



Guide to Using the Assessment Report

Measure to Assess and Improve Educational Quality

at Educational Childcare Establishments (Groups of 0- to 5-year-olds)

2023

Original text in French

Content

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Table of Contents

Who This Guide Is For and a Few Definitions.....	5
Introduction	6
1. Reading and Interpreting the Assessment Report	8
1.1 A bit of theory	8
1.2 Concrete strategies for reading and interpreting the Assessment Report.....	11
1(a) Defusing negative emotions	11
1(b) Reading (and rereading) the strengths in the Assessment Report.....	11
1(c) Trending towards learning-oriented motivation.....	11
1(d) Taking the time to go through written documentation.....	11
1(e) Having discussions with co-workers and with managers from other educational childcare establishments or calling on competent resources in the field.....	12
2. Preparing to Mobilize the Team	13
2.1 A bit of theory	13
2.2 Concrete strategies to prepare for team mobilization	16
2(a) Buying-in, mobilizing, preparing and acquiring the tools you need	16
2(b) Making structural changes to the organization	16
2c. Rallying the team around a shared project	16
2(d) Involving the team in the various stages.....	17
2(e) Providing support, setting goals and evaluating each employee	17
2(f) Planning regular reminders and scheduling regular follow-ups	17
3. Preparing to Mobilize the Team	18
3.1 A bit of theory	18
Who?	19
Why?	20
What?	20
When?	21
How?	21
3.2 Concrete strategies for disseminating the Assessment Report results to childcare establishment staff	23
3(a) Planning various parameters for disseminating the Assessment Report.....	23

3(b) Capitalizing on team strengths and the comments.....	23
3(c) Communicating the results to parents	23
4. Choosing, Implementing and Monitoring Proposed Improvements to Educational Quality	24
4.1 A bit of theory	24
1. Observation.....	25
2. Planning	26
3. Action.....	28
4. Assessment.....	28
4.2 Strategies for choosing, implementing and following up on avenues for improvement	29
4(a) Taking the time to think about the order of priority of proposed improvements	29
4(b) Starting with one dimension	29
4(c) Reflecting on actions for Structural Quality and associated factors	29
4(d) Opting for a mix of individual and group actions that are sustainable over time	30
4(e) Collecting data and documenting the process	30
4(f) Emphasizing each step taken	30
Conclusion	31
Bibliography	32
Further Reading... ..	33

Who This Guide Is For and a Few Definitions

This Guide contains support material that is primarily intended for the managers taking part in the Measure to Assess and Improve Educational Quality at Educational Childcare Establishments (Groups of 0- to 5-year-olds) implemented by the Ministère de la Famille.

The expression “educational team” is used to designate all the staff members of an educational childcare establishment (sometimes referred to as “childcare establishment” to facilitate reading), who are in charge of implementing an educational program on a day-to-day basis for children at the facility; namely educators, specialized educators and assistant educators.

The expression “management team” is used to refer to all the educational childcare establishment staff who are responsible for providing administrative and instructional support to the educational team at the facility; namely, manager, assistant facility manager, assistant instructional manager and educational adviser.

Since this Guide focuses entirely on the Measure to Assess and Improve Educational Quality at Educational Childcare Establishments, the expression “educational childcare establishment managers” is simplified to “managers” to make reading easier.

The expression “educational childcare establishment team” and the term “team” are used to designate all the management team and educational team members at an educational childcare facility.

Introduction

The quality of education provided at educational childcare establishments is a determining factor for children’s development and learning (Shuey et al., 2021). Québec’s Ministère de la Famille (the Ministère) decided to join the global trend (Maxwell, 2022) by implementing the Measure to Assess and Improve Educational Quality at Educational Childcare Establishments (the Measure) in 2019. This Measure enables the Ministère to monitor the quality of the education provided to children at their educational childcare facilities across the province.

In particular, educational teams, management teams, early childhood education teachers, associations and organizations, researchers and policymakers are working at various levels to maintain and improve the educational quality level in educational childcare establishments in Québec. However, the managers of educational childcare establishments are the ones who play a key role in the Measure put forward by the Ministère. More specifically, they act as a liaison between the educational childcare establishment team, which works with children and families on a daily basis, and Servirplus, which is responsible for implementing the Measure.

Moving forward, managers will have a work tool to help them play their essential role, namely to support educational quality in their community. This work tool is the Educational Quality Assessment Report, which is sent by Servirplus. The purpose of this report is to provide, in a way, an objective “snapshot” of the quality of education provided in an educational childcare establishment at the time that the assessment team was in the community. The managers are then free, as the “ship’s captains,” to “chart a course with their crew,” namely their educational childcare establishment team. The managers are responsible for identifying, together with all the educational childcare establishment staff, but more specifically with the educators, the avenues for improvement to be prioritized and the ways to achieve educational quality objectives.

Interviews¹ held with the managers have revealed the need for having support material handy to help them communicate the results of the Assessment Report to their teams, and to use these results to maintain and improve educational quality. In order to meet this need, this Guide proposes strategies recommended by the managers of childcare centres (CPEs) and day care centres who, together with their teams, have successfully used data from the assessment to maintain and improve educational quality in their facilities.

¹ The interviews, which lasted an average of 40-45 minutes, were conducted with managers of educational childcare establishments who had gone through the assessment process. First, the managers of 51 educational childcare facilities (26 childcare centre (CPE) facilities, 13 non-subsidized day care centres and 12 subsidized day care centres) were interviewed in the winter of 2019, after they had taken part in the pilot project in 2018 relating to the Ministère’s Measure for groups of 0- - 5-year-olds. Then, in the summer of 2022, 10 managers of educational childcare establishments (5 childcare centre facilities, 3 subsidized day care centres and 2 non-subsidized day care centres) were also interviewed individually concerning their participation in the Ministère’s Measure.

More specifically, the topics discussed in this guide concern:

- 1) Reading and interpreting the Assessment Report
- 2) Preparing to mobilize the team
- 3) Disseminating the results of the Assessment Report
- 4) Choosing, implementing and monitoring the proposed improvements to educational quality

This introduction would not be complete without a word of thanks to all those who gave up their valuable time to openly share their success stories and failures, the lessons learned from their experiences, and their expertise in team coaching.

1. Reading and Interpreting the Assessment Report

“I already had a picture in my head of my teams’ strengths and challenges. The report gave a good description of my facilities, and so I wasn’t surprised by what I read.”

