

alumni and representatives of non-academic groups included, the board is responsible for admission, courses, discipline and the awarding of degrees.

## **7.1.2 Levels of education**

### **7.1.2.1 Pre-grade 1, elementary and secondary education**

Pre-grade 1 enrolment in schools is neither compulsory nor universal throughout Canada, although kindergartens for five-year-olds are part of the elementary school system in large urban centres in most provinces. Recently, an increasing number of kindergartens are accepting four-year-olds. There are also some kindergartens which are run by private individuals and which accept children of three to five years of age.

Each September, most Canadian six-year-olds enter an eight-grade publicly controlled (including separate) elementary school. At about 14 years of age, a significant proportion of those who entered grade 1 move on to a four- or five-year secondary school. Less than 3% of the elementary and secondary students in Canada attend private schools.

The 8-4 plan leading from grade 1 to university was for many years the basic plan for organizing the curriculum and schools other than those under the jurisdiction of the Catholic school boards of Quebec. This plan, although still followed in some school jurisdictions, has been modified from time to time in all provinces, cities or groups of schools. There are a number of variants to be found in Canada at present: the addition of one or even two years of secondary schooling; the introduction of junior high schools, changing the organization to a 6-3-3 or 6-3-4 plan; or, the combining of the first six years of elementary school into two units, each designed to reach specified goals during the three-year period. In the recently established community colleges, the last one or two years of high school and the first one or two years of college are offered.

At the secondary level, three programs can generally be distinguished — the university entrance course, the general course for those wishing to complete an academic type of program before entering employment, and vocational courses for those wishing to enter skilled trades or pursue further training in the technological fields. However, in recent years changes in the curricula have allowed the student greater flexibility in program selection.

Secondary schools were at one time predominantly academic and prepared their pupils for entry into university. Until recently, vocational schools were to be found only in the large cities, although schools in some of the smaller centres did provide a few commercial and technical subjects as options in the academic curriculum. Today, in addition to the vocational schools and the regular secondary schools providing commercial courses, there are increasing numbers of composite and regional high schools offering regular academic subjects and vocational training in such courses as home economics, agriculture, shop-work and commercial subjects. Occupational or pre-employment classes, set up as part of the total program in regular vocational schools, require from one to three years or even four years for completion, and are terminal in nature. In addition to this type of course, some schools offer special, ungraded one- or two-year vocational programs to students who have completed the final years of high school. Some secondary schools also provide occupational programs for students who have shown no particular aptitude for an academic education or for training in a particular trade. These students learn no specific trade until perhaps their third year of studies. By remaining in school longer, however, they adjust more easily to conditions in the work world.

### **7.1.2.2 Special education**

There is increasing interest in the education of exceptional children. For gifted children, innovative, enriched and accelerated programs are being developed at both the elementary and secondary levels. New types of special classes are sometimes started by parents of children with a common disability, who band together to provide help and show the need for such service, which may then be taken over by public bodies. Progress in providing such education varies from province to province and is most commonly found in city school systems. There are six schools for the blind, 16 schools for the deaf, and a number of training schools for mental defectives. Special classes are conducted in tuberculosis sanatoria, mental hospitals and reformatories.