



Educational Quality in
HOME DAYCARES
COORDINATED BY
CHILDCARE CENTRES
[CPEs]
HIGHLIGHTS



WHAT IS THE AIM OF THE *GRANDIR EN QUALITÉ 2003* SURVEY?

For the first time in Québec, we have a detailed and representative portrait of the quality of daycare experienced on a daily basis by children 0 to 5 years of age in government-regulated daycares (i.e. *Centres de la petite enfance* — CPEs, home daycares and private daycares). This is being provided by the *Enquête québécoise sur la qualité des services de garde éducatifs* (Québec Survey on the Quality of Educational Daycare), also known as *Grandir en qualité 2003*. It is helping identify and better define measures likely to maintain and improve the quality of educational daycare in light of the strengths and weaknesses observed.

The results of this survey are timely given the context of the rapid development of early childhood daycares in combination with the implementation of the educational program by the *ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille* (MESSF) (Ministry of Employment, Social Solidarity and the Family). It fulfills both the need for information expressed by the daycare network and the recommendation of the Auditor-General to evaluate the quality of daycare provided to children and families.

Many studies in the field of early childhood have shown that the quality of daycare plays a key role in child development in the first few years of life. This reinforces the utility and pertinence of the results of the *Grandir en qualité* survey.

The survey was conducted by the *Institut de la statistique du Québec* (ISQ) (Québec Institute of Statistics) in partnership with educational daycare associations, university researchers and the MESSF (who funded it). A detailed report on the survey was published in June 2004.

The results are also being published in three summary reports, highlighting the main findings of the survey in Childcare Centre daycares (installations de CPE), home daycares coordinated by CPEs and private daycares. This report is primarily addressed to home daycare providers (*Responsables de services de garde* — RSGs) as well as pedagogical consultants, program coordinators and CPE administrators who coordinate home daycares. It can also provide useful information for parents who have children in these daycares.

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FOURNIER, Claire and Carl DROUIN (2004). Educational Quality in Home Daycares Coordinated by Childcare Centres (CPEs) — Highlights, Summary Report n° 2, *Enquête québécoise sur la qualité des services de garde éducatifs*, Québec, Institut de la statistique du Québec, 12 pages.

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OVERALL QUALITY OF DAYCARE — FAIR

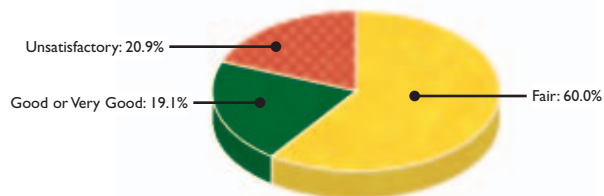
On average, the children in home daycares across Québec were receiving service judged to be of *Fair* quality overall based on the fundamental principles of the government-recommended educational program. Indeed, the survey revealed a total mean score of 2.75 on a scale of 1.00 to 4.00. The score takes into account all items of the measurement tool used to observe quality in these home daycares.

The means by which educational quality was measured in this survey are presented in the box on [page 5](#). Awareness of these will help in understanding the results presented in this summary report. Certain aspects of the methodology of the survey are also presented on [page 11](#).

Obtaining a score of *Fair* in this survey means that the daycare provided to the children generally fulfilled the principles of the educational program without, however, meriting a *Good* or *Very Good* rating.

Since the overall result is an average, it is important to examine the distribution of children by categories of quality. As indicated in Figure 1, though the majority of children (60%) were in home daycares deemed *Fair* in terms of educational quality, 19% were benefiting from daycare judged to be *Good* or *Very Good*. However, a fifth of children (21%) were in home daycares evaluated as *Unsatisfactory* in terms of fulfilling the principles of the educational program.

FIGURE 1 — OVERALL QUALITY OF DAYCARE IN HOME DAYCARES, QUÉBEC, 2003



Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Grandir en qualité 2003*.