1.1 A bit of theory

Following an assessment performed by Servirplus, the first step is to read the Assessment Report and understand what it contains. “The Assessment Report sent to early childhood education professionals provides an opportunity for them to reflect on and improve their practices with regard to the quality of the education provided to the children” (Krummel Reinking, 2015, in Geffray, 2022, p. 14).

An interesting point!

On reading the assessment report, 80% of the managers of educational childcare establishments interviewed stated that they found the results to be “fairly representative”, if not “completely representative” of their educational team. Half of the managers added that the report confirmed their own observations.

Some managers of educational childcare establishments reported various reactions on reading the Assessment Report. Ranging from a lack of emotion to pride, or disappointment, frustration and a sense of injustice, their reactions to the assessment results were often emotional. “The assessment itself is a controlling act that may be perceived as threatening” (Grenier et al., 2012).

An interesting point!

On reading the assessment report, 40% of the managers of educational childcare establishments interviewed said they had experienced positive emotions, 20% stated they had not been emotionally affected, and 40% said that they had experienced negative emotions.

Several years of research have shown that certain characteristics of feedback – for instance, feedback provided through an assessment report, as in the present case – can encourage or undermine the needs of managers and their teams for competency (e.g. feeling capable of doing something), autonomy (e.g. feeling that they have choices and are the instigators of their own actions) and social affiliation (e.g. feeling accepted in a group), and may therefore influence their motivation to work on improving educational quality in their environment. On the one hand, solely positive feedback – for example, when managers read in the Assessment Report that their facility has high levels of quality for all dimensions and that it has obtained a passing score for all dimensions – is appreciated by the person receiving it, bolstering self-

esteem and increasing self-confidence: “It meets the need for competency while being less likely to clash with the sense of autonomy” (Geffray, 2022, p. 61). However, positive feedback in itself would not provide information for further improvement.

On the other hand, purely negative feedback – for instance when the managers learn in the Assessment Report that their facility has low levels of educational quality or has not obtained a passing score – could threaten the feelings of competence and self-esteem of the person receiving it. In fact, “the brain reacts to criticism as a threat and reduces its activity. Focusing on shortcomings does not help people to learn; it inhibits learning” [Buckingham and Goodall (2019, p. 97, cited in Geffray, 2022, p. 61)]. In short, the negative emotions generated by negative feedback could prevent managers from using the Assessment Report to work on improving the quality in their environment.

For a middle ground, researchers found that the effects of negative feedback would be reduced if accompanied by suggestions for improvement to be considered in order to enhance the results obtained (Hu et al., 2016; Woo et al., 2015). For instance, “if relevant information is provided to improve on the requested task, the individual would focus on the information given to improve and this would divert attention from the negativity of the feedback” (Geffray, 2022, p. 61). It is in fact this type of so-called constructive feedback that is provided by the assessment report sent by Servirplus. Regardless of the level of educational quality at the educational childcare establishments assessed, all assessment reports present strengths and suggest avenues for improvement to be considered. In her dissertation based on interviews with 40 managers of educational childcare establishments in the Montréal area, Geffray (2022) actually points out the fact that many of them say it was the avenues for improvement, the accessible suggestions and the tools proposed in the report received that motivated them to work on improving educational quality, as well as the fact that they experienced positive emotions when they read the report.

In order to understand and process the constructive feedback in the Assessment Report, managers should shift from a performance-oriented motivation to a learning-oriented attitude. Performance-based managers generally prepare for the assessment with the sole aim of “passing an exam.” In this context, the Assessment Report results can be upsetting, calling into question their sense of competence, and leading to a feeling of failure when the feedback is not what was expected. Learning-oriented managers would tend instead to seek feedback on their work so as to improve it (VandeWalle et al., 2000).

Possible motivation for managers of educational childcare establishments concerning the Ministère's Measure:

Example of performance-based motivation:

"I know that we will be evaluated and then compared. For me what counts is that we get high scores in the assessment and that we show that we're doing a good job."

Example of learning-based motivation:

"We know that educational quality is important for a child's development, and so it's worth improving."

From Ball, 2003, p. 220

Of course, being evaluated is not easy for anyone, and it may be more or less motivating depending on the goals pursued on the job. In order to maintain learning-oriented motivation during the assessment and at the time of interpreting the report, it may be helpful to bear in mind that the Ministère's Measure was primarily implemented to ensure that children receive high quality educational services that promote their overall development as well as their educational success. The Ministère's Measure is therefore not an inspection, nor is it a performance appraisal of the educators. It may also be appropriate to remember that there is always room for improvement, even if the educational practices are already at a high level. Furthermore, the results of Geffray's study (2022, p. 91) show that "the managers of educational childcare establishments mention the improvement of quality in their answers (n=32) as a reason for motivating them to work," suggesting that a number of them (32/40, or 80%) already have learning-based motivation.

The Assessment Reports sent by Servirplus to the managers of educational childcare establishments contain detailed information. Although some people say that it is easy to understand what the Assessment Report says, others find that the style of the text or the language used is sometimes difficult to understand, at least when you first read it. Therefore, **reading the Assessment Report more than once, alone or together with your co-workers, may be useful.**

"I read the Assessment Report and then I asked the assistant manager to read it. Then we discussed what each of us understood. Before sharing it with our team, we wanted to take all the emotion out of it."

In short, some strategies (see below), which simultaneously take into account the emotional, cognitive, language and social aspects, help managers of educational childcare establishments to better read and interpret an Assessment Report.

1.2 Concrete strategies for reading and interpreting the Assessment Report

1(a) Defusing negative emotions



According to a number of managers who have already gone through an educational quality assessment, it is perfectly normal to feel a number of emotions, both positive and negative, in reading the Assessment Report. Nevertheless, it would be a good idea to reduce the emotional charge (especially the negative ones) so that you can go from a personal reading to a professional one.

1(b) Reading (and rereading) the strengths in the Assessment Report



Reading and rereading the strengths mentioned in the Assessment Report is a strategy adopted by some managers when interpreting the results received. In fact, positive feedback is always easier to accept as it usually elicits more pleasant emotions. This can help mitigate the effects of reading about results that are not as agreeable and the avenues for improvement to be considered.

1(c) Trending towards learning-oriented motivation



Here we are talking about the difference between motivation to work on the educational quality of one's own environment in order to always better meet the diverse needs of children ("Quality is important to me"), versus motivation that focuses more on performance and good results ("What's important to me is getting a passing score on the assessment). Managers of childcare establishments who recognize that educational quality can always be improved would seek feedback, and the effects of any negative feedback would fade away.

