The common base of knowledge and skills

SCÉRÉN [CNDP]

ministère éducation nationale enseignement supérieur recherche

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« All that must be mastered at the end of compulsory education »

Decree dated 11 July 2006

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A REFOUNDING ACT

July 11, 2006 will remain one of the major dates for the National Education system. It is the day when the Official Gazette of the Republic published the decree instituting the "Common Base of Knowledge and Skills".

This Base was requested by the national representation, which inscribed it in the guidance and planning law for the future of schools dated 23 April 2005, designed by my predecessor, François Fillon.

According to article 9 of this law "compulsory education should at least provide each pupil with the necessary means to gain a common base made up of knowledge and skills that must be mastered to successfully complete one's schooling, pursue one's studies, build one's personal and professional future and lead a successful life in society".

The Decree dated 11 July 2006 lists the skills that should be acquired by each pupil at the end of their compulsory education.

This text, which is inspired by reflections of the commission chaired by Claude Thélot, reaffirms the School with the Nation Pact: with this text, it undertakes to educate children, provide them with a living knowledge which passes on major aspects of legacies, opens them up to the reality of their time and prepares them to succeed in life.

The publication of the Common Base is therefore a refounding act for our schools, an exceptional milestone in school history, unequalled since the Jules Ferry laws which established free, secular and compulsory education and specified its contents.

It affects everyone in France: children, of course, who will have to acquire the contents of the Common Base, but also their parents who, when they read this text, will discover the fundamentals of the teaching and education their children are given. Lastly, the Base also involves teachers, as it defines the main lines that their teaching should follow.

Because this text is directed at all the French, My purpose was to be quick and easy access to it after its official publication. It was not created to be left on the dusty shelves of the ministry! It should be read and known by everyone who is interested in the school system, notably parents who are naturally concerned about what their children are learning and will learn.

A SALUTARY CLARIFICATION

Through this text, the National Education system also makes a salutary clarification of its ambitions. Throughout time, National Education reforms have come one after the other, regulatory texts have piled up and in the end it became very difficult, and even impossible to give a simple answer to this fundamental question: "What is it that children should definitely learn during compulsory education?"

Naturally, there are official curricula at every level and for every branches of instruction, but their language is very technical, making them hard to read. They are most of all written for the eyes of specialists, executives and professors, yet parents have the right to know what their children learn. I am convinced that this knowledge is essential for the proper functioning of the school system. The lack of readability in curricula is not the only factor to be blamed: the system was also lacking a general framework providing a unified viewpoint on compulsory education from primary school up to *collège* level. The gap has now been filled by this text, which I considered

needed to be very straightforward and precise, using as little specialised jargon as possible. The school system can now say directly to parents and the people of France: "this is what all children should know upon completing compulsory education; this is what the Nation undertakes to teach them". I am convinced that a straightforward agreement between schools, pupils and families will bring about a climate of trust that will foster academic success.

AN EDUCATIONAL STEPPING STONE

Two clarifications must be made in order to avoid any misunderstanding. I was accused of wanting to implement a "minimum service", as if all of compulsory education could be reduced to a single base. The mere reading of the text will clear up this misgiving, as it states that "compulsory education cannot be narrowed down to the Common Base". Therefore, defining fundamental knowledge in no way implies that things should remain here. The text provides the main lines, develops certain points, but allows for any possible developments. The Base can also be seen as a instrument for further development, a type of educational stepping stone.

The second point I would like to highlight is the fact that the Common Base does not sum up existing curricula. If this were the case, it would be a mere summary, an inventory without ambition or perspective. Its has a completely different aim: not to condense the curricula branches of instruction by branches of instruction, but to *give an overall meaning to all compulsory education*, showing its main lines, purposes, objectives and essential contents. This is why this Base does not break things down by level, nor trace the divisions between branches of instruction. However, the Base does not exclude the various teaching branches of instruction and specialisations: it shows how they all help build major skills which give compulsory schooling its meaning in today's world.

A LIVING KNOWLEDGE

This desire to show the meaning of education can be seen within the Base itself, which is built on seven main skills, each of which is broken down into *knowledge, abilities* and *attitudes*.

This presentation expresses the project's ambition. It was never a question of being limited to theoretical knowledge. The aim was to show that compulsory schooling should also provide a means of using one's knowledge in practical situations, in short, transmitting *knowledge* backed up by *abilities* to apply it to different situations. In sum, this implies a living knowledge which can be drawn upon in any situation during schooling and all throughout life.

For instance, mastery of the French language depends on *knowledge* of vocabulary, grammar and spelling. But knowledge of these rules would mean nothing without the *ability* to read, write and express oneself orally- without which these pupils would be left with dead, formal and useless knowledge.

In other words, schools should fill and shape pupils' minds allowing them to make use of their knowledge in everyday life, at work, of course, but also in any other situation. It is then that education will truly become "baggage" for life, an asset producing individuals capable of adapting to different contexts, building projects and making choices.

The text of the Base goes even further by highlighting *attitudes*. Let us take the example of language mastery which is based on *knowledge* that helps develop *abilities* and certain *attitudes* such as interest in reading, openness to discussion and correctness of expression. In the end, these *attitudes* will remain fundamental features of a well-shaped and free mind.

Many more examples could be put forward: foreign language mastery leads to open-mindedness, desire to communicate with European neighbors and other foreigners; mathematics fosters accuracy and accuracy, respect for the rationally established truth, while scientific culture helps develop critical thinking and observational skills, etc.

The Common Base therefore connects *knowledge* and *abilities* with education's most noble aim: to train an individual who will

not only be able to grasp quickly and react well, but also possess certain qualities such as open-mindedness and respect for others and rules of collective life.

Could this be too idealistic? I do not think so. In my opinion, it would be wrong and probably cowardly to renounce the values that found the National Education system and which actually underlie the Base. For if the National Education system abandons the ideals which it inherited from the Enlightenment, it is no longer a school, but a training centre which meets utilitarian imperatives.

