



## Québec Entrepreneurship Contest



**“High level of academic motivation and greater self-esteem from students with learning problems!”**

## IMPLEMENTATION OF ENTREPRENEURIAL PROJECTS IN THE SCHOOLS: POSITIVE AND POWERFUL SPIN-OFFS

The Québec Entrepreneurship Contest, ten years after its creation, has enabled nearly a million participants to develop almost 50 000 entrepreneurial projects at educational levels from elementary school to university. Eager to measure the effects produced by the implementation of projects designed to foster the development of entrepreneurial characteristics in the schools (leadership, solidarity, a sense of initiative, etc.), the organization undertook a survey of project coordinators, participants – students – and their parents. Feedback was received from nearly 2 000 respondents from throughout Québec.

**“Participating in the Québec Entrepreneurship Contest is also a very fine source of outside motivation for the students.”**

This document presents the main findings of the survey, which was conducted in June 2008. The survey has shown that projects have very beneficial effects on school retention, on the motivation of teachers who develop such projects with their students, and on the development of the participants’ entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurship also appeared to be a concrete means of building the school’s reputation in the eyes of parents and the community as a whole. Hundreds of respondents expressed great enthusiasm, backed up by many personal examples – all of which confirms the scope of the positive spin-offs generated by such projects.

**“As we went about putting together our class newspaper, it didn’t feel at all like work to the students, who had to draw on numerous competencies for the task. When students take an interest in the activities we give them, they are happy to come to school.”**

### An exceptional response rate

The survey conducted in June 2008 received responses from **459 coordinators** of entrepreneurial projects carried out in 2007-2008, **1824 students** involved in these projects, and **1352 parents**.

“The students are surprising in their creativity. They are so interested that they exceed expectations. Their attention and motivation at work increase enormously, despite the scope of the task at hand. I have also noticed that some students have attained their potential and become self-confident with the help of their peers and by occupying their chosen positions.”



## Significant effects on student motivation

As we know, motivation is a key factor in student success.<sup>1</sup> According to the survey respondents, entrepreneurship in the schools could directly help to increase the motivation of the students involved. In fact, **96.3% of project coordinators and over 89.0% of parents say that young people's motivation increases as they proceed through the steps of an entrepreneurial project (Table 1)**. Almost 9 students out of 10 (87.0%) stated that they are more motivated in such circumstances, thereby confirming the trend observed by their teachers and parents.

Apart from the completed questionnaire, the majority of project coordinators showed that they were enthusiastic about the spin-offs generated by this type of project.

## Young people's motivation within the framework of entrepreneurial projects

Respondents / Questions	Responses in %			
	- Not at all	No opinion	+ A lot	
<b>Project coordinators</b>				
The students' motivation increases	0.22	3.46	<b>22.68</b>	<b>73.65</b>
<b>Parents</b>				
My child's motivation increases	2.96	10.09	<b>30.87</b>	<b>56.09</b>
<b>Students</b>				
My motivation increases	1.68	9.29	<b>33.58</b>	<b>55.45</b>

One significant fact is that **86.5% of the students** mentioned that their participation in an entrepreneurial project **makes them want to go to school more**. Could entrepreneurship be a relevant instrument for motivating student dropouts to stay in school? The survey findings appear to be very encouraging on this score. School dropout is a multifaceted phenomenon and we cannot conclude that carrying out entrepreneurial projects is the only solution to this problem. We can recognize, however, that entrepreneurship is a key factor worthy of our attention.

<sup>1</sup> Québec Federation of Parents' Committees (QFPC), 2008. *Leur réussite, c'est aussi la nôtre*. Online. <http://www.fcpc.qc.ca/reussitescolaire/>. Consulted on September 23, 2008.

The motivating aspect of entrepreneurial projects is demonstrated by the fact that **92.3% of the students indicated that their interest in other projects increased** following their involvement in an entrepreneurial project, a feeling also expressed by the parents (93.8%) and project coordinators (97.9%). These data clearly demonstrate that young people like to develop entrepreneurial projects and that this has a positive impact on the paths they ultimately take. In other words, it has interesting and widespread repercussions for young people.

## Young people who develop entrepreneurial characteristics

The Contest's mission is to help students develop entrepreneurial characteristics such as creativity, leadership, a sense of responsibility, self-confidence and solidarity. The survey findings confirm that our actions are bearing fruit. Indeed, **97.6% of the project coordinators state that the students have developed their entrepreneurial characteristics** by means of projects brought forward in 2007-2008. In the same vein, there has been an increase in the number of students who plan to become involved in entrepreneurial activities, according to those who work with students (91.1%). Even parents (87.7%) have attested to the beneficial impact on their children, who have developed admirable qualities that will serve them throughout their lives.

We should also mention that 90.4% of project coordinators and parents consider that the **school contributes directly to the development of entrepreneurial culture by carrying out such projects**. This makes the school an exceptional conduit for the transmission of entrepreneurial values. To be quite clear, it is not a matter of encouraging business creation through the development of such projects. The main objective is to enable young people to develop characteristics that will be useful to them at various points in their lives. Overall, by developing such qualities, they will become more complete individuals and more committed citizens.