1(d) Taking the time to go through written documentation



Some managers of educational childcare establishments pointed out the importance of taking the time to read and analyze the Assessment Report. To do so, it may be helpful to turn to the reference texts suggested in the Assessment Report, which can support them in performing their duties. In particular, managers are invited to take the time to read excerpts from the documents recommended by the Ministère (e.g. *Accueillir la petite enfance*, 2019) (in French only), the Guide to Interpreting the Assessment Report, or issues of the e-newsletter *Info-Qualité* or documentation relating to the Classroom Assessment Scoring System tool (CLASS, Teachstone) used to assess the Quality of the Interactions Between the Educational Staff and the Children.

1(e) Having discussions with co-workers and with managers from other educational childcare establishments or calling on competent resources in the field



Managers are well-advised to identify people from within the childcare establishment, who can take an objective look at the Assessment Report. This could be the assistant manager, a facility manager, or a reference instructional educator. They can suggest that these people read the Assessment Report, and that they then discuss its content together. These people would be in an even better position to help interpret the Assessment Report if they are well-informed about the Ministère's Measure (for example, they have previously read the Information Brochure and the Explanatory Guide).



Similarly, some managers recommend contacting management staff at other educational childcare establishments for mutual support. If these people have already gone through an educational quality assessment, they can act as "mentors" to help interpret the Assessment Report.



Finally, in addition to the Ministère's advisors, some associations, organizations and groups offer their services to managers of educational childcare establishments to help them interpret the Assessment Report. Practically all managers who received a report strongly recommend seeking help from these highly appropriate resources.

Programme de soutien financier pour l'amélioration de la qualité éducative des services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance

Under Part B of the *Programme de soutien financier pour l'amélioration de la qualité éducative des services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance 2022-2023* (the Program), the Association des garderies non subventionnées en installation (AGNSI) was granted financial assistance, thereby allowing a customized support project to be developed in partnership with CASIOPE for childcare centres (CPEs) and day care centres that did not obtain all the required passing scores during the educational quality assessment. For more information about this project, childcare centres (CPEs) and day care centres may contact their educational childcare services advisor at the Ministère.

In addition, under Part A of the Program, support can be provided to a number of educational childcare associations recognized by the Ministère so that they can develop tools and training for the various dimensions of educational quality. To find out more about the projects selected, please refer to the Program web page.

2. Preparing to Mobilize the Team

“It takes a manager who believes in this and is convinced that there is always room for improvement. It also takes an instructional expert to interpret what’s in the report.”

2.1 A bit of theory

Once the Assessment Report is read and clearly understood by the management staff, they should take action even before involving the educational team of the childcare establishment to work on improving educational quality. In this regard, Benedetto-Meyer and Willemez (2017) highlight “[that] the [management staff] has to accept the idea of change positively, internalize it, and then sell it [to team members]” (p. 50). Its own mobilization is therefore key to the success of the educational quality improvement process, which is in fact a process of change in staff educational practices. It is therefore important for management team members not only to take ownership of the Assessment Report results and endorse the proposed improvements issued, but also to acquire the tools for team mobilization to “set the stage” for future steps.

An interesting point!

A word of encouragement: 80% of managers of educational childcare establishments who implemented one or more of the proposed improvements from the Assessment Report are noticing a change in the educational staff’s practices in all dimensions of educational quality. Among these, 70% add that the changes are sustainable over time.

“The key people are the educators because without them, nothing would get done.”

When the time comes to work with the educational team, it would be appropriate for the managers to act simultaneously on personal, contextual and social factors, both on an individual and group level for educators, in order to create conditions that are conducive to change (Duclos, 2016). These three categories of factors are defined in the box below.

Three categories of factors associated with staff members

Personal: Personal factors refer to the emotions, beliefs and knowledge specific to each staff member. They involve actions that target each person's specific needs, challenges, emotions and misconceptions, and act on them through, for example, observations in each group, targeted training or reading, one-to-one meetings, the drafting of an individual improvement plan, specific recognition and feedback, etc.

Contextual: Contextual factors relate to human and material resources, organizational culture, the context in which the process is implemented, and the nature of the change and associated costs. They involve considering structural and organizational actions such as hiring an external support resource, aligning the hiring of educational staff with the values of the educational childcare establishment, organizing schedules so that educational staff can count on a weekly planning period, etc.

Social: Social factors include professional identity, participation and collaboration between and among team members, discussion forums and a relationship of trust within the team. They involve group actions to consolidate the team's vision, enable everyone to feel valued, recognized and heard, and establish a relationship of trust that enables new practices to be adopted, such as team meetings, continuing education, video recordings of best practices and instructional discussions.

Summary of Duclos (2016)

For a management team, succeeding in creating the right conditions for change can be a challenge, in the sense that it is important to identify actions at different levels that can simultaneously affect personal, social and contextual factors. Although there is no single recipe for mobilizing an educational team, certain levers for mobilization are known. These would mainly to be found in hiring, information sharing, skills development and feedback on performance and recognition; in fact, these levers are “among the means of action to choose in order to deploy a mobilizing strategy”. (Tremblay et al., 2005, p. 73).

From the outset, when hiring new staff, it is important to target candidates who are aligned with the vision of the educational childcare establishment, both personally and professionally, and to coach the new educators on becoming part of the team (Tremblay et al., 2005), for example, by familiarizing them with the educational childcare establishment's values and the educational program in place, and introducing them to the other team members.

“If values are shared and the team is tight-knit, it is much easier to accept change.”

Then, when initiating a quality improvement process, it would be advisable to set up ways for the entire team of the educational childcare establishment to send and receive information, to allow members of the educational team to share their feelings about the process so that they can express their expectations while taking into consideration their various needs and concerns. According to Tremblay et al. (2015), the staff become mobilized when they see that their intelligence is trusted, if they understand what is expected of them, and if they feel that the management team genuinely cares about their needs, concerns and suggestions.

Then, it would be best to involve the educational staff in every stage of the process to encourage their taking ownership of the changes to come, as far as their educational practices are concerned. By being involved in the analysis and prioritization of their own professional development objectives, the educational staff would be more likely to see the improvement process as meaningful to them (Irvine and Price, 2014). Moreover, and this is linked to the concept of self-determination, motivation and performance would be enhanced when people “feel responsible for their choices” (Geffray, 2022, p. 60). At the same time, managers should support the process with changes that they themselves will implement at the structural level, aimed at significantly supporting the work of the educational team in improving educational quality, in line with the choices that have been decided as a group.