THE SEVEN PILLARS OF THE COMMON BASE

"The text of the Base is based on seven major skills, which are in some way the seven pillars of the Base. Each pillar is divided into knowledge, abilities and attitudes. I would like to underline several points that I consider essential, for each of them."

1

MASTERING THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

Mastery of the French language is the basis of all education. Pointing this out seems like stating the obvious, but too many young people leave the school system without basic mastery of French. They are cut off from a major part of their intellectual and social existence, as it is impossible to develop accurate thinking and communicate with others without a specialised vocabulary.

The Base therefore reaffirms the necessity of mastering vocabulary, grammar and syntax. In order to so, specific training is needed: conjugation exercises, dictation and reciting and should all be included in language learning rules.

2

SPEAKING A MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Everyone is aware that we are living in a time of globalisation. It is therefore essential that the school system provide everyone with the means to open themselves to the world through mastery of a foreign language. Nowadays, the lack of mastery of at least one foreign language is a major setback in professional life, and schools cannot allow pupils to leave without having acquired this elementary mastery. They particularly need to ensure that pupils are able to speak this foreign language properly.

3

ACQUIRING BASIC KNOWLEDGE IN MATHEMATICS AN A SCIENTIFIC CULTURE

Along with languages, mastering arithmetic is one of the oldest requirements of compulsory schooling. "Knowing how to read, write and count": was once the watchword and still is! The lack of mastery of elementary arithmetic operations is as serious a handicap as poor spelling.

It is also important for pupils to develop a basic scientific culture, in order to grasp the major laws that govern the universe, our planet and also our bodies. Furthermore, in developed countries such as France, the sciences play a fundamental role:

they invent new theories and therefore the basis for progress that create our technical environment. Without an adequate scientific and technical culture, our children would be clueless in a world shaped by science and technology. They would later be unable to impact and change it.

4

DEVELOPING A HUMANIST CULTURE

We live in a world which is structured, not only by technology, but also by history, major art works, values and ideas. Giving children access to this cultural universe is enhancing their perception.

It would also provide them with reference points. It is currently admitted that our children lack references. Humanist culture precisely makes it possible to provide this for them, notably through knowledge of chronological and geographical references. Thanks to them, pupils will learn where they come from and where they stand. We do not underestimate the structuring value of such references.

Let me add that this culture could not possibly be strictly national, especially in the context of Europe. This is why the Base includes major accomplishments of European culture: the major texts (the *Bible*, the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, etc.) and major works of world heritage, in order to help pupils understand what is universal and thus essential in all human cultures.

5

MASTERING COMMON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICTS)

In the Internet era, overlooking IT training would cause incomprehension. All parents are aware that young people have great interest in these technologies, notably computers. The Base therefore plans to enable pupils to develop a deeper mastery of these instruments.

They should, above all, acquire the ability to sort information and have a critical attitude with regard to it; otherwise they would only be passive receptors. This critical attitude is the condition of an intelligent use of resources offered by the Internet. It is vital that they be taught how to approach this huge world library where no hierarchy is provided!

6

ACQUIRING SOCIAL AND CIVIC SKILLS

School should prepare children for life in society, but they will only be able to participate in the nation's life once they know and respect the rules of collective life. Particular attention should be paid to learning civic rules. This is why the Common Base particularly stresses knowledge of symbols of the Republic and their meaning.

It is just as important for pupils to know the fundamental mechanisms of our democracy (national representation, justice,

taxation, etc.). The Base therefore implements a real *civic course for pupils*, which covers knowledge of principles of life in society, elements of law and developing the notion of individual responsibility.

7

DEVELOPING AUTONOMY AND INITIATIVE

The seventh pillar is essential, as education would be missing its purpose if it failed to train autonomous beings capable of judging for and taking care of themselves. As a result, they will be able to apply their educational knowledge to different situations and make use of their school culture throughout life. Autonomy and initiative will help them to design projects, implement them and innovate. In a world where unending innovation is the driving force behind progress, they will be equipped with assets for their professional future.

AFTER THE BASE

By publishing the Common Base, the National Education system has taken a major step forward. However, more efforts are needed to make the application of the Common Base effective.

Firstly, teaching curricula must be adapted to the Base. As I have already pointed out, the Base is not a summary of what already exists. It opens new prospects and defines new ambitions for schools. The curricula must conform to it.

By focusing on the first requirement, which is mastery of French, the Common Base requires that schools make language mastery a reality, by using the best methods. I wanted the 2006 school year to be marked by true progress in this direction. This is why I modified the curricula for primary schools, in order to adopt a more effective method to learn reading.

Other changes will follow, notably concerning grammar learning, which should be founded on methodical acquiring of basic rules. Moreover, we have already undertaken significant efforts directed at modern language teaching. Since the start of the 2005 school year, teaching of a modern language was generalized for *CE2* (grade 3). At the start of the 2007 school year, learning of a modern foreign language can start as of *CE1* (grade 2). Oral practice will be reinforced at every level.

The National Education system will also allow regular assessments of pupils to be carried out. By publishing the text of the Common Base, the system its objectives, circulates them and makes sure that all students reach the level it has set.

In order for the text of the Base to translate into actions, we will see to it that the level of pupils' acquisition be regularly assessed, by knowledge testing. Three stages have already been defined.

The first stage, which is at the end of the fundamental learning cycle- *CE1* (grade 2), will correspond to fluent reading and writing (these pupils will be tested notably on their capacity to read out loud and to understand the texts they analyse).

The second stage, which is at the end of primary school, will particularly validate the acquisition of fundamental rules of grammar, conjugating as well as elementary arithmetic and the four operations.

Lastly, the national *brevet* diploma will make it possible to assess mastery of the Base at the end of the *collège*. The National Education system also undertakes to ensure that pupils master knowledge and skills that constitute the Common Base. This is why we need to assist pupils who may be struggling any point along their academic path.

