

Literacy Research Program
Thematic Concerted Action

Summary

Year of competition:	2021-2022
Components offered:	Research Projects, Action-Research Projects, Knowledge Synthesis, Postdoctoral Fellowships, Further Exploitation of Data
Deadline (notice or letter of intent):	Wednesday, January 13, 2021, 4:00 p.m.
Deadline (application):	Wednesday, May 5, 2021, 4:00 p.m.
Total amount available:	Variable, depending on the component
Duration of funding:	Variable, depending on the component
Announcement of results:	Week of July 12, 2021

Note: In case of any discrepancy, the French version shall prevail.

Proposed by:

The Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ)

and

The Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture (FRQSC)

1. Objectives

The Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture (FRQSC) and the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ) invite the scientific community to respond to this call for proposals for the Literacy Research Program (LRP). The projects submitted and their findings should contribute to achieving the primary objective, which is to develop knowledge in order to:

Foster the development, maintenance and enhancement of literacy skills in Québec

This research program also favours the creation and consolidation of partnerships between researchers and practitioners. Lastly, it aims to foster the appropriation of research findings by user communities leading to the creation of concrete applications adapted to schools and communities.

2. Context

Launched in 2009 and stemming from the [Plan d'action pour l'amélioration du français](#), the Literacy Research Program (LRP) contributes to developing knowledge on literacy.

It is recognized that literacy is the foundation on which learning is built and that it plays a key role in the full development of an individual on the personal, professional and social levels. As underscored by the OECD, "Literacy is no longer considered to be an ability acquired only in childhood during the early years of schooling. Instead, it is viewed as an expanding set of knowledge, skills and strategies that individuals build on throughout life in various contexts, through interaction with their peers and the wider community."¹

Since the LRP was created, eight calls for proposals, including this one, have gone out to the scientific community, providing funding for 82 research activities—37 research projects, 31 actions-research projects, 9 fellowships and 5 knowledge syntheses.

This year, the structured consultation process, which takes place in the Ministère and the school system for all competitions, brought to light new needs for knowledge, made even more pressing by the world health crisis and the closing of Québec schools in spring 2020.

It is in this context that the MEQ and the FRQSC have joined forces to issue this call for proposals and invite the scientific community to submit letters of intent.

1 OECD (2017), *PISA 2015 Assessment and Analytical Framework: Science, Reading, Mathematic, Financial Literacy and Collaborative Problem Solving*, revised edition, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, 51.

3. Research needs

3.1 Qualifying conditions

Anyone submitting a letter of intention for this competition must explicitly demonstrate how their project meets each of the following requirements. Without this, their letter of intention will not be considered. For this competition, proposals must:

- Clearly demonstrate their connection with the primary objective of this competition.
- Clearly indicate the need (**only one of those presented in the following section**) they intend to address on a priority basis. The project’s potential for responding to this need must be solidly argued.
- Explicitly demonstrate how they will take gender-based analysis ([ADS](#), information available in French only) into account with regard to the subjects of the study. This clear demonstration must be attached in the “Other documents” section of the letter of intent form. If gender-based analysis is not considered relevant to the proposed project, the same form must be used to present the justification for that decision. **Without this explanation, the letter of intent will not be considered for this competition.**

3.2 Specific research needs

The research needs for this competition are centred on the following six different themes:

- [Family literacy](#)
- [Literacy skills in school](#)
- [Literacy skills in digital contexts](#)
- [Literacy skills in a professional development context](#)
- [Literacy skills and absence from school](#)
- [Literacy skills in the adult population](#)

Each of the research needs presented is directly linked to the primary objective of this program, which is the development, maintenance and enhancement of literacy skills in Québec.

Family literacy

The [Strategy From Birth to Age 8—It’s All About the Children](#) states that parents who have their own difficulties with literacy face greater challenges in supporting their children in their educational path. For parents, having weak literacy skills can have an adverse effect on their involvement, and their children may be at greater risk of dropping out of school. A recent evaluation of the [Passe-Partout](#) program underscored the importance of intervention with parents of preschoolers to equip them to better accompany their children through their first transition from one educational setting to the next.² We know that children who participate in emergent reading activities at home, at the library, in an educational childcare centre or at school become better readers and are more

2 MEES (2020). [Rapport d’évaluation. Programme Passe-Partout](#). Québec, Gouvernement du Québec.

interested in reading. In addition, certain community organizations also work to develop the love of reading in children of all ages. However, little is known about the impact of these types of activities on parents, including immigrant parents, with little schooling. What are the activities that should be prioritized to obtain positive outcomes? In what language should these activities be carried out? These are just some of the questions for which we have no immediate answers.

1. To what extent do family literacy activities contribute to motivating parents to maintain or upgrade their literacy skills from the perspective of lifelong learning?

Literacy skill(s)	Oral, reading or writing
Target population	Parents with little schooling
Language of instruction	French or English
Second language	French or English

Literacy skills in school

The ability to communicate orally is central to today's ministerial programs. In preschool as well as in elementary and secondary school, the supporting or teaching of this skill is often poorly understood by educators. In fact, beyond evaluating this skill, teachers often feel ill-equipped to support and teach it effectively,³ Nevertheless, this skill is required in several spheres of life, regardless of the educational pathway students choose. There is research that remains to be done on developing knowledge on the teaching and learning of oral communication skills in Québec.