Finally, during the process, it is important to put into place actions providing such existential recognition of results, work practices and the efforts made by the staff, which will help maintain this mobilization over time despite the challenges encountered. In particular, informal feedback, offered in a climate of discussion conducive to learning, makes it possible to communicate information to the educational staff about their strengths, progress and challenges in order to maintain, redirect and improve their engagement (see Brun and Dugas, 2005 for more recognition initiatives and further information). Feedback that recognizes efforts can be given individually, and feedback about the progress of the educational team (as a group) “would facilitate interactions and information exchange between and among individuals, minimize competition and reinforce cooperation” (Tremblay et al., 2005, p. 74). Cohesion within the educational childcare establishment team would help satisfy the need for relatedness, which underpins member motivation.

Along the same lines, the Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance (AQCPÉ; 2021, p. 15) sums up, in its own very interesting way, four levers for mobilizing a team to improve educational quality, namely information sharing, buying-in, taking ownership and recognition:

1. Information sharing: *“I feel mobilized when I understand and am understood.”*

2. Buying-in: “I feel mobilized when I believe in it [the project and the team].”
3. Taking ownership: “I feel mobilized when I participate and contribute.”
4. Recognition: “I feel mobilized when I receive recognition commensurate with my efforts.”

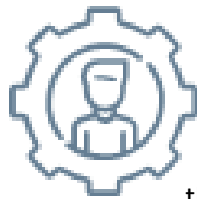
2.2 Concrete strategies to prepare for team mobilization

2(a) Buying-in, mobilizing, preparing and acquiring the tools you need



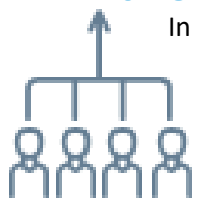
Management team members need to be convinced of the importance of educational quality, the need for an improvement process, their ability to change their own practices and to support change, and the potential of their educational team. It's to their advantage to learn about improving educational quality and mobilization. In this way, they will feel more competent to support the educational team, and ensure that the next steps run smoothly.

2(b) Making structural changes to the organization



Managers are way ahead if they set an example for their educational team by implementing structural quality measures that support the work of the educational staff. For instance, this may mean juggling schedules to offer an instrumental break, setting up mentoring among colleagues, allocating a budget for continuing education for the entire team, and applying measures to facilitate a work-study balance so that all the educational staff can acquire recognized qualifications in early childhood education (e.g. encouraging the [Early Childhood Work-Study Program](#)).

2c. Rallying the team around a shared project



In order to mobilize the educational staff to improve the quality of education at its educational childcare establishment, some managers suggest building on the team's shared values to gain acceptance for a change resulting from implementing proposed improvements at the educational childcare establishment. What motivates members of the educational childcare establishment team to work together, from the bottom up? What values do they share? Overall child development, promotion of quality at the educational childcare establishment and the desire to constantly improve can serve as a bond between all the educators on the team, making them feel stronger about moving forward together. Mobilization to improve educational quality then becomes a shared project.

2(d) Involving the team in the various stages



Several of the managers interviewed mentioned the importance of involving educators in decision-making related to the continuous improvement process of educational quality. Since this process is associated with changes in their educational practices, educators are directly called upon to develop professionally. By choosing suggestions and actions that are consistent with what the educational staff want to work on, they will be more inclined to personally support the objectives of the changes to come, and to voluntarily work hard to achieve them (Sheldon and Elliot, 1998, cited in Grenier et al., 2012).

2(e) Providing support, setting goals and evaluating each employee



In order to ensure that each member of the educational staff is committed to improving the quality of education at the educational childcare establishment, managers should offer individual, personalized coaching. First, they can establish a professional development plan with each educational staff member, targeting observable and measurable objectives and reflecting together on the small and large changes to be made to achieve them. Then, it is useful to ensure regular follow-up of this action plan in order to assess what has been put in place and the results obtained, as well as to adjust objectives accordingly. Lastly, it is a good idea to recognize everyone's contribution to the process established in order to appreciate their efforts and perseverance, especially when it has been difficult.

2(f) Planning regular reminders and scheduling regular follow-ups

On a group level, managers benefit from regular reminders and follow-ups with the educational staff to ensure team mobilization over time. These can take the form of meetings at which the team's strengths and progress are discussed. Among other things, efforts can be recognized by giving examples of observations made with groups and by showing videos of exemplary practices (with the prior agreement of parents to film the group). Once the strengths and progress have been recognized, it is then possible to recall the common objectives to be achieved and to review the next steps.

Preparing to mobilize the educational staff towards change would be an important step in ensuring the smooth implementation of actions to enhance educational quality at the educational childcare establishment, a major team project. The following sections also address preparation for team mobilization by inviting managers to lay the groundwork for more specific actions, i.e. communicating the Assessment Report results to the educational childcare establishment staff, as well as choosing the avenues for improvement and actions to improve educational quality in the environment.

3. Preparing to Mobilize the Team

“The [assistant managers] took it personally ... A bit like me, we all had a lot of emotional reactions ... the educators’ reactions were mixed (disappointment, incomprehension, pride, questioning).”

3.1 A bit of theory

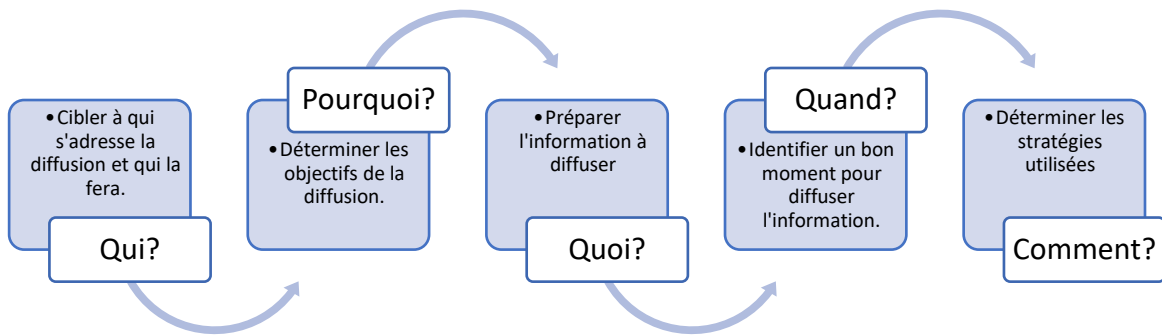
After preparing to mobilize team members, now is the time to think about a plan for communicating the results to them, so as to encourage their involvement. In this way it will be possible to ensure bidirectional information sharing, i.e. the expression of information, expectations and feelings of both management and educational team members in order to collectively commit to quality improvement at the educational childcare establishment. This stage is social and emotional on one hand, and cognitive and linguistic on the other.