SLIGHT VARIATIONS IN EDUCATIONAL QUALITY BY ASPECT

To complete the general portrait based on overall quality, it is important to examine the data in light of the four aspects of educational quality covered in the survey. This can help reveal the strengths and weaknesses in the services being provided by home daycares in Québec.

Each aspect received an educational quality rating of Fair, since the mean scores ranged from 2.50 to 2.99 on the observation scale (Table 1). However, differences were observed among the aspects. The highest mean score was obtained in the aspect of interaction between home daycare providers (RSGs) and the parents (2.97). This was very close to the threshold score of 3.00 which would indicate *Good* quality. In contrast, the physical characteristics of home daycares received the lowest mean score of the four aspects (2.65).

As for the other two aspects assessed by the survey — structure and variation of activities, and interaction between home daycare providers and children — each had a mean score of 2.78.

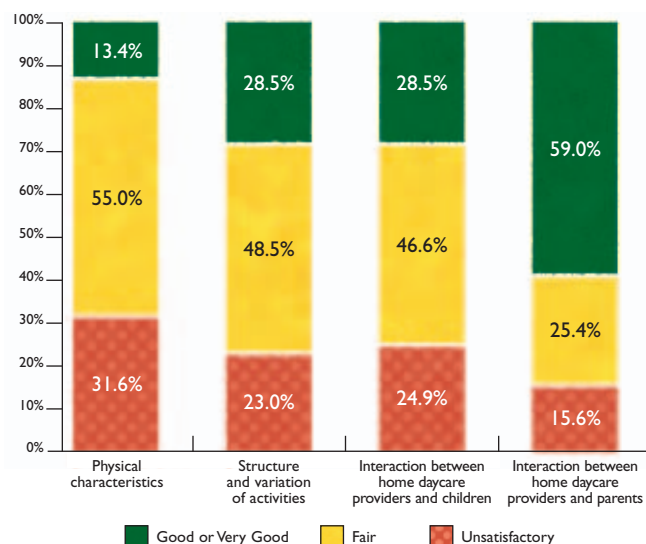
TABLE 1 — EDUCATIONAL QUALITY IN HOME DAYCARES BY ASPECT, QUÉBEC, 2003

	Mean Scores (from 1.00 to 4.00)	Educational Quality
Physical characteristics	2.65	Fair
Structure and variation of activities	2.76	Fair
Interaction between home daycare providers and children	2.76	Fair
Interaction between home daycare providers and parents	2.97	Fair

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Grandir en qualité* 2003.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the relatively favourable score in interaction with the parents can be explained in part by the fact that the majority of children (59%) were in home daycares judged to be *Good* or *Very Good* in this aspect, and a rather small proportion (16%) were in ones assessed as *Unsatisfactory*. In contrast, the weakness observed in physical characteristics reflects the fact that more than half of the children (55%) were in daycares judged to be of *Fair* quality in this aspect, and 32% in daycares evaluated as *Unsatisfactory* in this aspect according to the principles of the educational program and the practices that derive from them.

FIGURE 2 — DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN IN HOME DAYCARES BY LEVEL AND ASPECT OF QUALITY, QUÉBEC, 2003