In order to do so, I have decided that at the start of the 2006 school year, *personal programmes for academic success* will be implemented in all *CE1* (grade 2) classes. During the assessment carried out at the start of the year, struggling pupils will receive personalised support to help them catch up in reading.

These personalised support programmes already exist in some *6éme* (grade 7) classes. They will be extended to *collége* entry over the 2006-2007 school year. The success of all pupils will therefore remain the objective of the National Education system.

The Common Base will also have significant consequences for teachers, as knowledge of the Base will become the foundation of their training. Good knowledge of the Base will be the primary duty of future teachers, regardless of their branches of instruction. Their training in IUFMs (University Institutes for Teacher Training) should be adapted to take this into account. Lastly, more experienced teachers should also be familiarised with the Base.

THE BASE, CEMENT OF THE NATION

Before this presentation comes to a close, I wish to bring to mind an idea that is close to my heart. In the text, you will read "cement of the Nation".

We often read that the "national bond is to be reinvented". I am convinced that the Base contributes to this! What is the Base but the very foundation of a national community of knowledge, practices and attitudes? In short: a common culture.

We need it now, more than ever, as it is a condition for dialogue. Understanding one another implies to live in the same universe, sharing common references. The Base will precisely ensure that all the children of France will share these intellectual, cultural and civic references. This is why the Base is in fact, the "cement of the Nation".

I am convinced that the publication, implementation and knowledge by everyone in France, of the Common Base will help give impetus to the National Education system and the civic life of our country.

Enjoy your reading!

APPENDIX

The establishment of a Common Base of essential knowledge comes as a response to a need felt over the past few decades stemming from the diversification of knowledge. Article 9 of the guidance and planning law for the future of schools dated 23 April 2005 established the principle by specifying that "compulsory education should at least provide each pupil with the necessary means to gain a Common Base made up of knowledge and skills that must be mastered to successfully complete one's schooling, pursue one's studies, build one's personal and professional future and lead a successful life in society". Furthermore, according to Article 2 of the same law "the nation defines the school's main mission as passing on the values of the Republic to pupils".

For all these reasons, the Common Base is the cement of the nation: it is a body of values, knowledge, languages and practices whose acquisition depends on the mobilisation of schools and which implies that pupils show effort and perseverance.

The definition of the Common Base also relies on the proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union on "key competences for lifelong learning".

Lastly, it refers to international assessments, notably the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which offers a comparative assessment of knowledge and skills required throughout life.

Five generations after the founding school laws of the Third Republic and one generation after the establishment of a single *collège*, the Base constitutes a common reference point for all those who entrust schools with their children as well as for teachers.

Compulsory teaching cannot be limited to the Common Base. Although the Base will henceforth be the foundation of primary school and *collège* curricula, it neither replaces nor sums it up. Its particularity lies in its objective of adding meaning to fundamental school culture, by looking on from the viewpoint of pupils and

building essential bridges between disciplines and curricula. It determines what everyone should know by the end of compulsory schooling, without which they risk being marginalised. Moreover, schools should provide a means of developing all of one's faculties.

Mastering the Common Base means being able to apply one's acquired knowledge and skills in complex tasks and situations, in and outside of school. It means being equipped with a vital instrument for lifelong training to participate in evolutions of society. It means being able to understand the major challenges facing mankind, cultural diversity and the universality of human rights, the need for development and requirements for planetary protection.

The Common Base consist to seven skills. Among them, five, in some way or another, are included in current teaching curricula: mastering the French language, speaking a modern foreign language, basic skills in mathematics and scientific and technological culture, mastering common ICTs and humanist culture. Two other sets of skills are not given enough emphasis in schools: social and civic skills on the one hand, and autonomy and initiative of pupils, on the other.

Each major skill composing the Base is designed as a combination of fundamental knowledge for the times we live in, abilities to implement this knowledge in various situations, as well as attitudes which are vital throughout life. These include openness to others, interest in seeking the truth, respect for self and others, curiosity and creativity.

The Common Base is acquired gradually from kindergarten up until the end of compulsory schooling. Each skill which makes it up requires the contribution of various branches of instruction and vice versa, each branches of instruction contributes to the acquisition of several skills.

In primary school and in *collèges*, all the teaching and various branches of instruction play a role in acquiring the Base. Therefore, artistic, cultural and sports activities also contribute fully.

Requirements in terms of content and assessment of the Common Base are inseparable. Intermediate stages, which are adapted to the different learning paces defined for the cycles, are determined in the mastery of the Base.

Assessment instruments, which correspond in particular to the requirements at the different stages in the mastery of the Common Base, are available to teachers.

A personal report book will allow pupils, their family and teachers to monitor the gradual development of skills.

In order to take into account the various paces of acquisition, primary schools and *collèges* will provide adapted assistance: supervised study periods, tutoring, access to books, culture and the Internet. A personalised programme will be provided for pupils who have specific needs in terms of necessary knowledge and skills at each level.

1

Mastering the french language

Gaining access to all areas of knowledge and developing skills will depend on the ability to read, write and speak French. The French language is the main instrument for equal opportunities, freedom of citizens and civility, as it allows oral comprehension and expression, interaction, written comprehension and expression in various situations and makes it possible understand and express one's rights and duties.

Pupils will master the French language and develop a clear and precise oral and written expression, through the teaching of French but also that of other branches of instruction. Teachers and members of the teaching community are responsible for this priority school mission. Regular reading of French-language literature is a major instrument in acquiring a good command of the French language.

Knowledge

Written and oral expression should be practiced throughout compulsory schooling witt vorious methods including memorizing and reciting of literary texts.

The learning of spelling and grammar should help pupils understand that respecting rules of French expression is not incompatible with freedom of expression. On the contrary, it encourages a sharp thinking as well as a accurate and easily comprehensible reasoning. The pupil should sufficiently master language instruments (vocabulary, grammar and spelling) to be able to read, understand and compose texts in different contexts. The learning of grammar and spelling requires exercises in addition to text studies.