## School retention given a boost

According to the abovementioned survey, 87.1% of project coordinators and 85.6% of parents have observed an **increase in school retention**. This result should interest all school stakeholders, particularly those who deal with the issue of school dropouts. Entrepreneurship is intended to be an additional tool, a concrete and feasible means (in the short term) for encouraging students to pursue their studies. This finding is also likely to be of interest to stakeholders in areas with the highest dropout rates and those working with disadvantaged communities. A number of project coordinators have also pointed out, without any prompting, that young people from disadvantaged communities or at risk of dropping out seem to have a pronounced interest in continuing within a school setting after their projects have been completed. *“Young people are happy to be identified with their project. Their self-esteem is truly increased. Young people with problems who take part in the project are better accepted by others, because there is less of a tendency to label them as different.”*

## A significant influence on behavioural and learning problems

Although reducing various behavioural and learning problems are not Contest objectives, it is very pleasant to observe that the rise in entrepreneurial projects has had a significant impact on the participants. Project coordinators have noted a **39.7% reduction in language and learning difficulties and a 59.6% drop in behavioural and attention problems**. Comments gleaned from teachers confirm this fact. For example: *“In my opinion, students with learning problems benefit from these projects. This enables them to show that they have other abilities than those required to perform well in academic matters. They are the first to want to participate. Their self-esteem is greatly improved, even though they are not the only ones taking part.”* And, as one project coordinator put it, *“After the projects, the students in my class were much more united and there was a big drop in disputes among students.”*

## Teachers' motivation: A possible solution

Entrepreneurship's positive impact on motivation also extends to the adults in charge of the projects – adults who are, for the most part, teachers at all the educational levels concerned. In this connection, **nearly 99.3% of the project coordinators say that their motivation increases as they perform their duties**. This information is encouraging for the education community, proving, as it does, that there are ways of increasing teacher motivation, often put to the test during the school year. Teachers often inherit classes with too many students, they are increasingly called upon to perform too many tasks (which are also increasingly demanding), they must deal with a lack of professional resources, and students' lack of discipline and parents' expectations require them to become more and more involved. For a significant number of teachers, this situation unfortunately leads to a lack of motivation and burnout. Normand Richard, a highly committed teacher, attests to the impact of the *Festival des conteurs* on his professional practice: *“This project caused my students to grow, but with time I realized that I had benefitted from it just as much as they had, if not more. I believe that I have become a much better teacher since that time. With this project, the class won six different prizes. Since then, I have had some incredible experiences...”*

**“Significant progress has been observed among our clients with moderate learning difficulties. Their creativity, organization, motivation and personal development have substantially increased within the framework of this project.”**

Moreover, considering that schools benefit from increased parental support, it is very encouraging to observe that over 50% of project coordinators – 58.5%, to be more precise – have noticed increases in parental involvement when their children take part in entrepreneurial projects. Also, about 7 out of every 10 parents (73.4%) state that their involvement in the school has increased since their child began participating in this type of project. This is a highly stimulating piece of information: *“Parents also tell me that this type of project is fantastic and that they see changes in their children, who gain self-confidence and are more capable of being assertive. One mother told me that her daughter (who used to be quite shy) has become very outgoing this year, due to our many entrepreneurial projects.”*



**“The students are very proud of their achievement. They start to feel competent. Moreover, students experiencing difficulties often become competent and obtain the recognition of their peers.”**

## Entrepreneurship: An effective means of promoting the school

School administrators will undoubtedly be happy to know that 92.1% of project coordinators develop a feeling of belonging to their school as they carry out entrepreneurial projects. The latter, moreover, have also observed an increased feeling of belonging to the school among 92.3% of the students themselves. It would therefore be advantageous for school administrators who wish to mobilize the staff and students to promote entrepreneurial projects in their school.

There is another fact that is likely to be of interest to school administrators: **entrepreneurship has spin-offs not only inside the school but outside as well.** In this respect, the project coordinators affirm that entrepreneurial projects enable the school to establish connections with its milieu (90.4%) and to position itself within the community (90.2%). Parents confirm these two findings at the respective rates of 88.9% and 91.7%. As one parent put it, *“The impact on the feeling of belonging and school pride is the most obvious.”*

**“This contributes to our students’ motivation and thus to the transfer of learning.”**

## Conclusion Positive spin-offs for all

The organization is proud to note that the efforts made over the course of the past 10 years have borne fruit. This survey on the spin-offs of entrepreneurial projects carried out within Québec schools confirms the importance of continuing to promote entrepreneurship at this level. The spin-offs of such projects, as the survey reveals, are positive both for the students and teachers as well as for the parents and school.

The Québec Entrepreneurship Contest team does not feel authorized, however, to proclaim victory at the sight of these findings. It hopes to develop numerous projects targeting, among others, disadvantaged communities and college and university students. It is important for the organization to adapt to the needs of Québec today. But to achieve this, the team is counting on external resources, particularly the Défi de l’entrepreneuriat jeunesse and the Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS). The MELS has supported the mission of the Contest since its inception. Moreover, the MELS’ Introduction to Entrepreneurship Measure, a means of funding elementary and secondary schools and CEGEPs to help them to support entrepreneurial projects carried out by their students<sup>2</sup>, is a highly effective incentive. This is, therefore, a winning partnership. Thousands of young people have an opportunity to become involved in projects whose positive effects could follow them throughout their lives. Keep in mind that entrepreneurial projects also have repercussions on teacher motivation, the school’s reputation in the community and parental involvement in the school.

These findings clearly demonstrate that the Québec Entrepreneurship Contest, through its many spin-offs, helps in **transforming Québec one project at a time.**

<sup>2</sup> Secrétariat à la jeunesse. 2008. *Le défi de l’entrepreneuriat jeunesse*. Online. <http://www.defi.gouv.qc.ca/terrain/sensibilisation.htm>. Consulted on September 24, 2008.

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