An interesting point!

In 2019, following Pilot Project II (carried out by a team of researchers at UQAM and Université Laval to test the assessment process and tools aimed at childcare centres (CPEs) and day care centres – Groups of 0- to 5-year-olds), two focus groups with educators who had already been assessed enabled them to express their point of view. A large proportion of them (over 25%) had not had access to their childcare establishment’s assessment results, about which they were disappointed. Among the managers interviewed most recently (2022), 70% reported having communicated the assessment results to the educators. Thus, from 2019 to 2022, there still seems to be a percentage of educators who still do not have access to the assessment results, and this may be an obstacle to the motivation required to improve educational quality. The simple fact of circulating the results to the educational team appears to be a first step in beginning the task of improving educational quality in childcare centres².

² However, it is worth noting that under an amendment made to section 5.1 of the Educational Childcare Act and a transitional provision introduced by the Act to amend the Educational Childcare Act to improve access to the educational childcare services network and complete its development in 2022, the Ministère will publish the results of the educational quality assessment and improvement process when all permit holders have been assessed at least once.

It is important to properly plan the dissemination of results to the educational team. Walter et al. (2015) developed a model (see Figure 1 below) detailing various parameters to comply with when communicating the results to an individual or a team, specifically in the context of educational quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS). These parameters are found in numerous communication frameworks (e.g. Macoubrie and Harrison, 2013; Swanson, 2013).



Adapted from Walter, Torres and Aldebot-Green, 2015

Figure 1. Parameters to be organized when communicating results

On reading the model of Walter et al. (2015), the principal message is that it is always better to plan the dissemination of results, paying particular attention to parameters that can be summarized in five questions: “Who?”, “Why?”, “What?”, “When?”, and “How?”. They will be explained individually below.

Who?

Identify the target audiences. Managers know their childcare establishments and what would be the most effective way of disseminating information. Sometimes, they feel it is more appropriate to present information to the entire educational team or only by subgroups (e.g. to infant room educators and those working with groups of children aged 18 months and older). When there is a great deal of variability in the assessment between groups, or in order to respect the confidentiality of certain results, some managers will prefer to present the information individually to the educational staff.

It is also useful to think about the professional and personal characteristics of the people who will receive the information and are likely to influence the type of information that will be disseminated and, above all, how it will be disseminated, in order to meet various needs (social, emotional, cognitive and language). For example: qualifications and experience in early childhood education, sense of self-efficacy, performance- or learning-oriented attitude and the relational climate within the childcare establishment team. This would help avoid situations in which educators with a low sense of self-efficacy – in other

words, who doubt their ability to deal with different situations and have what they need to succeed – would feel threatened and view feedback as an attack on their competency (Grenier et al., 2012).

Identify the key disseminator of the information. It is a good idea to think of a key person at the childcare establishment who will be responsible for disseminating the assessment results. This person must demonstrate both personal and professional qualities. First, on a professional level, knowledge of early childhood education and educational quality will add to his or her credibility. Therefore, this person should have a good grasp of the content of the report and a good understanding of the Ministère’s Measure to Assess and Improve Educational Quality, and be well versed in the childcare establishment’s educational program and *Accueillir la petite enfance* (in French only) (Ministère de la Famille, 2019). It is also important that this key person has the essential personal skills for dissemination of the Assessment Report results: ability to communicate clearly and effectively (e.g. be concise and speak with a calm voice), ability to maintain a bond of trust with those he or she deals with, ability to listen and ability to be open, empathetic, respectful and flexible.

Why?

Determine the objectives for disseminating this information. For managers, thinking about the reasons for disseminating results helps to guide further action. Why is it important to disseminate the results to the educational team? What is the team’s starting point and what are the results that you would like them to achieve? What changes in knowledge and practices should the team target? By asking themselves these questions, managers will be able to target the “useful and lasting changes that should occur in [the educators] and whose presence is appreciable at the end of a prolonged process” (Legendre et al., 2005, p. 960). This is where managers describe the objectives to be achieved, i.e. what educators will now know (knowledge to be acquired) or be able to do (educational practices to be improved) as a result of this results dissemination process. The educational staff is key to the objectives, which concern the knowledge they will acquire or the practices they will improve.

In order to help motivate the team to work on improving educational quality, objectives should be demanding, but achievable, and organized in several stages to allow for progression (Grenier et al., 2012).

What?

Identify the information to be communicated to the team. Next, managers need to identify which results from among all the detailed information in the Assessment Report, they would like to share and explain to the educational team. For example, managers need to determine whether they will discuss the entire Assessment Report with the educational staff, use only the summary of results presented at the end of the report, or summarize results and observations in words or graphics. On the topic of communicating results, Bourgon and Lavallée (2005) state that “it is important to remember the context of the observation when communicating the results. It is also necessary to put the results into perspective, even when they are quite negative; there is no need to panic and cause people to feel demoralized. It should once again be remembered ... that the figures are less important than the observations themselves.” (p.

52). So, just like the feedback provided in the Assessment Report, which is intended to be constructive, it is important that the message relayed to the educational staff focuses on the strengths of the educational team before presenting the points to be improved, that the comments rather than the figures be emphasized, and that the results be communicated using an encouraging tone that gives rise to reflection and not reaction.

When?

Determine the right time to communicate the information. The AQCPE (2021) states that while there is no perfect time for starting a quality improvement process, it is nevertheless appropriate to examine the current situation at the childcare establishment before proceeding. Is the childcare establishment team stable? Have new children been fully integrated? Are there any particular conflicts within the team at the present time? Next, it is advisable to consider the daily lives of the educational team members and the right time to communicate results to them. Would it be better for them to have these meetings or discussions during the day, evening or at another time? They can be consulted about this. Ideally, educators should be rested and in a state of mind that is ready to learn.

How?

Determine what strategies to adopt and implement. Geffray's dissertation (2022) notes that "Even if feedback is one of the most influential instruments in learning (Masson, 2020), we still need to know how to best give feedback so that people's intrinsic motivation is strengthened" (p. 57).