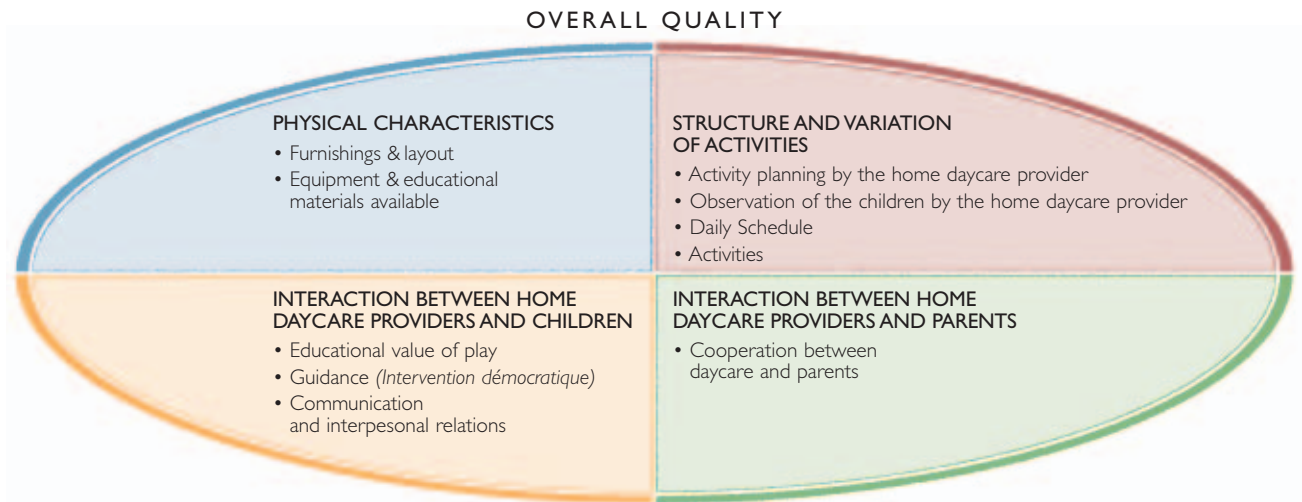


Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Grandir en qualité* 2003.

MEASURING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY IN HOME DAYCARES

The survey measured quality based on the approach outlined in the government's educational program recommended for daycares in Québec. Specialists in the field created an observation scale adapted to the specific characteristics of home daycares, such as the range of ages of the children and the fact that they operate out of private homes. Using this scale and scoring guide, approximately 120 items related to home daycares were evaluated, producing data on overall quality, and four major aspects and sub-aspects of quality.

THE FOUR ASPECTS OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, GRANDIR EN QUALITÉ 2003 SURVEY



The mean scores of quality, namely the measurements of quality calculated for all groups in home daycares, were derived from an index of six categories of quality (from *Very Poor* to *Very Good*). The three lowest indicate *Unsatisfactory* in terms of the underlying principles of the educational program (mean scores under 2.50). Above 2.50, considered minimal in terms of these principles, are *Fair* (2.50 to 2.99), and *Good* or *Very Good*, the highest ratings of educational quality (3.00 to 4.00). The colours red, yellow and green provide a means of distinguishing these three main groups of the index used to present the results of the survey.

GUIDE TO INTERPRETING THE MEAN SCORES OF QUALITY IN THE GRANDIR EN QUALITÉ 2003 SURVEY

MEAN SCORE	EDUCATIONAL QUALITY		FOLLOWS THE PRINCIPLES OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
3.50 to 4.00	Very Good	}	SATISFACTORY
3.00 to 3.49	Good		
2.50 to 2.99	Fair		
2.00 to 2.49	Low	}	UNSATISFACTORY
1.50 to 1.99	Poor		
1.00 to 1.49	Very Poor		

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Grandir en qualité 2003*.

STRENGTHS TO HIGHLIGHT...

An examination of the results for each item in the observation scale reveals those that received *Good* or *Very Good* scores in terms of quality based on the principles of the educational program. These strengths constitute aspects upon which home daycare providers can build and maintain their acquired skills, thereby attaining their goal of providing quality daycare. Here are some examples:

■ Positive characteristics of the physical environment

- The survey revealed that *public, common, and private areas* were clearly defined in home daycares (mean score of 3.97). Given that these daycares are in private homes, it is important that these different spaces be easy to identify. Areas defined as “public” are reserved for clients and the daycare provider, “common” are shared by clients, the daycare provider and family members, and “private” are for the exclusive use of the daycare provider and her family.
- The physical characteristics of the daycares facilitated group activities (3.80) and contributed to maintaining a relaxed atmosphere during lunch (3.84). In addition, the physical environment fostered the smooth transition between family and daycare, both at drop-off (3.51) and at pick-up time (3.49).
- Positive results were also achieved in terms of healthy lunches (3.63) and snacks (3.24). These ratings were based on characteristics such as sufficient portions, variety of foods, correct size of the bites or mouthfuls, and healthy practices related to food consumption.

