



## The public system

### *Local school boards*

In varying degrees, each province has delegated responsibility for the provision of elementary and secondary education to local (often municipal) school boards. Over the years, small local boards have been consolidated into larger ones, sometimes on a county or regional basis.

The local boards, composed of elected or appointed trustees, are responsible for school management. Their powers are determined and delegated by the provincial legislatures or departments of education. Generally, they handle the business aspects of education: establishment and maintenance of schools; hiring of teachers and negotiating their salary scales; purchase of supplies and equipment; provision of school transportation facilities; and preparation of budgets. In varying degrees, they have considerable latitude in shaping school curricula within provincial guidelines. In most provinces they are authorized to levy taxes (or to requisition tax support from municipal governments) and manage grants from provincial departments of education.

### *Organization*

School attendance is compulsory for about ten years in every province. The compulsory starting age may be six or seven, and the minimum school-leaving age 15 or 16.

Elementary-secondary education usually extends over 12 years. However, many local authorities provide one or two years of pre-school education for pupils aged four and five.

The most common grade structure in Canada is the "6-3-3 system," with Grades 1 to 6 designated as elementary, Grades 7-9 as junior high school, and Grades 10 to 12 as senior high school. Other grade structures are Kindergarten-Grade 8, 9-12 or 13; and K-7, 8-12.

### *School curricula*

Elementary education is general and fundamental, and provincial curriculum guidelines normally permit wide latitude in the choice of content and methods. Its objective, however, remains what it has always been — to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to proceed to higher levels of study. It features basic subjects such as language, mathematics and social studies as well as an introduction to the sciences and the arts. In some jurisdictions, religious instruction and second-language education are also compulsory.