



FACT  
SHEET

# 06

## MOTIVATION IN GRADES 1 AND 2 OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### 1 CONTEXT

Numerous factors – family, social, individual, pedagogical – were analyzed to explain academic performance in various subjects. Certain studies have shown that the more a student enjoys and feels competent in his/her subjects, the more he/she will succeed.

### SOURCE

This fact sheet is a brief summary of the results presented in the following fascicle: GUAY, Frédéric and Denis TALBOT (2010). "Motivation in the First and Second Grades of Elementary School: An Analysis Based on Gender and Socioeconomic Status," in *Québec Longitudinal Study of Child Development (QLSCD 1998-2010) – From Birth to 8 Years of Age*, Institut de la statistique du Québec, Vol. 5, Fascicle 3. [http://www.iamillbe.stat.gouv.qc.ca/pdf/publications/feuillelet/fascicule\\_motivation\\_an.pdf](http://www.iamillbe.stat.gouv.qc.ca/pdf/publications/feuillelet/fascicule_motivation_an.pdf)

Note that the QLSCD has been following a cohort of children who were born in Québec in 1997-1998.

### 2 HIGHLIGHTS

In Grades 1 and 2, children enjoyed reading and writing more than they did mathematics (intrinsic motivation). They also felt they had more competencies in reading comprehension or writing than in mathematics (academic self-concept), according to their grade level.

When we compare Grade 2 with Grade 1, we observe that:

- The pleasure children felt while learning mathematics significantly decreased, while there was no change in motivation in reading and writing.
- Children felt less competent in mathematics and writing.

In Grade 1, differences in motivation and the feeling of competency varied by the child's sex and socioeconomic status.

- In general, girls were more motivated than boys in reading and writing. They also reported feeling more competent in reading comprehension. However, they derived less pleasure from mathematics than boys and felt less competent than them in this subject.
- Children from families with a higher socioeconomic status were more motivated and felt more competent in reading comprehension. A similar trend was observed in writing.

In Grades 1 and 2 of elementary school, children enjoy reading and writing but seemed less motivated in mathematics.



### 3 DEFINITIONS AND MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS

#### Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation means that the source of motivation does not come from external sources, but rather from the pleasure and satisfaction a child feels when engaging in an activity.

#### Academic self-concept

Academic self-concept is defined as the subjective evaluation a student makes of his/her skills in a given subject. For example, a student who tells himself he is capable of rapidly learning mathematics has a high academic self-concept in this subject.

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### INTERVENTION PATHS

Interventions aimed at helping boys derive more pleasure from reading and writing and seeing themselves as competent in these subjects continue to be essential. Interventions with girls can target mathematics in this regard. It would also be important to help children from disadvantaged families so that they feel more competent in reading and derive more pleasure in this subject at school entry. Initiatives could target both teachers and parents.