Vocabulary

Enhancing pupils' vocabulary on a daily basis is a vital, as of kindergarten and throughout compulsory schooling. Pupils should have:

– accurate and correct vocabulary to designate real objects, feelings, emotions, mind processes, abstractions;
– literal and figurative meanings of an expression;
– level of language to which a given word belongs;
– words with similar or opposite meanings;
– word formation, in order to understand and spell them.

Grammar

Pupils should know:

– punctuation;
– fundamental syntactic structures;
– nature and function of words;
– common logical connectors (coordinate conjunctions, subordinate conjunctions, adverbs);
– verb conjugation;
– tenses and modes.

Spelling

It is necessary for pupils to master spelling in spontaneous writing as of the end of primary school. However, it is essential for them to perfect their spelling until the end of compulsory education. To do so, dictations can be used as a vital instrument

for learning and assessment, but special vigilance is required in all teaching contexts for this mastery to be attained.

Pupils should know the main lexical and grammatical spelling rules (invariable words, agreement rules, spelling of verb forms and plurals).

Abilities

Reading

At the end of compulsory schooling, each pupil should be able to:

- read aloud a text (in verse or prose) expressively;
- analyse grammatical elements of a sentence to clarify its meaning;
- bring out the main idea of a reading or listening text;
- show comprehension of various texts, whether documentary or literary;
- understand declarations or instructions;
- read entire literature books, particularly classics, and do book reports.

Writing

The ability to write means being able to:

- copy a text without making mistakes, write a legible and correct text spontaneously or during dictations;
- answer a question using a full sentence;
- write a short, consistent text, divided into paragraphs, with correct punctuation, respecting the instructions given: narration, description, explanation, argumentative, report, common writing assignments (letters…);
- adapt the subject to the addressee and the desired effect;
- summarize a text;
- use the main lexical and grammatical spelling rules.

Oral expression

It means being able to:

– speak in public;
– participate in a dialogue, a debate: take into account the opinions of others, express one's point of view;
– report individual or collective work (presentations, experiments, demonstrations...);
– reformulate texts or opinions read or expressed by someone else;
– adapt one's public speaking (attitude and level of language) to the communication situation (place, addressee, desired effect);
– recite heritage texts (literature, famous quotations).

Using instruments

The pupil should be able to use:

– printed or electronic dictionaries to check the spelling or meaning of a word, find a synonym or a necessary word to express one's thought;
– grammar books or spell check software.

Attitudes

Interest in language as a instrument for thinking and integration develops:

– desire to achieve correctness of written and oral expression, interest in enhancing one's vocabulary;
– interest in sounds, play on meaning, emotional impact of language;
– interest in reading (books, written press);
– openness to communication, dialogue, and debate.

2

Speaking a modern foreign language

This involves the language learnt since primary school, or a new foreign language taught in the *collège*. Communicating in a foreign language means being able to understand, express oneself and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts, both orally and in writing and in various situations.

It also implies knowledge and understanding of the cultures which the language transmits: it makes it possible to go beyond the vision given by stereotypes.

The "European Common Framework of Reference for Languages" designed by the Council of Europe, is the fundamental reference for modern language teaching, learning and assessment of language skills. A2 Level of command (level of elementary speakers) is the level required by the Common Base.

Mastery of modern languages is achieved by regular practice and memory training. This is made possible by five types of activities: listening, speaking, conversation, written comprehension and writing.

Knowledge

Speaking a modern foreign language first of all means adopting a linguistic code. It is essential to know the written and sound forms which make it possible to understand or to produce correct and significant messages in everyday situations. This implies knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, phonology and spelling. It therefore means:

– having a sufficient vocabulary to understand simple topics;
– knowing fundamental rules of grammar (noun category, verbal system, coordination and subordination in their elementary form) and how the language studied works, taking into account its special features;
– knowing rules of pronunciation;

– mastering spelling of words and expressions learnt, understanding phonics (the relationship between sounds and written letters). In some languages, learning the writing system is a priority given the necessity knowing special characters.

Abilities

Speaking a modern foreign language means being able to use it relevantly and appropriately according to the situation in a given socio-cultural context. The pupil is expected to be able to communicate in a simple, yet effective manner, in everyday situations, meaning that he/she can:

- use the language while mastering its corresponding social relations codes;
  - use common expressions following basic usage (greetings, formulating invitations, apologies...);
  - take into account the existence of differences in language registers, adapt one's speech to the communication situation;
- understand a short oral presentation: identify the contents of a message, the subject of a discussion if it is slow and clear, follow a story;
- make himself or herself clear (short conversation or comment) and in writing, with enough clarity, which means being able to;
  - pronounce properly;
  - put together groups of words with logical connectors;
  - give and get information;
  - express an idea or opinion simply;
  - tell a story or give a brief description;
- understand a short, simple written text.

Attitudes

Learning a foreign language develops an awareness of cultural difference and diversity. It fosters:

– the desire to communicate with foreigners in their language, read newspapers and listen to foreign audiovisual media, watch films in their original version;
– open-mindedness and understanding of different ways of thinking and acting.

3

Basic knowledge in mathematics and scientific and technological culture

It means providing pupils with the scientific culture needed to develop a coherent representation of the world and an understanding of their daily environment; they must grasp that complexity can be expressed in fundamental laws.

Concrete and practical approaches to mathematics and sciences, which notably call for manual skills (for instance working with material, handling volumes, creating), help pupils to understand abstract notions. Mathematics, experimental sciences and technology all encourage intellectual accuracy which constitutes scientific reasoning.

A. - Basic mathematics

In the fields of arithmetic, geometry and data management, mathematics provides instruments to act, choose and decide in daily life. They develop logical thinking as well as abstract and visionary abilities in planes and spaces by using formulae, models, graphs, diagrams. Logical reasoning and interest in demonstrating should also be developed.

Mastery of basic mathematics can be acquired and demonstrated mainly by problem-solving, notably based on situations close to reality.