³ Dumais, Christian, and Lizanne Lafontaine. (2011). L'oral à l'école québécoise: portrait des recherches actuelles. *Revue suisse des sciences de l'éducation*, 33(2), 285-302.

2. What teaching practices are the most likely to foster the development of oral communication skills within the framework of the overall development program in preschool or a subject program in elementary or secondary school?

Literacy skill(s)	Oral
Targeted level(s) of education	Preschool, elementary or secondary school (general education, vocational training, adult education)
Language of instruction	French or English
Second language	French or English

In elementary school, reading is still taught mainly through the use of textbooks. According to the [Progress in International Reading Literacy Study \(PIRLS\)](#) of 10-year-old students, textbooks are used almost twice as often to teach reading in Québec, in comparison with Canada as a whole.⁴ However, various authors have demonstrated that using authentic texts, youth literature in particular, in teaching may be an effective strategy in elementary school.⁵ While this practice is well documented in terms of its use and positive impacts on learning in elementary school, there has been much less work done on it with regard to secondary school.

3. How can authentic texts be used effectively in teaching the ideas and concepts in the Québec Education Program, in the language of instruction or in other subjects?

Literacy skill(s)	Reading
Targeted level(s) of education	Secondary school (general education, vocational training, adult education)
Language of instruction	French or English
Second language	French or English

Literacy skills in digital contexts

The [Digital Action Plan for Education and Higher Education](#) testifies to the increasing preoccupation with the use of digital technologies in education. Under Measure 13 of this plan, a digital environment will be set up to support all activities related to ministry examinations using an integrated exam management platform. This means that ministry examinations will eventually be administered to Québec students in digital format. The evaluation contexts for reading, writing, and oral communication in the language of instruction or second languages need to evolve. It is recognized that the strategies used in a digital environment to support students' learning to read, write, listen and speak are very often different from those used in traditional environments.⁶ They must be understood, mastered and taught by teachers and then learned by students so that they can effectively demonstrate the development of their competencies in ministry examination

4 Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (2012). [Le Programme international de recherche en lecture scolaire \(PIRLS\) 2011. Résultats obtenus par les élèves québécois de 10 ans.](#)

5 See, in particular, the work done by [Lefrançois](#) (2014), [Lépine](#) (2017), [Montésinos-Gelet](#) (2018) and [Morin](#) (2011).

6 See, in particular, the work done by [Lacelle](#) (2017).

situations. Research needs to be conducted in order to document teaching practices that are likely to support students as they learn to read, write, listen and speak in a digital environment.

4. What are the teaching practices that are most likely to support the learning processes for reading, writing, listening or speaking in a digital environment?

Literacy skill(s)	Oral, reading or writing
Targeted level(s) of education	Elementary or secondary school (general education, vocational training, adult education)
Language of instruction	French or English
Second language	French or English

Literacy skills in a professional development context

Having teachers who demonstrate a high level of language proficiency is of great importance and is a key element for student success. To properly practise their profession, teachers must have a set of language skills.⁷ They are not only expected to use language correctly and appropriately depending on the communication situation, but also to serve as role models for their students and be able to read and write texts specific to their subject field⁸.

With the passage of the [Act to amend mainly the Education Act with regard to school organization and governance \(Bill 40\)](#), continuing education will become compulsory beginning in July 2021 (s. 7). This means that teachers must undergo 30 hours of continuing education activities per period of two school years. However, teachers will not reap the full benefit of this new obligation unless the training offered meets their needs more closely.⁹

Work is needed to document the correspondence between the language-skills training offered and the needs of teachers.

Anyone who wishes to propose a project to address this need must answer all of the following questions:

7 For this competition, language skills consist of discursive, textual and linguistic elements (MEES, 2002, 9). Consulted at <http://biblio.ugaq.ca/archives/24286856.pdf>.

8 See, in particular, the work done by [Blaser](#) (2014) and by [Ouellet](#) (2018).

9 Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (2014). *Le développement professionnel, un enrichissement pour toute la profession enseignante*, Québec, Gouvernement du Québec. Consulted at: <http://www1.cse.gouv.qc.ca/fichiers/documents/publications/Avis/50-0483.pdf>.

5. How does the current continuing education offer contribute to upgrading the language skills of teachers in all contexts related to the practice of their profession?

What are teachers' professional development needs, according to the sector in which they teach?

Literacy skill(s)	Oral, reading or writing
Targeted level(s) of education	Preschool educators, elementary or secondary school teachers (general education, vocational training, adult education)
Language of instruction	French or English
Second language	French or English

The aim of the [Digital Competency Framework](#) is to foster the development of digital competency throughout Québec's educational community. It is recognized that improving how students learn to read and to write is an objective that should be prioritized in continuing education because of the fundamental role played by proficiency in the language of instruction with respect to students staying in school and achieving educational success.¹⁰ To date, there has been little research that has revealed the content and methods in continuing education that promote the commitment of teachers to transfer to their classes the literacy knowledge they have acquired through the use of digital technologies.