■ Positive results for activities

- When the home daycare provider worked with an assistant, both demonstrated a high degree of professionalism (3.67). This means that, in general, they shared responsibilities in equitable fashion, shared information with each other while respecting the rules of confidentiality concerning the children and parents, and helped each other in their work.

- Conditions for the development of free play were observed to be very good (3.74). For example, the time for free play was sufficient to allow infants to concentrate and develop their play and/or infants had direct access to materials.
- Activities conducted with the children by home daycare providers were appropriate, especially for those 18 months to 5 years of age (3.41). In particular, this reflects the fact that the home daycare providers stimulated the children’s creativity, fueled their imagination, and took into account their developmental stages and interests.
- The children were offered the possibility of making significant choices such as choosing an activity, a toy from a range of those available, or a playmate, whether after drop-off in the morning (3.43) or near pick-up at the end of the day (3.73). This was also the case during the middle of the day, both for infants (3.34) and for the older children (3.36).

■ Good quality skills in relating to the children

- Home daycare providers showed good listening skills with the children (3.38). They demonstrated positive personal qualities such as attention, enthusiasm, availability, warmth, and patience (3.53), that fostered the establishment of solid relationships with the children.
- They effectively decoded what the infants were trying to communicate (3.48) and used appropriate language to talk to all children (3.33).
- Home daycare providers scored well in terms of helping the children undergo a smooth transition from family to daycare at drop-off time (3.57). They attended to all the children (3.65) towards the end of the day before pick-up time.

■ Strengths in guidance (*intervention démocratique*)

- Home daycare providers demonstrated very good skills in giving instructions adapted to the level of the children (3.78) and consistency and impartiality in applying these (3.55).
- They shared decision-making with the children according to their level of ability (3.23). They showed good skills in positioning themselves so as to be able to keep an eye on all the children in the group (3.30).

■ Good interaction between home daycare providers and parents

- Home daycare providers demonstrated the ability to establish constructive interpersonal relationships with parents, both at drop-off (3.41) and at pick-up time (3.43).
- Ongoing communication between the home daycare and families was good in light of continuity of contact with the parents — e.g., informal conversations, written communications, and telephone calls (3.09).



...BUT ALSO WEAKNESSES TO BEAR IN MIND

The data revealed a number of aspects of educational quality in home daycares judged to be *Unsatisfactory*, particularly in terms of materials and equipment available to the children. Weaknesses were also noted in activity planning and observation of the children on the part of home daycare providers. Low scores were also given on the value placed on play as part of the learning process, and guidance. There were also problems observed with regards to the health and safety of the children. Here are some examples of areas requiring major change in order to provide a minimal level of quality daycare:

■ Lack of equipment and educational materials that foster child development

- *In general, the materials and equipment in home daycares did not adequately fulfill the needs of the children (2.11) because they were not safe or in good condition, or were lacking in quantity or variety.*
- *The quantity of psychomotor materials available to the children such as blocks, hoops, balls, or toy cars was insufficient for fostering development in this regard (2.22). There were also insufficient materials to stimulate the senses (2.29), such as crayons, bells, stuffed animals, and toys used to explore various colours.*
- *Materials for playing outside were also lacking with regards to stimulating psychomotor development (2.24) or other aspects of development such as cognitive and socio-affective (1.43). These low results were also observed in winter conditions.*
- *In addition, educational materials in home daycares rarely reflected the cultural and family diversity found in society — e.g., music from around the world, books showing family and cultural diversity, dolls of both sexes, etc. (1.02).*