The development of a scientific culture depends on the math skills acquired.

Knowledge

It is necessary to create as early as possible in primary school, automatic reflexes in arithmetic, particularly the ability to master the four operations of calculus. Learning to demonstrate and reason is also essential.

Concepts and techniques should also be understood (calculus, algorithm) and memorised so as to be applied later on. Pupils should know:

- regarding numbers and arithmetic;
  - decimal numbers, relative numbers, fractions, powers (order, compare);
  - the four operations and their meaning;
  - elementary techniques of mental arithmetic;
  - elements of simple literal arithmetic (first-degree expressions to variables);
  - calculation of the value of a literal expression for different values of variables;
  - remarkable identities;
- regarding organisation and management of data and functions:
  - proportionality: linearity property, graphical representation, proportionality table, "cross product" or the "rule of 3", percentages, scales;
  - common representations: tables, diagrams, graphs;
  - locating on an axis or a map;
  - fundamental notions of descriptive statistics (maximum, minimum, frequency, average);
  - notions of chance or probability;
- in geometry;
  - elementary geometric properties of the following plane and solid figures: square, rectangle, rhombus, parallelogram, triangle, circle, cube, rectangular parallelepiped, cylinder, sphere;
  - notions of parallel lines, perpendicular bisector, bisector, tangent (to a circle);
  - transformations: symmetry, enlargement and reduction;
  - plane geometry theorems: sum of the angles in a triangle, triangular inequality, Thales (in the triangle), Pythagoras.

Pupils should also know how to interpret a plane representation of space figures and patterns (cube, rectangular parallelepiped);

- regarding scales and measurements:
  - the main scales (units of measurement, formulas, calculations and conversions): length, area, capacity, volume, mass, angle, duration, speed, density, number of revolutions per second;
  - measurement using instruments, taking into account uncertainty related to measuring.

Abilities

Upon ending compulsory schooling, pupils should be able to apply basic mathematics principles and processes daily, both in their personal and work life. This means being able to:

- reason logically, use deduction and demonstrate;
- communicate, both in writing and orally, using an adapted math language;
- carry out;
  - by hand: a single calculation with relatively small decimal numbers (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division);
  - using a calculator: a single calculation with relative numbers in decimals: addition, subtraction, multiplication, decimal division to the closest 10-n, calculating the square or the cube of a relative number, the square root of a positive number;
  - mentally: simple calculations and quickly give a rough answer;
- compare, add, subtract, multiply and divide fractions in simple situations;
- draw lines using common instruments (ruler, set square, compass, protractor):
  - parallel, perpendicular, perpendicular bisector, bisector;
  - circle defined by its centre and radius;
  - image of figures using axial or central symmetry;
- use and create tables, diagrams, graphs and know how to go from one mode of expression to another;
- use instruments (tables, formulas, drawing instruments, calculators, software);
- realize when an everyday situation requires use of mathematics, analyse by presenting data then formulating hypotheses, carry out a reasoning process or a calculation with the intention of solving it, and in order to do so:
  - know when and how to use elementary operations;
  - verify the likelihood of a result;
  - recognize situations involving proportionality and choose the adapted means to handle them;
  - use graphical representations;
  - use plane geometry theorems;
- situate oneself in space: use a map, a plan, a diagram, a system of coordinates.

Attitudes

Studying mathematics allows pupils to grasp the existence of logical laws and to develop:

– accuracy and accuracy;
– respect for rationally established truth;
– interest in reasoning based on arguments which are to be proven.

B. - Scientific and technological knowledge

Experimental sciences and technologies seek to understand and describe the real world, nature, the man-made world as well as changes brought about by human activity.

Studying these subject areas will help students grasp the distinction between verifiable facts and hypotheses on the one hand, and opinions and beliefs on the other hand. To reach these goals, observation, questioning, manipulation and experimenting are essential, as of primary school, similar to the "Hands on" operation which fosters interest in science and technology at an early age.

Complex notions (related to DNA, genes and tectonics of lithospheric plates) which children hear about everyday, are covered using an adapted method. Presenting the history of how concepts came about, by pooling resources from the concerned branches of instruction, is an effective means of addressing complexity: a historic view helps develop a consistent vision of science and technology and their joint development.Pupils must also understand that science and technology contribute to the progress and well-being of companies.

Knowledge

At the end of compulsory schooling, each pupil should have a coherent representation of the world based on different areas of knowledge. Each should therefore:

- know that the Universe is structured:
  – on a microscopic level (atoms, molecules, cells of living things);
  – on a macroscopic level (planets, stars, galaxies);

- know that planet Earth:
  - belongs to the solar system, which is governed by the law of gravity;
  - has a structure as well as internal and external dynamic phenomena;
- know that matter comes in many forms:
  - subject to transformations and reactions;
  - organised from the simplest to the most complex, from the inert to the living;
- know the characteristics of living things:
  - unit of structure (cell) and biodiversity;
  - processes in living organisms: reproduction, development and functioning;
  - unit of the living (DNA) and evolution of species;
- know that the Universe, matter and living organisms are surrounded by many interactions and signals, notably light signals, which propagate and impact from a distance;
- know that energy, which can be seen in movement, can take many forms and can be transformed from one to another; have knowledge of electrical energy and its importance; be aware of fossil energy and renewable energy;
- know that gradual control of energy will allow humans to make many technical developments, it is therefore essential to know;
  - conditions of use;
  - environmental impact;
  - mode of operation and security conditions;
- master knowledge related to humans:
  - uniqueness and diversity of individuals that make up the human species (genetics, reproduction);
  - organisation and functioning of the human body;
  - the human body and its possibilities;
  - influence of humans on the ecosystem (resource management...);
- be familiarised with commonly used technology, electronic and digital data processing and automated processes, which explain the functioning everyday objects.