6. What are the content and methods in continuing education that promote the commitment of teachers to transfer to their students the literacy knowledge they acquired and the skills they deployed through the use of digital technologies?

Literacy skill(s)	Oral, reading or writing
Targeted level(s) of education	Preschool, elementary or secondary school (general education, vocational training, adult education)
Language of instruction	French or English
Second language	French or English

Literacy skills and absence from school

During the confinement period due to the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020, teachers, particularly those providing support services for learning French, questioned the ability of at-risk children (i.e. those without regular contact with French-speakers and without a computer at home) to maintain their literacy skills. These questions had already been asked with regard to the long visits made by certain students to their country of origin, summer vacation or support services for learning French in remote areas with fewer human resources available to provide such services on

¹⁰ See the knowledge synthesis by [Richard](#) (2017).

a regular basis. This need for knowledge is even more pressing given the possibility of future school closings due to new crises. Research must be conducted to find answers to these questions.

7. What family multilingual literacy practices, types of academic support or distance monitoring activities by teachers are most likely to support the maintenance of students' literacy skills during a break in their schooling that lasts more than two weeks?

Literacy skill(s)	Oral, reading or writing
Targeted level(s) of education	Preschool, elementary or secondary school (general education, vocational training, adult education)
Language of instruction	French
Second language	French

Literacy skills and the adult population

According to the [Rapport québécois du Programme pour l'évaluation internationale des compétences des adultes \(PEICA\)](#) (Québec report on the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIACC), available in French only), the average literacy score of Quebecers aged 16 to 65 is lower than that of Canada and the OCED countries and jurisdictions. In Québec, numerous school and community stakeholders collaborate regularly and consistently to take concerted action from the perspective of lifelong learning. It would be useful to better document the means and partnerships that could be put in place to foster the love of reading and enhance the level of literacy skills in the adult population of Québec.

8. From the perspective of lifelong learning, what means and partnerships could be put in place to foster the love of reading and enhance the level of literacy skills in the adult population who need this assistance?

Literacy skill(s)	Oral, reading or writing
Population	Adults with weak literacy skills
Language of instruction	French or English
Second language	French or English

Further exploitation of data gathered within the framework of the LRP but not yet processed

(Projects submitted to address this need must be presented under the Further Exploitation of Data component)

The funding provided by the Literacy Research Program since it began includes 73 grants for projects aimed at the development, maintenance and enhancement of the literacy skills of Quebecers. Not only have these projects generated useful findings to support the MEQ, the education system and its various partners, but they have also resulted in the gathering of a plethora of data, both qualitative and quantitative, that could not be fully exploited due to the time limits imposed for the production of research reports.

This need is aimed at allowing principal investigators who have already received funding under the LRP¹¹ to exploit the wealth of data gathered that they were unable to analyze and use within the timeframe of their initial grant.

Anyone interested in submitting proposals with regard to this need must demonstrate:

- how the outcomes of their project for exploiting the data already gathered will contribute to the achievement of the LRP's primary objective
- how the outcomes of their project for exploiting the data already gathered will contribute to the further nourishing of the originally targeted need for knowledge
- the value added by the project in relation to the findings already obtained

Need 9	
Literacy skill(s)	Reading or writing
Population	All
Levels of education	All
Language of instruction	French
Second language	French

3.3 Other elements for increasing the relevance of the project

In order to increase the relevance of their project within the framework of this competition, anyone who wishes to submit an application is also invited to:

- Demonstrate the value added by their project in relation to what has already been done on this theme in Québec, especially within the framework of the program's previous competitions (consult [Appendix 5](#))
- Take the school's socioeconomic environment indicator ([SEI](#)) into consideration, and, if applicable, the sociodemographic characteristics of the subjects under study

¹¹ The call to respond to this need under the Further Exploitation of Data component is open only to principal investigators who received funding within the framework of the four previous LRP competitions (call for proposals launched between March 2014 and November 2018—the links to each of these documents are provided in an appendix), with the exception of projects funded under the Doctoral Fellowship and Postdoctoral Fellowship component. The research reports associated with the projects that were originally funded must be submitted to the FRQSC no later than the deadline for submitting the letter of intent, that is, 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 13, 2021. Researchers who submit projects under this component must be certain that they can access the target data in compliance with the guidelines issued by the Ethics Committees of their institution.

- Join forces with people or organizations with expertise in mobilizing knowledge, detailing their role in carrying out the project or knowledge mobilization strategy
- Join forces with members of the education system and partners from the community as soon as they start preparing their letter of intent

Educational institutions and their community partners who wish to develop a project aligned with the objectives and knowledge needs of this competition are invited to communicate directly with researchers, faculties or departments, or with liaison and transfer organizations in order to facilitate networking.

[...]

The rest of the Call for Proposals is in the French version. For further requests, please contact: actions-concertees.sc@frq.gouv.qc.ca