■ Improvements needed in the furnishing and layout of home daycares

- *In spite of certain positive aspects of the physical characteristics of home daycares, the survey revealed that in general the physical environment did not adequately respond to the needs and interests of the children (1.70). Some of the items needing improvement in this regard were: child-sized furniture, decorative elements geared to their height, and space reserved for their personal effects.*

- *The yard or playground was considered on average inadequate (2.05) either because there was little variety in the equipment and areas provided (e.g. sandbox areas, lawn areas, “secret” sections and child-sized furniture) or because of hazards (e.g. possible exits from the yard enclosure, the presence of dangerous objects) or the play area was too small.*

■ Deficiencies in activity planning and observations of the children

- *Activity planning on the part of home daycare providers was on average inadequate (1.56). This score is related to the fact that approximately a quarter (24%) of children had a home daycare provider who reported not doing any activity planning, whether informal or written. Yet, activity planning is one of the fundamental elements of quality in educational daycare because it provides a means of addressing the specific needs and interests of the children. An activity program can be written on a weekly or daily basis and should be made available to the parents and, if applicable, the assistant(s).*
- *Low scores were also given for the number and variety of sources of inspiration used by home daycare providers in planning their activities (2.27). In general, little effort was made in programming activities based on the specific interests of the children or seasonal events and celebrations.*
- *Home daycare providers were not well-organized in terms of observing the children (2.36), such as providing a space for themselves in the room where they could observe the majority of the children, employing appropriate observation methods, or using various mnemonic techniques to remember important observations of the children made during the day.*

- In addition, they took few notes of their observations (2.02) and did not follow them up in an appropriate fashion (2.33).

■ Educational value of play not fully achieved

- As mentioned earlier, even though the proper conditions to carry out free play were observed, it was found that educators did not effectively contribute to the development of the children through their play (2.14). Strategies for achieving a Good or Very Good rating for this item include using children's suggestions to build on their play, motivating them to think in creative ways and test their ideas, and asking them to express their thoughts with regards to the games they invent.
- In the same vein, there was inadequate support for children 18 months to 5 years of age in helping them plan or choose their specific activity (1.41). Moreover, home daycare providers rarely organized periods of reflection or review whereby the children in this age category could become aware of their achievements (1.50).

■ Some weaknesses in guidance (*intervention démocratique*)

- On average, home daycares did not score very well in terms of fostering an environment of cooperation among the children (1.93). This result implies that home daycare providers did not put enough emphasis on helping one another and sharing, and did not organize enough play activities or games that put a premium on cooperation.
- Home daycare providers did not provide enough opportunities for the children to resolve their problems and be autonomous (2.07).
- Children who behaved in a disruptive manner were not supported in an appropriate manner so as to modify their behaviour (1.89), for example, by asking them to make amends for the hurt they caused, by helping them discover concrete means of changing their behaviour, or by reminding them of the solutions chosen.

■ Room for improvement in health and safety

- Health and safety aspects of the physical environment of home daycares did not always fully conform to government regulations and recommended practices (1.67). This poor rating resulted from the fact that, among other things, the majority of children (68%) were in home daycares with characteristics that could affect their health and safety (such as unprotected electrical outlets, unrolled electrical wires accessible to the children, plastic bags within reach), or the daycare was not following the norms regarding the child/educator ratio at certain times of the day.
- It was observed that diaper-changing did not adequately conform to the recommended practices of hygiene in this regard (1.29).
- On average, home daycare providers did not wash their hands frequently enough (1.98). This item was assessed in terms of the frequency with which they washed their hands in situations where the transmission of disease or contamination could occur, such as after changing diapers, wiping a child's nose, and before and after meals.

