedagogical project);
- **accompanied:** a member of the pedagogical team acts as a tutor for the young person during the training.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS

+ Contacts at the Directorate general for Schools

Initial vocational-training, apprenticeship and integration unit

T. +33(0)1 55 55 32 20

+ Documentary resources

<http://eduscol.education.fr/apprentijunior>

06. The *lycée des métiers* ⁽¹⁾

Since 2001, the *lycée des métiers* label has been a symbol of excellence in the technological and vocational domains. It provides pupils from vocational and technological routes with the delivery of a range of qualifications of a same occupational sector. It applies to certain schools offering a comprehensive range of training paths and services, notably through active partnership with the economic sector and with local and regional authorities. The recent formalisation of the label in the April 2005 Education Act has helped to optimise perceptions of vocational education.

A DIVERSE, COHERENT TRAINING OFFER FOR ALL TARGET GROUPS

- The *lycée des métiers* is an upper secondary school offering vocational and/or technology training in specific sectors of activity (e.g. sales, construction, automotive or hospitality sectors) or in interrelated trades (e.g. textiles and clothing) or in complementary trades (e.g. related to the sea and to housing). This coherence makes for optimal readability for pupils, their parents and employers. By highlighting its association with clearly-identified sectors of activity, the *lycée des métiers* facilitates young people's integration into the world of work, and is in a position to receive greater material and human resources from companies in those sectors.
- The *lycée des métiers* broadens its training offer. On the one hand, it prepares pupils - on its own or in cooperation with other schools - for a wide variety of national qualifications ranging from the certificate of vocational aptitude or *CAP (Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle)* to higher-education qualifications such as technical diplomas or *BTSs (brevets de technicien supérieurs)* and vocational degrees (*licences professionnelles*). It also caters to the needs of various target groups (e.g. worked-based trainees, upper secondary school pupils, students and employees on professional development), providing each person with an appropriate individualised path. The breadth of this training offer makes for often-valuable interaction between people of different types and age groups. During the training process at the *lycée des métiers*, the status can also change (e.g. from pupil to "apprentice", or vice-versa).

(1) a new quality label for specialised sectoriel vocational *lycées*.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

As well as providing training equal to that in other vocational upper secondary schools, the *lycée des métiers* offers additional services:

- it is committed to providing support until the young person finds either a job (e.g. with help from associations of former pupils or apprentices) or additional training, possibly a third-level course (e.g. through a partnership with a general and technological upper secondary school);
- it offers professional-experience accreditation (*VAE / validation des acquis de l'expérience*); it welcomes and supports applicant employees, providing them with details of qualifications for which it offers accreditation, and helping them to prepare their applications. In so doing, it helps meet the *VAE*-development objective of tripling the number of qualifications awarded;
- it offers accommodation, either directly in a boarding school or through agreements with other schools.

LOCAL ROOTS AND A EUROPEAN OUTLOOK

Partnerships with local economic, social and political players are essential to the *lycée des métiers*' approach, and help build its reputation and influence. They make it possible to:

- have better knowledge of changes in professions and in the job market;
- spread knowledge of the professions that can be prepared for in the school;
- optimise technological cooperation and make the *lycée des métiers* a full-fledged player in local and regional development;
- provide better support for those seeking employment.

The *lycée des métiers* combines strong local roots with a European outlook. The range of training provided always has a European dimension (e.g. European sections or preparation for the Europro certificate). This certificate, which is attached to the vocational qualification, proves that the holder of the qualification has participated in in-depth professional exchanges with EU Member States in the form of mobility (partnerships or work placements), regular exchanges of e-mail or repeated contact with foreign companies established in their regions.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS

+ Contacts at the Directorate general for Schools

Initial vocational-training, apprenticeship and integration unit
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+ Documentary resources

<http://eduscol.education.fr/lyceedesmetiers>

07. The language renewal plan

The language renewal plan, which is the result of a movement initiated some years ago, is designed to prepare pupils for European and international mobility. It is a response to the European aim of ensuring that young people have a command of two languages in addition to their native tongues. The new approach to language teaching places special emphasis on oral expression, and uses the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Language certification backed by the framework will gradually be offered to pupils.

A DIVERSE, COHERENT OFFER

In accordance with the April 2005 Education Act, a modern-language commission has been created in each *académie* (regional education authority). Its role is to ensure that there is a broad language offer and that there is continuity in terms of languages between primary school and lower secondary school. It is also responsible for providing information on the language offer to schools, elected representatives, parents and pupils.

A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING AND EVALUATION

The objectives to be reached are defined by the global language-competence scale provided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR):

- **Level A 1** (basic user) must be reached by the end of primary school;
- **Level B 1** (independent user - Threshold level) must be reached by the end of compulsory schooling;
- **Level B 2** (independent user - Vantage level) must be reached by the end of secondary school.

