FRAME OF REFERENCE

Evaluation and approval of dictionaries for english language arts and english as a second language programs

Elementary and Secondary Education

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PART ONE : GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Orientations of the elementary- and secondary-level English Language Arts and English as a Second Language programs**

    Both the elementary and secondary English Language Arts and English as a Second Language programs stress the importance of developing oral communication (speaking and listening) and written communication (reading and writing) in a rich environment that provides access to a variety of resources.

    To help students develop their competencies, they are required to use relevant and effective strategies. They must also adopt certain techniques to help them overcome difficulties in writing, reading and oral communication. Students must learn how to orchestrate a multitude of internal and external resources to promote understanding and use of the English language. In this learning context, the dictionary is a useful tool.

2. **Role of the dictionary in teaching and learning**

    While it is up to the institution to provide students with a variety of reference tools, it is the responsibility of the teaching staff to guide and help students to use these tools effectively in a variety of situations, both in and out of school.

    The dictionary that the student should learn to use is generally adapted to the requirements of a cycle or educational level and a subject (English language arts or English as a second language). Its content provides a solid reference framework, but it is adapted (number and choice of words, definition content, examples and illustrations) so as to take into account the students' learning process.

    The role of the dictionary intended for students in a learning situation is to allow them to rapidly find a clear answer to any problems encountered and questions asked. It is a tool to be consulted when verifying the meaning, usage, spelling, translation or pronunciation of a particular word.

Bilingual and unilingual dictionaries are admissible since they allow students to adapt to a variety of situations and needs.

Moreover, the various programs for learning English demonstrate that visual aids are an essential element. Thematic learning is also encouraged. In this respect, visual dictionaries and thesauri are resources to be favoured, without, however, setting aside the other dictionary formats (e.g. spelling dictionary, encyclopedic dictionary) as students progress in the development of their competencies. Subject-specific dictionaries and synonym, antonym, rhyming and other dictionaries, should, however, be excluded.

Note: For Elementary Cycle One, the English as a Second Language program places priority on the authenticity of the content (rhymes, songs, stories, etc.) and on oral communication. Thus, the dictionary is not an indispensable resource for learning, unless it is presented in a clear, simple and up-to-date visual format.

3. Prerequisites for approval

Given the preceding explanations, dictionaries may be submitted for approval if they meet the following criteria:

- They are adapted to the learning profile of students, in a given cycle or educational level,

- They are structured as reference works, presenting an overall view of content,

- They conform to the Canadian and Québecois (translation) contexts, and use the metric system.

4. Evaluation of dictionaries

The evaluation of dictionaries deals more specifically with pedagogical and linguistic aspects. The pedagogical aspects concern content (conformity with the program; organization of content to facilitate consultation; adaptation to the students concerned). The linguistic aspects pertain to the relevance and coherence of linguistic elements (including translation, if required) and to sociolinguistic adaptation.

Dictionaries are also evaluated for their material and sociocultural aspects.

The list of approved dictionaries is published on the Web site of the Direction des ressources didactiques.

5. Duration of dictionary approval

The duration of dictionary approval is seven years. The approval may be renewed if, at the end of this period, the dictionary is still current. The purpose of this clause is to ensure that the works take into account lexical progress and trends (neologisms, archaic expressions) and remain current with regard to illustrations.

PART TWO : Evaluation Criteria

Pedagogical Aspects

First criterion:	The work meets the guidelines for English language programs in the Québec Education Program.

Element to Consider	Points for Analysis
1.1 The content of the introductory pages indicates the targeted clientele, the type of dictionary and its specific contribution to the understanding and usage of the language.	1.1.1 The targeted clientele is identified. 1.1.2 Details are provided on the usefulness of the work and its components as a support to language development. 1.1.3 Details are provided on the number and choice of words. 1.1.4 The information provided is clear, concise and useful (e.g. how the work is structured, connotation keys, significance of symbols and abbreviations). 1.1.5 If applicable, the use of labels (numbers, symbols, etc.) is indicated to distinguish meaning and indicate an order of presentation from the most frequent to the least frequent, from the literal to the figurative, etc. 1.1.6 There are links to acquired knowledge and strategies. 1.1.7 The terminology (metalanguage) is consistent with that used in the English language programs. 1.1.8 If the information is organized in a non-alphabetical manner (e.g. insertion of words of the same family), this feature should be indicated and explained.

Pedagogical Aspects

Second criterion:	The work is designed in a way that will help students in their tasks and support them in their understanding and use of the language

Elements to Consider	Points for Analysis
2.1 The organization of content in general and the table of contents (if applicable) enables the student to quickly navigate the reference work.	2.1.1 Page layout is clear and well spaced out, making consultation easy and effective. 2.1.2 The table of contents is designed to provide easy access to the various content. 2.1.3 Tables, appendix, sidebars and illustrations facilitate comprehension of the information.
2.2 Guidelines and examples are provided to help the student understand and speak the language.	2.2.1 Definitions and examples enable the student to clearly understand the meaning or different meanings of a word. 2.2.2 Any difficulties (e.g. pronunciation or spelling of a word) are explained, and the dictionary takes into account any difficulties the students are likely to encounter. 2.2.3 Examples are varied. 2.2.4 Illustrations and plates of illustrations, if any, support the definitions.