TOWARDS MAKING BETTER USE OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IN HOME DAYCARES

The *Grandir en qualité 2003* survey reveals that, on average, home daycares were of *Fair* quality in terms of following the principles of the educational program promoted by the *MESSF*. This rating indicates that in general, the services these daycares are providing were deemed to be satisfactory but could not be described as *Good*. It indicates there are strong points upon which home daycare providers can build for the future, but also weaknesses which require corrective measures to ensure a higher level of quality.

Among the strong points were the skills shown by home daycare providers in establishing good relationships with the children and parents, and the healthy aspects of meals and snacks. These strengths can be reinforced through various means of encouragement or through activities that foster maintaining acquired skills (e.g. continuing education and training). With regards to the weaknesses observed, various strategies can be envisaged that would have a positive impact on quality. For example, appropriate educational materials and equipment that foster overall child development can be acquired. Home daycare providers can be provided with support in activity planning and observation methods. More rigorous monitoring procedures can be implemented to address certain health and safety aspects.

The results suggest that making better use of the educational program and adapting it to the specific needs of home daycares will help build on acquired skills and improve educational quality. Progress in this regard depends on the involvement of all those concerned. Certainly home daycare providers and their assistants play an important role. But these challenges must also be met by *CPEs* — responsible for overseeing home daycares, by home daycare associations, government ministries and agencies, and educational institutions. To this end, the survey report can serve as a practical reference tool. It presents a detailed portrait of educational quality, and underlines characteristics of home daycares likely to enhance it.



MÉTHODOLOGIE EN BREF

TARGET POPULATION

All children in early childhood educational daycares regulated by the government of Québec, except those which began operating after October 15, 2001, and certain others for minor reasons. Given these exclusions, the target population was representative of approximately 89% of all children attending government-regulated daycares at the time of the survey, namely slightly more than 145,000 children.

SAMPLE SIZE AND RESPONSE RATE

The sample comprised 905 groups of children in approximately 650 daycares selected at random from the list of educational daycares comprising the following five types:

1. *Infant daycare in Childcare Centres daycares (installations de CPE) for children under 18 months of age (128 groups)*
2. *Preschool daycare in Childcare Centres daycares (installations de CPE) for children 18 months to 5 years of age (228 groups)*
3. *Home daycares coordinated by a CPE (200 groups)*
4. *Private daycares for children under 18 months of age (124 groups)*
5. *Private daycares for children 18 months to 5 years of age (225 groups).*

In all, 87.8% of the randomly-selected groups of children participated in the survey.

PRECISION OF THE RESULTS

As indicated above, the *Grandir en qualité 2003* survey has produced data representative of children's experience of educational daycare in Québec. However, since all children in all daycares did not participate in the survey, the results are to be considered estimates — in other words, they have a certain margin of error. For more details on their precision, the reader is invited to consult the survey report.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND METHODS

Developed by specialists in the field of early childhood and adapted to the age groups and types of daycare, three observation scales of educational quality were used in the survey. The measurement of educational quality in these scales was based on numerous aspects of the daycare environment and the principles of the educational program recommended by the *MESSF* and the practices that derive from them.

Trained and accredited observers spent an entire day with the groups of children in the randomly-selected daycares.

Telephone or self-administered questionnaires were given to the directors, educators and home daycare providers as a further method of data collection.

DATA COLLECTION PERIOD

End of March to beginning of June 2003.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE *GRANDIR EN QUALITÉ 2003* SURVEY

- The **three summary reports** on the highlights of the survey can be downloaded from the survey website at www.grandirenqualite.gouv.qc.ca. The website also presents further information on how the survey was conducted and **tables** of mean scores for every item of quality assessed.
- The complete **survey report** is also available free of charge on the ISQ website at www.stat.gouv.qc.ca. The printed version can be purchased from *Publications du Québec*. It can also be ordered from the *Centre d'information et de documentation* of the ISQ by calling toll-free 1-877-677-2087.
- The **observation scales** and scoring guides used to evaluate the educational quality of the daycares are available on the website of the MESSF at www.messf.gouv.qc.ca under "Publications."