Level A 2 (basic user - Waystage level) will constitute the reference for the common core curriculum.

NEW WAYS OF LEARNING

1. Competence groups

In primary school and lower secondary school, pupils can now be divided into language-competence groups, independently of classes or divisions. For a given period, learning is centred on a dominant language activity: oral comprehension, continual oral expression, oral interaction, written comprehension and written expression. This work may be conducted with groups of pupils from different classes who have the same needs. The CEFR

reference scale (A 1, A 2, B 1, etc.) helps the teacher to identify these needs and provide an individual response.

2. Variable pace

Short or medium-length periods of intensive teaching may be used in order to have a variety of ways of learning and to boost pupils' progress at a given point on their paths.

3. Smaller classes for Grade 12

In order to give pupils more time for oral practice, there are to be no more than twenty pupils per class in Grade 12. This means that all pupils can develop their oral-communication competence.

4. Exposure to a language and the development of independent learning

To enable pupils to maintain their levels and make additional progress, access to schools' multimedia tools (satellite channels, CD-ROMs and the Internet) will be facilitated. These tools provide both pupils and teachers with a wide range of resources relating notably to oral competence.

Moreover, the "school open for languages" (*langues en école ouverte*) operation provides pupils with greater exposure to languages outside of class time, and notably during school holidays.

RECOGNISED, FREE-OF-CHARGE LANGUAGE CERTIFICATION

Foreign-language certification backed by the CEFR will be put in place gradually. This will be made available particularly to voluntary pupils in European and international sections. An initial experiment involving German started for levels A 2 and B 1 in 2006 (*see sheet 8*), and will be gradually extended to cover other languages from September 2007.

THE ROLE OF FOREIGN-LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS

In first and second-level schools, the assistants help pupils to develop their language (notably oral) and intercultural competence.

In primary schools, they perform teaching or support activities.

At secondary level, the role of the assistant must be formalised in the school plan. This role is not limited to the provision of support for language teaching, and generally involves international-openness actions.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS

+ Contacts at the Directorate general for Schools

Curriculum unit: T. +33(0)1 55 55 22 80

+ Documentary resources

<http://eduscol.education.fr/lv>

08. Plan for the development of German

The Plan to develop German in France and French in Germany follows on from the Lisbon process and from the resultant “Education and Training 2,010” programme, attaching considerable importance to the need for each European citizen to have a command of at least two European languages in addition to his or her native tongue. This plan complements what has already been accomplished through the publication of the Franco-German history coursebook.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

The fourth Franco-German Council of Ministers, which was chaired by the French President and the German Chancellor, was held in Berlin on 26 October 2004. At the meeting, key decisions were jointly approved aimed at developing knowledge of German in France and of French in Germany.

In Saarbrücken on 12 November 2004, the French Education Minister and the German plenipotentiary with responsibility for Franco-German cultural affairs, officially announced the language action plan to the *recteurs* (heads of the French *académies* or regional education authorities) and representatives of the German education authorities. The plan comprised a number of measures aimed at encouraging the learning of the partner language on both sides of the Rhine. Some of the measures are specific to France, while others have German equivalents.

THE MEASURES

Measures applicable in both France and Germany

- The introduction of language certification backed by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) - level A 2 at the end of lower secondary school and level B 1 at the end of Grade 10;
- The opportunity for all pupils learning the partner language, and who have been awarded such certification, to make a linguistic and cultural trip to the partner country;
- The opportunity for all Grade 10 pupils who have spent a year in a German school to have the knowledge and experience acquired validated by their home schools;
- The introduction of the *AbiBac* (simultaneous awarding of the *baccalauréat* and its German equivalent, the *Abitur*) in all *académies*.

Measures applicable in France

- The continuation of German teaching across all *académies*;
- A 20 % increase over five years in the numbers of primary-school pupils learning German;
- The continuation of German teaching at lower secondary school level wherever it is taught in the local primary school;
- A 50 % increase over five years in the number of bilingual (French-English or French-German) Grade 6 classes.

“GERMAN - A PASSPORT FOR EUROPE”

A brochure published jointly by the French Education and Foreign Ministries, the Goethe Institut, the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and the Franco-German University has been distributed each year since 2005. The aim of the brochure, which is entitled *L'allemand, un passeport pour l'Europe* (“German - a Passport for Europe”), is to increase the percentage of parents of pupils in Grades 1, 2 and 7 encouraging their children to choose German. The brochure points out that a good command of German is an advantage on the job market and facilitates higher education studies in a European context. It is distributed to schools in January to coincide with the Franco-German Week, which is held around 22 January.

In Germany, there is a similar brochure entitled *Französisch schlägt Brücken in die Zukunft* (“French - a bridge to the future”) encouraging the learning of French.