Pedagogical Aspects

Third criterion:	The work is suitable for the students for whom it is intended

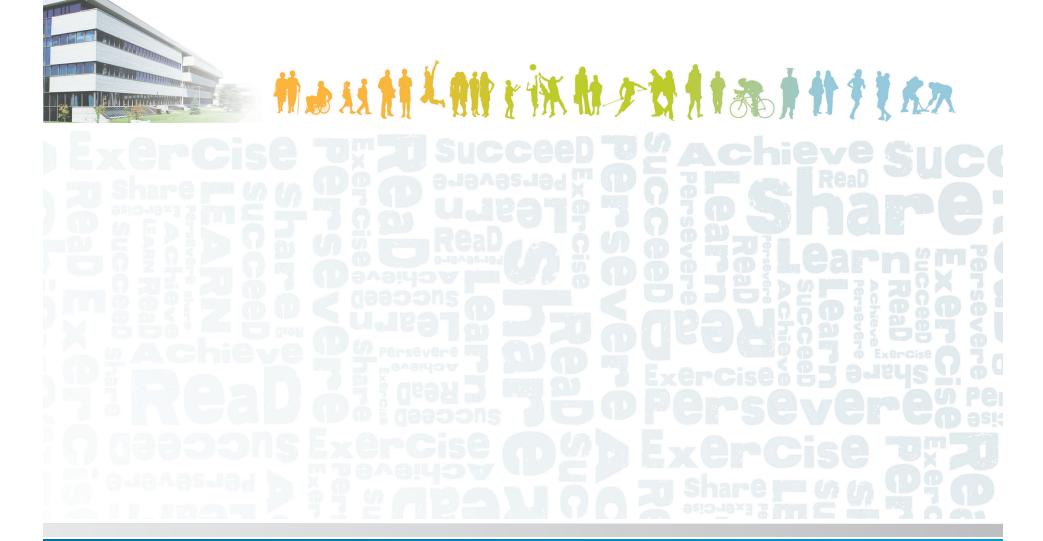| Elements to Consider	Points for Analysis
3.1 Guidelines are provided on how to best consult tables, sidebars, lists, etc., making the dictionary a work that is frequently consulted.	3.1.1 The work is easy to use and, when required, provides explanations on the best way to consult the lists, sidebars, verb tables, etc. 3.1.2 Abbreviations, symbols, pictograms, colour codes and other graphic procedures are clearly explained, and act as backup support.
3.2 The work contains an adequate number and choice of words.	3.2.1 Words found in the dictionary are those most likely to be frequently encountered or used by the student.
3.3 The content (definitions, examples, explanations, illustrations) is presented in a clear manner.	3.3.1 Definitions, explanations, illustrations and examples are clear and easy to understand. 3.3.2 The formulation and level of completeness (e.g. analogy, polysemy) of the definitions is understandable to the targeted students.
3.4 The examples chosen are oriented to the targeted students so as to pique their interest; they are numerous and diversified.	3.4.1 Examples are appropriate to the age and reality of the students: they are in line with students' experience and fields of interest. 3.4.2 Quotations come from a variety of sources that reflect local and other cultures. 3.4.3 When the work provides encyclopedic notes, these are easily understood by the students, and pique their interest.
3.5 The use of labels or typographical methods facilitates the location of important elements.	3.5.1 Character type and size facilitates reading and is appropriate to the students' age group. 3.5.2 Highlighting, colours and pictograms are used appropriately throughout the work, in moderation. 3.5.3 At the elementary level, lowercase characters are used for entries, while small caps may be used at the secondary level.

Linguistic Aspects

First criterion:	The linguistic concepts are sound and coherent

Elements to Consider	Points for Analysis
1.1 The definitions, explanations and rules and the wording that introduces and explains them must be accurate and clear. The examples presented are relevant.	1.1.1 The definitions, explanations, rules and the wording that introduces and explains them are accurate. 1.1.2 The examples properly illustrate the rules and usage. 1.1.3 The wording chosen is appropriate to illustrate words and their use.
1.2 The organization (order, sequence) is coherent and provides students with an accurate representation of the language, considered as a system.	1.2.1 The work's layout makes it easy to identify and find polysemic words. The most common senses of a word are presented first, to avoid overloading the work. 1.2.2 Links are provided between words in order to present the language in a coherent manner. Cross-references are used wisely. 1.2.3 If alphabetical order is not followed, the way in which definitions are presented and classified must be relevant.

Linguistic Aspects

Second criterion:	The work provides for current standards and usage of the language, and is adapted to the Canadian and Québec contexts.

Elements to Consider	Points for Analysis
2.1 The work addresses issues of sociolinguistic adaptation.	2.1.1 The varieties of English (e.g. designations or acceptations proper to a given country or region) are specified; Canadianisms are identified. 2.1.2 The work deals carefully with the varieties of usage, distinguishing common and standard usage. Familiar, archaic or nonstandard labels are indicated. 2.1.3 The choice of words and illustrations reflects the Canadian reality. 2.1.4 The translation conforms to the French used in Québec. 2.1.5 The translation from French to English or from English to French specifies cultural nuances.