Abilities

The study of experimental sciences develops inductive and deductive intelligence in various forms. The pupil should be able to:

- use a scientific approach;
  - know how to observe, question, formulate and validate a hypothesis, argue, design elementary models;
  - understand the relationship between natural phenomena the math language which applies and helps describe them;
- manipulate and experiment by testing the resistance of reality;
  - help design and implement a protocol using the relevant instruments, including IT instruments;
  - develop manual skills, become familiarised with certain technical gestures;
  - perceive the difference between reality and simulation;
- understand that an effect can have several simultaneous causes and grasp that there may be unseen or unknown causes;
- express and use results of a measurement or research, and to do so:
  - use both written and spoken scientific languages;
  - master the main measurement units and know how to associate them with the corresponding scales;
  - understand that uncertainty is attached to every measurement;
  - understand the nature and validity of a statistical result;
- perceive the relationship between science and technology;
- apply one's knowledge in practical situations, for instance understanding how the body works and the impact of a diet, take action by getting involved in physical activities and sports, and watching out for natural, professional or household accidents;
- use techniques and technologies to overcome obstacles.

Attitudes

Rational comprehension develops the following attitudes:

- observational skills;
- curiosity about discovering the causes of natural phenomena, reasoned imagination, open-mindedness;

- critical mind: distinction between the proven, the probable and the uncertain, prediction and forecasting, situating an outcome or information in its context;
- interest in scientific and technical progress;
- awareness of the ethical implications of these changes;
- following basic safety rules in the fields of biology, chemistry and in electricity use;
- responsibility towards the environment, the living world and health.

4

Mastery of common information and communication technologies (ICTs)

Digital culture involves the safe and critical use of technology of the information society. This includes IT, multimedia and the Internet, which now permeate economic and social fields. This technology is often learnt by experimenting outside of school. Nevertheless, schools must allow each pupil to acquire a set of skills that will allow him/her to use technology in a more thought-out and effective manner.

The knowledge and skills required for the *B2i collège- Brevet informatique et internet* (IT and Internet *Brevet*) correspond to the level required in the Common Base. They are acquired during activities in the various fields of branches of instruction.

Knowledge

Pupils should master the basics of ICTs (hardware, software and common services, data processing and exchange, technical features, files, documents, structure of the workplace, multimedia products...).

They should also know that:

- IT equipment (hardware, software and services) process encoded information to produce results and can communicate with each other;
- use of these instruments is governed by rules that help protect intellectual property, rights and liberties of citizens and protect oneself.

Abilities

Mastery of ICTs is achieved based on abilities listed in regulatory texts that define *the B2i*:

- develop an IT work environment for oneself;
- create, produce, process, use data;
- keep up with information, do research;
- communicate, exchange.

Attitudes

Developing an interest in information research and exchange for educational, cultural, social and professional purposes, should be backed by a responsible attitude. This area is also developed in the definition of the B2i, ie:

- a critical and thought-out attitude towards information available;
- a responsible attitude when using all interactive instruments.

5

Humanist culture

A humanist culture allows pupils to acquire both a sense of continuity and change, a sense of identity and otherness. By knowing where France and Europe are coming from and being

able to situate them in today's world, pupils will project themselves more clearly into the future.

Humanist culture contributes to the development of judgment, taste and sensibility. It enhances perception of what is real, opens the mind to diversity in human situations, stirs reflection on one's own opinions and feelings, and triggers aesthetic emotions. It is based on the analysis and interpretation of books and works from various periods or of different genres. It involves regular access to literary works (stories, novels, poems, plays) which contribute to knowledge of ideas and self discovery. This culture draws from contribution of artistic and cultural education.

Knowledge

By providing common references for understanding, humanist culture helps build a sense of belonging to the community of citizens, develop rational opinions, prepare each individual to develop his/her own culture and determine his/her openness to the world. Pupils must:

- have geographic references;
  - the major physical units (oceans, continents, reliefs, rivers, major climatic and biogeographic areas) and human units (distribution of the world's population, leading contemporary world powers and their main cities, States of the European Union and their capital cities);
  - major types of settlements;
  - main geographic features of the European Union;
  - French territory: organisation and localisations, regional units, overseas territories;
- have historical references;
  - the different periods in the history of mankind (characteristic founding events that help situate them in relation to each other by connecting facts, whether political, economic, social, cultural, religious, scientific and technical or literary and artistic), as well as breaking points;
  - major features in the history of Europe's construction;
  - main periods and dates, leading figures, founding events in the history of France, connecting them to European and world history;

- be prepared to share a European culture;
  - through knowledge of the main texts of Antiquity (the Iliad and the Odyssey, stories of the founding of Rome, the Bible);
  - through knowledge of the main literary, pictural, theatrical, musical, architectural and cinematographic works that are a part of French, European and world heritage (ancient, modern and contemporary);
- understand unity and complexity of the world by a primary approach to:
  - human rights;
  - diversity of civilisations, societies, religions (history and contemporary spheres of dissemination);
  - religion in France, Europe and throughout the world through the study of founding texts (notably, extracts from the Bible and the Koran) using a secular approach respecting consciences and convictions;
  - major principles of production and exchange;
  - globalisation;
  - inequality and interdependence in the world;
  - notions of resources, restrictions and risks;
  - sustainable development;
  - teaching on political culture: major forms of political, economic and social organisation (particularly the major States of the European Union), the place and the role of the State;
  - world conflicts and notions of defence

Abilities

Pupils should be able to:

- read and use different languages, particularly images (different types of texts, tables and graphs, diagrams, cartographic representations, artwork representations, photographs, computer-generated images);
- situate in time events, literary or art works, scientific or technical discoveries that were studied and connect them with historical or cultural facts which are useful in understanding them;
- locate a place or a geographical unit by using maps with different scales;
- distinguish between cultural consumables and works of art;

- develop a sensible approach to reality;
- use their knowledge to understand current events;
- cultivate humanist and universal sports values by participating as players and spectators.

