



THE
ETHICS AND
RELIGIOUS
CULTURE
PROGRAM

*Contributing to
Harmonious Social Relations
in Québec Society Today*

Québec 

One Objective: Contributing to Harmonious Social Relations in Québec Society Today

The school's mission is to broaden horizons, develop talents and provide the tools needed for each individual to live with others as a self-actualized, free and responsible adult. Québec society is undergoing change: societal challenges are as much an issue for urban centres as for rural regions; mentalities are evolving in keeping with a multitude of influences; values and convictions are being asserted with greater force; questions are constantly being raised. The school must therefore adjust to this transformation. It is within this context that the new Ethics and Religious Culture program will be offered to all students in Québec starting in the fall of 2008.

The Ethics and Religious Culture program will allow your child to:

- acquire or consolidate, if applicable, an understanding of how all individuals are equal in terms of rights and dignity
- learn to reflect on issues responsibly
- explore, depending on his/her age, different ways in which Québec's religious heritage is present in his/her immediate or broader environment
- learn about elements of other religious traditions present in Québec
- grow and develop in a society in which different values and beliefs coexist



Consistent Evolution

Over the course of the last 50 years, training in the area of moral and religious questions has evolved tremendously. For example, at one point French schools used the *Petit catéchisme*, comparable to the *Baltimore Catechism* taught in English Catholic schools. But then there was a shift to catechesis, and subsequently to confessional moral and religious instruction open to other religions. Schools also offered moral education.

Reaffirming a Principle

Throughout this evolution, the following principle has always been affirmed: parents are in charge of providing religious or moral education in accordance with their values and convictions. With the Ethics and Religious Culture program, not only has this principle been reaffirmed, but the respective responsibilities of the school and churches are clearly set out.

Your Child Reflects and Explores

Ethics

Your child will learn to:

- carefully reflect on aspects of certain social realities and on subjects such as justice, happiness, laws and rules
- ask himself or herself questions such as: What value should guide people in their relationships in society? What are the characteristics of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour? How can these behaviours be recognized?

It will therefore become easier for your child to organize his/her ideas and express them with respect and conviction.

Religious culture

Your child will:

- learn about the important place of Catholicism and Protestantism in Québec's religious heritage
- discover the contributions of Judaism and Native spiritualities to this religious heritage
- learn about elements of other religious traditions more recently found in Québec society

In addition, both in ethics and in religious culture, your child will develop an ability to reflect and deepen his/her knowledge by exchanging ideas and discussing with others.

This program devotes special attention to the religious heritage of our society. The historical and cultural importance of Catholicism and Protestantism in Québec is especially highlighted, while Judaism and Native spirituality, which have also marked this heritage, are also covered, along with other religious and spiritual traditions that contribute to present-day Québec culture and that inspire different ways of thinking, being and acting.

- Excerpt from the Ethics and Religious Culture program

Respect for everyone

By offering the same education in ethics and religious culture to all children, this program respects their diversity of beliefs and values, as well as different ways of thinking. In this way, your child will not have to justify his/her religious convictions. Also, since this program deals with religious traditions from the perspective of knowledge, at no time will your child be initiated into the religious practices of any of these various traditions. **As parents, you are still in charge of your child's religious education.**

Themes Adapted to Your Child's Age

In Elementary School

In ethics, using simple and familiar situations, your child will learn to reflect on, among other things, questions that will help him or her develop an awareness of the following:

- that he/she is unique
- that he/she has responsibilities regarding his/her family, school and different groups to which he/she belongs
- that he/she lives in a society in which differences can be a source of enrichment or conflict

In religious culture, your child will learn about the following:

- family celebrations, ceremonies, birth rituals and important stories about them
- various forms of religious expression present in their environment, such as buildings, monuments and symbols
- the place of religion in society and in the world

In Secondary School

In ethics, using complex and more or less familiar situations, your child will continue to reflect on questions that deal with issues such as:

- freedom
- autonomy
- tolerance
- justice

In religious culture, your child will explore:

- Québec's religious heritage (founders, other key figures, institutions)
- key elements of religious traditions (stories, rites, rules)
- existential questions (the meaning of life and death, the existence of the divine, the nature of human beings)

Would you like to know more?

Consult the *Ethics and Religious Culture* program on the Web site of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport at www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/ecr.

Parents who would like to have their children receive confessional instruction are invited to contact their faith community or the requisite religious authorities.

Would you like to see how the program is applied?

In the same section, view a video that was shot in elementary and secondary school classes.

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