This leads us to wonder whether the Assessment Report results should be communicated in writing or verbally, whether virtually or in person. Indeed, it would seem that less favourable feedback is best delivered in person (verbally face-to-face) because this would improve people's motivation (Fong et al., 2019).

Next, another step is to schedule, in the same meeting and possibly in subsequent meetings (depending on the timeframe used to communicate the results), the activities and discussions that will follow once the results have been given for the purpose of identifying actions that will make it possible to work on improving educational quality at the childcare establishment. First, in order to support staff on a social and emotional level, it is a winning formula to create a climate of trust to meet the needs of the educators on the team in terms of autonomy, competence and relatedness. This relationship of trust and the response to their various needs would be associated by staff members with greater commitment, well-being and satisfaction, as well as better knowledge and skills (Rigby and Ryan, 2018). Moreover, under these conditions, educators would be more likely to share their ideas, question their current practices and collaborate in improvement (Thornton and Cherrington, 2014).

Managers have mentioned that the "report, as drafted, makes them feel proud of the work they have done as a group and strengthens team spirit to continue working together" (Geffray, 2022, p. 93). Pointing out to the educational team what they do well, so that they can recognize these behaviours, and repeat

and improve them, would also be important in supporting the need for competence underlying motivation (Buckingham and Goodall, 2019). In fact, Grenier et al. (2012) suggest using and presenting feedback to value the educational team and thereby recognize their efforts. For example, this could involve accompanying observed strengths with video recordings of the educational staff's best practices (with their approval and that of the parents of the children in the group).

Once a climate conducive to learning has been created, it is then possible to address, as a team, strategies to implement proposed improvements to be considered, and thus achieve the previously set objectives. The most recent advances in learning strategies point out that we learn more when we co-construct our learning, and at a pace that respects the learning process. In other words, educators gain, in particular, from being in action, discussing and sharing their practices, explaining themselves to each other, solving problems, reflecting and combining theory and practice to further their knowledge and skills. They also benefit from having time between meetings to consolidate their new knowledge and skills, and thus co-construct sustainable learning.

In short, "optimal feedback would be based on [the educational staff's] perspective, giving choices for solutions with advice, based on clear expectations, in a calm voice that avoids making judgments about the individual (Manganelli et al., 2018)" (in Geffray, 2022, p. 62).

"It is important to share this report with the educators. But you have to tread lightly because many people will take it personally."

3.2 Concrete strategies for disseminating the Assessment Report results to childcare establishment staff

3(a) Planning various parameters for disseminating the Assessment Report



The step to communicate the Assessment Report results from Servirplus to the educational staff should be well planned. To do this, it is a good idea to answer a number of questions before taking action: Who will receive the report results? Who will be responsible for this communication? Why disseminate the results? What results should be communicated? When? What communication strategies should be adopted?

3(b) Capitalizing on team strengths and the comments



To encourage professional development, it is important to reassure the educational staff about their skills, while showing confidence in the improvements to be targeted.

With this in mind, the managers who were interviewed recommend you start by naming the strengths, by using the comments instead of the figures, and showing sensitivity. When the information given for improvement is concrete, it would seem that the attention of the education team members is focused more on the behaviours to be improved than on the rather negative feedback.

3(c) Communicating the results to parents



Managers who have also communicated Assessment Report results to the parents of the children at the educational childcare establishment strongly recommend that this be done. In fact, at the childcare establishments where the assessment results were shared³ with the parents, the entire educational team received encouragement and congratulations from the parents. Such appreciation helped reassure the childcare establishment staff about their competency.

³ When the publication of results becomes mandatory (see section 5.1 of the *Educational Childcare Act*), childcare establishments will be required, within 30 days of receiving a notice to that effect from the Ministère, to inform the parents of children under their care that the results have been published. Regardless of this requirement, informing parents of the results may be useful to the childcare establishment's quality improvement process, and is worth considering.

4. Choosing, Implementing and Monitoring Proposed Improvements to Educational Quality

“The management team first drew up a list of priorities for the proposed improvements to be prioritized - WHAT. These were added to a calendar - WHEN. Next, the educators were consulted at a team meeting and they made their suggestions as to the HOW.”

4.1 A bit of theory

The Assessment Report is intended to be a work tool for childcare establishments. This is a neutral, objective external view of the quality of educational practices. Jeon et al. (2014) show that U.S. early childhood education and care (ECEC) centers participating in a quality rating and improvement system have higher quality levels than those that do not. We can therefore assume that already the Assessment Report supports the management team in its work to maintain and improve the educational quality of childcare establishments by providing an objective snapshot of current practices, as well as avenues for improvement to be considered. It is therefore worthwhile to use it.

A point of interest!

Out of the managers interviewed, 80% have implemented some, if not most, of the proposed improvements in the report.

During the assessment, if an educational childcare establishment does not obtain a passing score for one or more of the educational quality dimensions, it is then required to send an action plan to the Ministère in order to raise the educational quality level of the childcare establishment and show how the proposed improvements in the Assessment Report will be applied (see, for instance, p. 37 of the Explanatory Guide). If a childcare establishment has obtained a passing score for all the dimensions, it will then not be required to send an action plan to the Ministère. Nonetheless, it is still appropriate to establish an action plan to maintain and improve the educational quality of the childcare establishment by determining the avenues for improvement that make sense in this situation.

In her model, Strehmel (2016) shows that managers have a positive influence on the work of the educational staff when they support their professional development and engage in a continuous quality improvement process. Thanks to the good working conditions and shared vision established within the educational team, professionalism, empathy, motivation, a sense of competence and autonomy, reflection and learning are encouraged among educators. The implementation of such initiatives that would meet the need for competence, autonomy and relatedness would even be necessary to motivate

them to work towards maintaining and improving quality, and increase their satisfaction and well-being, which in turn would improve their ability to implement positive change in their educational practices.

In its document on the implementation of a continuous improvement process for educational quality, the AQCPE (2021) states that, in order to determine the changes to be prioritized (steps, sequence, resources required), four main steps should be considered: (1) observe the overall picture as provided in the Assessment Report, (2) plan the changes to be made, (3) implement them and (4) assess whether the objectives have been achieved. Figure 2 below shows these four steps, which are described in detail in the paragraphs that follow.