Attitudes

The humanist culture taught in schools provides pupils with common references. It also gives every person the desire to have a personal cultural life:

- by reading, visiting museums, and doing leisure activities (cinema, theatre, concerts and other cultural events);
- by having a cultural, artistic or physical activity.

This culture aims at cultivating curiosity:

- about art, heritage and contemporary productions, whether French or foreign;
- about other countries of the world (history, civilisation, current affairs).

It develops awareness of the fact that human experiences have a universal aspect.

To successfully complete their schooling, pursue further studies, build their personal and professional future, lead a successful life in society and freely exercise their citizenship, pupils require other skills. Schools should allow each pupil to become fully responsible, ie autonomous and open to initiative, and fulfill their mission of providing social and civic education more effectively.

6

Social and civic skills

This means providing a true civic course for pupils, made up of values, knowledge, practices and behaviours. The purpose is to encourage the effective and constructive participation in social

and professional life, preparing them to exercise their freedom while being fully informed of the rights of others and to reject violence.For this, pupils will have to learn to distinguish between universal principles (human rights), rules of the State of law (the Law) and cultural customs (civility).It should also help them develop a sense of belonging to their country and the European Union, respecting diversity of choice of each person and their personal options.

A. - Living in society

As early as kindergarten, the aim is to prepare pupils to live together well by gradual adoption of rules of collective life.

Knowledge

The necessary knowledge comes from the teaching of sciences and humanities. Physical education also plays a role.

Pupils should also be able to:

- know the rules of collective life and understand that every human organisation is based on codes of conduct and usages which must be respected;
- know what is prohibited and what is allowed;
- know the distinction between professional, public and private circles,
- have knowledge of sex, health and safety education;

know first aid.

Abilities

Each pupil should be able to:

- follow rules, in particular, school rules;
- communicate and work in groups, which means being able to listen, assert one's point of view, negotiate, seek a consensus, carry out the task following the rules set out by the group;
- assess the consequences of one's actions: ability to recognize and identify one's emotions, impressions, affirm oneself constructively;

- give assistance: obtaining a first aid certificate shows that this ability is acquired;
- respect safety rules, notably road safety rules by obtaining school road safety certificate.

Attitudes

Life in society is based on:

- self respect;
- respect for others (civility, tolerance, refusal of prejudice and stereotypes);
- respect for the opposite sex;
- respect for privacy;
- desire to resolve conflicts peacefully;
- awareness that no man can exist without others;
  - awareness of the necessary contribution of each person in a group;
  - sense of responsibility towards others;
  - need for solidarity: taking into account the needs of persons facing difficulties (difficulties whether physicval or economic) in France and in other parts of the world.

B. - Preparing to become a citizen

The objective is to promote understanding of institutions in a living democracy by acquiring founding principles and main rules of the Republic. It also aims to allow pupils to become responsible actors in our democracy.

Knowledge

In order to exercise freedom, the citizen must be well-informed. His/her mastery of the French language as well as humanist and scientific culture all pave the way for a responsible civic life. In addition to this essential knowledge, notably national and European history, the pupil will have to know:

- the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens;
- the International Convention on Children's Rights;

- the symbols of the Republic and their meaning (flag, motto, national anthem);
- the fundamental rules of democratic life (the Law, principle of representation, universal suffrage, secrecy of voting, majority decisions and right of opposition) which are taught at primary level in various everyday situations and continues during the *collège*, particularly with election of student representatives;
- the link between respecting rules of social and political life and values that found the Republic;
- several basic notions of law, and in particular:
  - personal identity;
  - nationality;
  - the principle of responsibility and the notion of contracts, by referring to common situations (signing a rental contract or a job contract, purchasing property, getting married, declaring a birth, etc.);
- several notions of management (setting up a personal budget, taking out a loan, etc.);
- working of the justice system (distinction between civil and criminal, between judicial and administrative);
- major international organisations;
- the European Union:
  - purposes of the project shared by its member nations;
  - main characteristics of its institutions;
- main features of the organisation of France:
  - main institutions of the Republic (powers and functions of the State and territorial authorities);
  - principle of secularism;
  - main data on French demography and economy;
  - general scheme of public revenue and spending (State, local authorities, social security;
  - operation of social services.

Abilities

Pupils must be able to make up their own judgment and have a critical mind, which implies:

- being able to assess the subjectivity or partiality of a speech, a story or a report;

- knowing how to distinguish between a rational argument and an argument of authority;
- learning to identify, classify, rank, analyse and distance information;
- knowing how to distinguish between what is virtual and what is real;
- being educated about their media as well as its role and influence in society;
- knowing how to form a personal opinion, question it, modify it (based on awareness of the role of feelings, impact of prejudice, stereotypes).

Attitudes

At the end of their civic education course, the pupil should be aware of the value of the law and the value of commitment. This implies:

- awareness of rights and duties;
- interest in public life and major society issues;
- awareness of the importance of voting and democratic decision-making;
- desire to participate in civic activities.

7

Autonomy and initiative

A. - Autonomy

Autonomy of human beings is vital to accompany human rights: the Common Base establishes the possibility of interacting and making informed choices, developing the ability to judge for oneself.

Autonomy is also a condition for academic success, good orientation and ability to adapt to changes in one's personal, professional and social life.

It is also important for schools to develop pupils' ability for lifelong learning.

Knowledge

Mastery of other elements of the Common Base is inseparable from acquisition of this skill, but each pupil must also know:

- the learning processes, his/her own strengths and weaknesses;
- the economic environment;
  - the business world;
  - the professions for different sectors and levels of qualification, as well as the corresponding training required and possibilities of access.