For further details

+ Contacts at the Directorate general for Schools

International relations unit – T. +33(0)1 55 55 08 98

+ Documentary resources

<http://eduscol.education.fr/allemand>

09. Curriculum design

In France, curricula are designed nationally. New curricula are therefore designed on the initiative of the Education Minister, to take account of ongoing reforms. The design process, which is steered by the Directorate general for Schools, is conducted collectively by a group of experts, in close cooperation with the general inspectorate for education (*Inspection générale de l'Éducation nationale*). Teachers are also involved. The *Conseil supérieur de l'éducation* and, where applicable, the *Haut Conseil de l'éducation* (two education councils) are consulted.

DESIGNING A CURRICULUM

Curriculum design is conducted by a group of experts, presided jointly by an academic and a general education inspector (*Inspecteur Général de l'Éducation nationale*⁽¹⁾), both appointed by the Minister. The members of the group of experts are appointed individually on the basis of their acknowledged professional expertise. They are selected by the group president, in agreement with the Directorate general for Schools⁽¹⁾, which monitors the group of experts throughout their mission. The Directorate general for Schools ensures that the specifications are complied with, and acts as a permanent interface between the group and the other education-system players during the various stages of the drafting process.

CONSULTATION AND REWRITING

An intermediate stage involves systematic simultaneous consultation with all teachers of the discipline concerned, with the inspectorate and with the trade unions. This consultation is followed by a rewriting process.

Consultation with the teachers lasts for two months. It is conducted by subject inspectors, under the responsibility of the *recteurs* (heads of the *académies* or regional education authorities), and provides details, not only of teachers' opinions of the future curriculum, but also of their needs in terms of support documents and actions. More generally, it provides an opportunity to look at the ramifications of the new curriculum for pupil evaluation.

Summaries from the *académies* (regional education authorities) are collected by the Directorate general for Schools and transmitted to the inspectorate and to the group of experts, which is also informed of any remarks on the part of the inspectorate.

(1) see box on next but one page.

INSTITUTIONAL PHASE

The curriculum project then enters an institutional consultation phase, during which the opinion of the *Conseil Supérieur de l'éducation (CSE)*⁽²⁾ is sought prior to publication. The opinion of the *Haut Conseil de l'Éducation (HCE)*⁽²⁾ may also be sought, at the Minister's request. The texts and opinions are transmitted to the Minister, who finalises the text and authorises the publication of the order officialising the new curriculum in the French State's official gazette (*Journal officiel de la République française*) and in the official Education Ministry gazette or *BOEN (Bulletin officiel de l'Éducation nationale)*.

PUBLICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Directorate general for Schools supervises the publication of the curriculum and that of the supporting documents, which are drawn up by the group of experts who drafted the curriculum. It manages the implementation of related continuing-training actions put in place under the responsibility of the *recteurs*. The new curriculum comes into use in schools twelve months after the publication in the *BOEN*, which allows time for new coursebooks to be published.

THE COURSEBOOKS

These are supposed to be compatible with the curricula. The coursebooks are designed and published by private publishers. Teachers of a given subject in schools meet to agree on which book should be used.

The arrangements for financing coursebooks vary from one type of school to another.

- **Primary school coursebooks** are traditionally financed by the municipalities, as part of the global school-supplies budget.
- **Lower secondary school coursebooks** are financed by the State, and the books are lent to the pupils. New books are typically purchased every four years.
- **Upper secondary school coursebooks** are, theoretically, to be acquired at the families' expense, something that has often been done through parents' associations or book-exchange systems. For the past few years, however, most regions have been covering part or all of the costs.

(2) see box next page.

THE CURRICULUM-DEVELOPMENT PLAYERS

- The Education Minister and his or her Office.
- The general inspectorate for education (*IGEN / inspection générale de l'éducation nationale*) is under the direct authority of the Minister and has responsibility for consulting, management and evaluation activities.
- The Directorate general for Schools (*DGESCO / direction générale de l'enseignement scolaire*) forms part of the Ministry's central administration. It draws up and implements policy on primary schools, lower secondary schools and general and vocational upper secondary schools.
- The *Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (CSE)*, a special education council, provides the Minister with a consultative opinion on all questions of national interest touching on education. The *CSE* has 97 members drawn from the Education sector (48 members); from local and regional authorities, out-of-school associations and major cultural, social and economic interest groups (16 members); from among parents and pupils (19 members); and from trade-union organisations (14 members).
- The *Haut conseil de l'éducation (HCE)*, another special education council, is an independent consultative body composed of nine members appointed by the French President and the Speakers of both Chambers of the French Parliament. At the Minister's request, this body issues opinions on questions relating to pedagogy, curricula and procedures for evaluating pupils' knowledge, as well as to the organisation and results of the education system and to teacher-training policy.
- The group of experts is comprised of
 - academics, who ensure that course content is scientifically valid or who train future teachers;
 - rank-and-file teachers from a variety of *académies*;
 - inspectors with a good knowledge of various practices and concrete needs.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS

+ Contacts at the Directorate general for Schools

Curriculum unit -T. +33(0)1 55 55 22 80

+ Documentary resources

<http://eduscol.education.fr/prog>

10. Pedagogical assistants

The educational-assistant system was introduced in 2003 and complemented by the arrival of pedagogical assistants in 2005: to provide greater support for pupils in difficulty, pedagogical assistants are recruited to work in difficult schools or in schools located in difficult areas. They have the status of educational assistants. In September 2005, 1,500 pedagogical assistants were sent to work in the 344 upper secondary schools most affected by social and educational difficulties.

ROLE OF THE PEDAGOGICAL ASSISTANT

Pedagogical assistants are responsible solely for assisting teachers with pedagogical support and assistance for pupils in lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools. They cannot therefore, replace teachers, but assist pupils in difficulty who ask for their help. This help may be provided either individually or in small groups, and is intended essentially to enable pupils to prepare as well as possible for their examinations. The pedagogical characteristics of the support provided – notably support with schooling, methodological and cross-disciplinary assistance, and help with individual work – are defined by the head teacher in collaboration with the pedagogical teams.

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS

The educational-assistant system has been in place since 2003. Educational assistants are recruited to assist the teachers. Their responsibilities notably cover:

- management and supervision of primary-school and lower secondary school pupils;
- assistance in catering for and integrating disabled pupils;
- help in using the new technologies;
- participation in educational, sporting, social and cultural activities.

RECRUITMENT AND STATUS

In **September 2005**, pedagogical assistants were recruited mainly to work in upper secondary schools located in difficult or socially-deprived areas. Given their special missions and the levels of the classes with which they work, the pedagogical assistants must:

- have a qualification requiring two years of study after the baccalauréat or a qualification of similar or greater value;
- be recruited, preferably among students who are studying to become teachers. They must have proven knowledge of their respective disciplines and have covered the corresponding content when studying in their upper secondary schools.

Scholarship holders are given priority during the recruitment process.

In **September 2006**, 3,000 pedagogical assistants were recruited in the primary schools and lower secondary schools of the “success-oriented” networks (*see sheet 4*) in order to optimise support for pupils encountering educational difficulties.

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Pedagogical assistants gain useful experience for their future work as teachers. From the outset, they receive training centred on the pedagogical challenges and opportunities encountered at upper secondary school level.

Their work lasts no more than thirty-six weeks, and is, at most, part-time. Preparation time is included in the working hours.

Pedagogical assistants may be granted time off (deducted from their working hours) to attend university or vocational courses or to sit examinations. Their work schedule takes account of the time constraints associated with their ongoing studies.

5,500 PEDAGOGICAL ASSISTANTS

- **September 2005**: 1,500 in 344 upper secondary schools;
- **September 2006**: 3,000 in 249 “success-oriented” networks;
- **1 January 2007**: 1,000 in primary schools and lower secondary schools to help implement personalised educational-success programmes or *PPREs* (*programmes personnalisés de réussite éducative*)

FOR FURTHER DETAILS

+ Contacts at the Directorate general for Schools

School organisation unit

T. +33(0)1 55 55 12 61

+ Documentary resources

<http://www.education.gouv.fr/assistants-pedagogiques>

11. School education in figures

	2004-2005	2005-2006
PUPILS	12,125,700	12,112,000
Primary-school pupils	6,585,000	6,626,000
Lower secondary school pupils	3,193,000	3,138,000
Upper secondary school pupils	1,515,000	1,513,000
Vocational upper secondary school pupils	715,500	720,200
TEACHERS	887,600	884,000
Public-sector teachers	742,600	739,000
Private-sector teachers	145,000	145,000
Teachers in public infant schools (<i>écoles maternelles</i>) and primary schools.	318,200	320,000
Teachers in public secondary schools	424,400	419,000
PRIMARY SCHOOLS, LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS	68,012	67,581
Public-sector primary schools, lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools	59,041	58,569
Infant schools and primary schools	56,628	56,158
Lower secondary schools	6,988	7,010
General and technological upper secondary schools	2,614	2,625
Vocational upper secondary schools	1,702	1,708

Source: Evaluation, long-range planning and performance Directorate (*DEPP / Direction de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la performance*).

FOR FURTHER DETAILS

+ *Repères, références et statistiques sur les enseignements, la formation et la recherche*, published by the French Education and Research Ministry (*DEPP / Direction de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la performance*), 2006 edition.

+ Website

<http://www.education.gouv.fr/evaluation-statistiques>