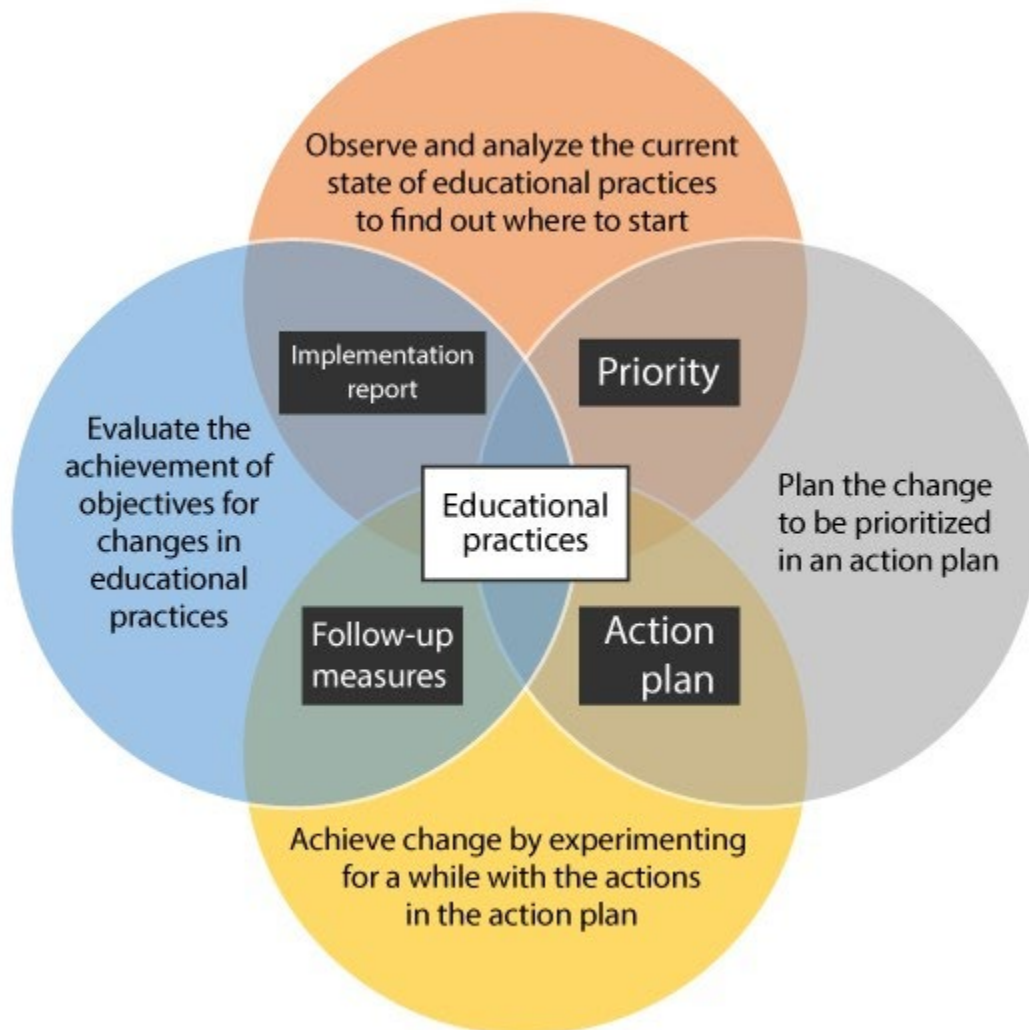


Figure 2. Steps in the quality improvement process, adapted by the AQCPE (2021, p.6)

1. Observation

The idea is to paint a picture of current educational practices in order to determine the team's basic level of quality. The childcare establishment staff can then work on taking ownership of the guidelines and

practices to be adopted in accordance with the existing tools and frameworks so as to fully understand the practices to be advocated. In this same step, we then focus on reading and understanding the assessment report, which provides a snapshot of the educational quality of the team’s “current” practices. The two are then linked to one another to analyze the results, which is already proposed in the Assessment Report sent by Servirplus. It is then appropriate to work with the educators to highlight the strengths in their practices, those that need to be improved first and then second, and the factors likely to explain the current state, for the individual or for the team as a whole. Such discussions will help prioritize the changes to be made.

An interesting point!

When establishing an action plan for maintaining and improving quality, managers reported using various approaches: 50% set priorities among managers, and 30% consulted the educators instead to do so. Two childcare establishments opted for a mixed approach, with the managers first drawing up a list of priorities for the improvements to be considered, and then consulting educators to obtain their feedback.

2. Planning

Once there is a picture of current practices, it is time to make a concrete plan of action, with the measures to move toward the changes that need to be prioritized. The avenues for improvement proposed in the Assessment Report, in the *Summary* section of “Structural Quality and Associated Factors” are especially relevant here.

To begin with, it is best to ensure that the childcare establishment team has a common, shared vision of the objectives to be achieved. Managers can then use discussions, debates, logbooks or surveys to enable everyone to express their vision of the changes to be made in the short, medium and long term. On this basis, it is then possible to agree on team objectives that are demanding but achievable. To plan the achievement of these objectives, it is then important to identify individual, group and structural-organizational actions that will move the educational team toward the prioritized changes.

In addition, a single action alone (e.g. reading a reference text or taking a training course on a measuring instrument) is less likely to lead to changes in educational practices than several such actions at the same time. **Therefore, the action plan should include both individual and group actions, with a follow-up and reminders; for example, a sensitivity training course for the educational staff, followed by video recordings in each group of a moment when sensitivity is shown; an analysis of clips in individual meetings, and then back to a staff meeting with exemplary video clips, accompanied by open-ended questions.**

Finally, it is useful to consider at this stage the methods used to supervise the educational team’s progress; for example, offering informal feedback (observations by managers, among co-workers, or with a coach,

observations with a standardized tool, and video recording), carrying out self-assessments, writing up perceptions in logbooks, and collecting written records.

At this planning stage, it is appropriate to mention again the *Programme de soutien financier pour l'amélioration de la qualité éducative des services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance*, in particular component B, which offers customized support to childcare centres (CPE) and day care centres that failed to obtain all the passing scores required during the quality assessment. For further details, childcare centres (CPEs) and day care centres may contact their advisor at the Ministère or consult the Ministère's [web page](#).

3. Action

At the action stage of the quality improvement process, the childcare establishment team experiments with the actions identified in the action plan for a defined period of time in order to initiate change. The role of management staff is then to support the educators' experimentation in terms of emotions, emerging concerns, their mobilization over time, and their professional autonomy. Their role is also to monitor how change is progressing by setting up the follow-up mechanisms mentioned in the action plan, adjusting the actions identified where necessary, and recording the progress, findings, success stories, problems and spinoffs.