Abilities

The main abilities expected of an autonomous pupil are as follows:

- ability to go by work methods (managing time and planning work, taking notes, spontaneously using a dictionary, an encyclopedia, or any other necessary instrument, concentrating, memorising, creating a file, presenting);
- knowing how to follow instructions;
- being able to reason logically and rigorously and thus be able to;
  - identify a problem and set up a problem-solving approach;
  - research useful information, analyse, sort, rank, organize and summarize it;
  - combine the acquired knowledge and skills of various branches of instruction and drawn upon it in different situations;
  - identify, explain, rectify mistakes;
  - distinguish between what is factual and what is to be proven;
  - try out different solutions;
- being able to assess oneself;

- knowing how to choose a training path, the first step in lifelong training;
- develop perseverance;
- have good control of one's body, knowing how to swim.

Attitudes

Motivation, self confidence, desire to succeed and progress are fundamental attitudes. Each person should:

- have the will to take care of oneself;
- exploit his/her own intellectual and physical faculties;
- be aware of the need of getting involved, seeking new learning opportunities;
- be aware of the influence his/her values and choices have on others;
- be open to different professional fields and be aware that they are equally noble.

B. - Initiative

Pupils should prove that they can design, implement and carry out individual or group projects in the art, sports, heritage and socio-economic fields. Irregardless of its nature, the project, which is always validated by the school, encourages the involvement of pupils.

Knowledge

All the knowledge acquired in the other skills can be useful.

Abilities

It is about teaching pupils to go from ideas to action, which implies knowing how to:- define an approach adapted to the project:

- find and contact partners, use resource people;
- make decisions, commit and consequently take risks;

- seek advice from others, interact, inform, organise a meeting, represent the group;
- define the tasks to be carried out, determine priorities.

Attitudes

The desire to take initiatives, anticipate and be independent and inventive in one's personal, professional and working life later on, is an essential attitude. It involves:

– curiosity and creativity;
– motivation and determination when carrying out goals.

The very principle of the Base lies on an imperative of quality. As it is a common culture for all pupils, it translates into both an ambition for more fragile persons and a requirement for those who are doing well. The major and minor deficiencies that pupils may have upon completing their compulsory schooling are obstacles to full success and exercise of free and responsible citizenship.

As a result, the Common Base forms a unit which has to be completely mastered at the end of compulsory schooling, as the skills that make it up, (and their respective knowledge, abilities and attitudes) are all complementary and necessary. Each field that makes up the Base contributes to the professional, social and civic integration of pupils. In order to master it at the end of compulsory schooling, there can be no compensation between the required skills, which make a whole, in the same way as human qualities or laws and duties of citizens.

Decree dated 11 July 2006, on the common base of knowledge and skills, which modifies the Education Code.

The Prime Minister,

Based on the report published by the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research,

In view of the Education Code, and in particular Article L. 122-1-1;

In view of the meeting of the *Haut Conseil de l'Education* held on 22 May 2006;

In view of the opinion issued by the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Education*, dated 8 June 2006,

Hereby decrees:

Article 1

The regulatory section of the Education Code is hereby modified in accordance with the measures set forth in Articles 2-4 herein.

Article 2

The following articles are hereby inserted in Book I, Title II, Chapter II, Section I:

"Art. D. 122-1" – The common base of knowledge and skills provided for in Article L. 122-1-1, is defined in the Appendix to the present section.

"Art. D. 122-2" – The teaching curricula shall be adapted by decree from the Ministry of National Education, taking into account the provisions contained in the Appendix to the present section; in view of ensuring mastery of the common base by pupils, the objectives of each education cycle shall be specified along with the priority annual references.

"Art. D. 122-3" – Orders issued by the Ministry of National Education shall define the evaluation methods necessary to the gradual acquisition of the above-mentioned common base of knowledge and skills, and shall specify, as needed, the nature of any measures that may be implemented to assist struggling pupils, in accordance with Articles D. 321-3 and D. 332-6.

Article 3

I. – The Appendix to the present decree is provided as an appendix to Book I, Title II, Chapter II, Section I.

II. – Articles D. 122-1 to D. 122-7 shall hereby become Articles D. 122-4 to D. 122-10.

Article 4

I. – In Article D. 161-1, after the words *"les articles"* (the articles), the words *"D. 122-1 à D. 122-3 et"* (D. 122-1 to D. 122-3 and) have been added.

II. – In Book I, Title VI, Chapter II, the following has been added: Article D. 162-1, which reads:

"Art. D. 162-1. – Sont applicables à Mayotte les articles D. 122-1 à D. 122-3." "Art. D. 16

2-1 – Articles D. 122-1 to 122-3 are applicable in Mayotte".

III. – In Article D. 163-1, after the words *"les articles"* (the articles) , the reference *"D. 122-1"* has been added.

IV. – In Article D. 164-1, after the words *"les articles"* (the articles), the reference *"D. 122-1"* has been added.

V. – In Article D. 164-1, a second paragraph has been added, which reads:

"Les articles D. 122-2 et D. 122-3 sont applicables en Nouvelle-Calédonie, sauf en ce qui concerne l'enseigne-

ment public du premier degré." (Articles D. 122-2 and D. 122-3 are applicable in New Caledonia, except with regard to public primary education.

Article 5

The Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research and the Ministry for French overseas departments and territories are hereby entrusted with the enactment of the present degree (which will be published in the *Journal Officiel* (Official Gazette) of the French Republic), each in their own administration.

Done in Paris, 11 July 2006.
By the Prime Minister:

Dominique de Villepin

The Minister of National Education,
Higher Education
and Research:
Gilles de Robien

The Ministry of Overseas Departments and Territories,
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A founding text for all parents to know

July 2006. For the first time in the history of French schools, the Common Base has beeen defined as the body of knowledge and skills which our system is committed to imparting children in the course of compulsory education.
" The text states the terms of the pact between the school system and the nation ", writes Gilles de Robien in his foreword. " Along its lines, the system pledges to educate children and provide them with a living knowledge, granting them access to the major legacies of the past whilst opening them up to the reality of their time, thus preparing them to achieve fulfilling lives. [...]
The publication of the Common Base is therefore a founding act for our educational system, a milestone of matchless significance in the history of our schools since the Jules Ferry laws were passed. "

ministère éducation nationale enseignement supérieur recherche

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