4. Assessment

The final step in the process is to assess whether the objectives set out in the action plan have been achieved. This makes it possible to determine to what extent changes have been made in the previously targeted educational practices. More specifically, this stage involves measuring the changes and the achievement of objectives (quantitative progress in results or qualitative progress as perceived by the educational team, an external observer, managers and parents), as well as identifying new individual and group needs. It is also a time to do the implementation report on the change process by identifying the facilitators, challenges and lessons learned by each person, as well as by determining the strategies for sharing this implementation report (educational team, Board of Directors and parents).

The implementation report applies to all childcare establishments implementing an educational quality improvement process. However, for childcare establishments that have not obtained a passing score for all the dimensions during their quality assessment, it is mandatory to send this report to the Ministère. The Explanatory Guide (Ministère de la Famille, 2023, p. 41) mentions in particular that managers have up to one year to implement their action plan and then to complete and send the action plan implementation report via the secure online platform.

4.2 Strategies for choosing, implementing and following up on avenues for improvement

4(a) Taking the time to think about the order of priority of proposed improvements



It can be tempting to prioritize the weakest results in the assessment report. However, consulting work tools again, such as the Guide to Interpreting the Assessment Report, makes it possible to determine, together with the educational staff, which educational practices to target first. **Quality of the Interactions between the Educational Staff and the Children would be the educational quality dimension to work on first because it is more consistently associated with child learning and development, compared to other dimensions of quality.**

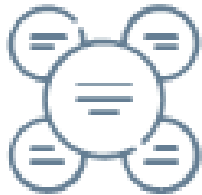
Within the Quality of interactions dimension, improvements in the dimensions of Domain Group A (social and emotional) should be considered first, before tackling improvements in the dimensions of Domain Group B (cognitive and language). In fact, authentic, warm, sensitive and predictable relationships provide children with the basic security they need to then explore their environment. However, within Domain Group A, if demonstrations of a negative climate are noted in the groups, the negativity should be dealt with first because it is to be avoided in educational childcare establishments. That is how we can initially prioritize the proposed improvements in the Assessment Report.

4(b) Starting with one dimension



Most managers interviewed recommend to first take a “bite-sized” approach to improving educational quality. It is possible to start by targeting one dimension of educational quality on which to work. Does a proposed improvement in inappropriate practices stand out as a particular priority for ensuring the overall development of children at the childcare establishment? Does the Assessment Report mention certain behaviours or factors that are never/rarely observed in the groups? Does the childcare establishment team want to start with the proposed improvements that seem to be the simplest, with a short-term deadline, to motivate itself? Breaking down a complex task into smaller objectives is sometimes more encouraging!

4(c) Reflecting on actions for Structural Quality and associated factors



Factors associated with structural quality (e.g. initial and ongoing training, implementation of an educational program, and staff schedule) would make it easier for the educational staff to adopt quality educational practices, or limit any possibility for it. Some of the managers interviewed indicated that structural and organizational changes were the easiest and the first that they implemented. Here, the management team needs to put in place measures that support the professional development and leadership of the educational staff and that create favourable employment conditions and a shared vision for improving

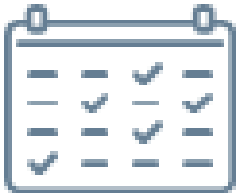
the quality of the interactions, environment and experiences offered to the children and their families. Moreover, in the Summary of the Structural Quality and associated factors dimension in the Assessment Report, managers will find suggestions for structural and organizational actions influencing the process quality dimensions.

4(d) Opting for a mix of individual and group actions that are sustainable over time



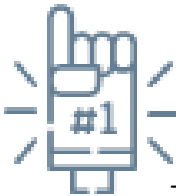
It is interesting to think about actions that address both the individual and group needs of the educational staff members at the childcare establishment. It is also a good idea to search for clues in the Assessment Report that identify whether the needs for improvement are individual (e.g. “a minority”, “variable”) and/or group needs (e.g. “the majority”). On the basis of the observations reported in the Assessment Report, managers can determine which behaviours or factors can be the subject of readings, training courses, workshops, discussions, group observations, meetings, video recordings followed by reflection, for a particular member of the educational staff or for the entire educational team.

4(e) Collecting data and documenting the process



Regular follow-ups are an essential step to incorporate in the action plan. What’s more, keeping track of progress helps to satisfy the educational team’s need for competence, autonomy and relatedness. Follow-ups can take the form of individual or group meetings, observations of each educator, group reassessments using standardized quality assessment tools, written reflections at given periods, etc.

4(f) Emphasizing each step taken



As the educational establishment team moves forward in its continuous improvement process, it helps to highlight the steps that each educator has completed, as well as those of the team as a whole, i.e. to recognize and appreciate the personal qualities demonstrated, the results observed, the quality of work carried out and the efforts made. The educational staff reassured of their competence will be more inclined to continue to put themselves off balance, by reflecting, questioning their practices, trying things out, challenging themselves, etc.

Conclusion

This Guide to Using the Assessment Report was developed in response to a need expressed by the managers for a tool to support their work to improve educational quality in their educational childcare establishment. In fact, although the pedagogical leadership of managers plays a decisive role in overall child development, particularly by putting in place structural and organizational conditions that support the quality of the processes (Douglass, 2019), research findings nevertheless indicate that the tasks associated with this function lack clarity, that the management staff assigned to this role are not well prepared for it, and that the other tasks limit the time they have available for improving educational quality (Rouse and Spradbury, 2016). Despite the many challenges of providing instructional support to the educational team, the management staff of childcare establishments feel that taking part in a measure to assess and improve educational quality is influential in helping childcare establishments to improve the interactions, premises and experiences offered to the children if accompanied by resources and support (Schulman et al., 2012). This Guide has therefore been prepared on the basis of suggestions from managers who have experimented with the quality improvement measure of the Québec Ministère de la Famille.

This Guide has covered reading and interpreting the Assessment Report, mobilizing the team at the educational childcare establishment, communicating the Assessment Report to the educational childcare establishment staff, and prioritizing the proposed improvements and implementing actions and follow-up. Each of these four sections provides information on the topic, as well as the strategies proposed by educational childcare establishment managers and organizations or associations that have shared their experiences.

In conclusion, here is some advice from and for managers of educational childcare establishments about the Ministère's Measure:

“A word of advice? Don't be afraid or nervous. Be open.”

“Put your emotions aside. It's not a newsletter, it's a work tool.”

“You're certainly going to be asking yourself how you're going to go about improving all that. Well, don't hesitate to call a specialist for help.”

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