

# Opening All the Doors to Success

MEQ Strategy in Support of  
Discussion and Reflection

**THE ORGANIZATION OF SERVICES FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS  
IN SECONDARY CYCLE ONE: REFLECTION AND ORIENTATIONS  
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE REFORM**

Discussion Resource

WORKING DOCUMENT

## *Presentation of the Discussion Resource*

### **The Organization of Services for At-Risk Students in Secondary Cycle One: Reflection and Orientations in the Context of the Reform**

#### **Context**

Various aspects of the reform have an impact on the organization of services for at-risk students in secondary school. The goal of success for all requires changes in both pedagogical and management practices.

This discussion resource on the evaluation and the organization of services for at-risk students in *Secondary Cycle One* is part of a comprehensive approach. It presupposes familiarity with an integrated view of the components of the reform, in particular the Québec Education Program and elements of the reference framework for intervention on learning difficulties and the guidelines on complementary educational services.

The proposals on the organization of services for at-risk students in *Secondary Cycle One* are based on a critical look at the existing services and on the students' needs and the factors that favour their commitment and perseverance. They draw on the *Education Act*, the lines of action in the Policy on Special Education, the Québec Education Program and the briefs of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation on the differentiation of the secondary school curriculum.

The proposals also draw on the thinking of an advisory committee set up in the fall of 2001 under the Plan of Action for special education to study the organization of services for students with difficulties. The committee was made up of representatives of the school system (coordinator of education, school principals, education consultants and teachers) and a professor and researcher, Roch Chouinard.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Roch Chouinard, Ph. D., is an associate professor in the Département de psychopédagogie et d'andragogie of the faculty of education of the Université de Montréal and a regular researcher at the Centre de recherche et d'intervention sur la réussite scolaire (CRIRES).

## Personnel targeted

Principals and personnel who are part of the school team and the cycle team: teachers of regular classes, special education teachers, complementary educational services personnel.

## Objective of the workshop

In the context of the reform and the drawing up of success plans, to support reflection by the school team and the cycle team on the organization of services for at-risk students in Secondary Cycle One in order to promote their success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications.

## Process

### Activity 1

- Presentation of the sheet *The Reform and Its Components* and explanation of the key ideas underlying all documents produced by the MEQ

### Activity 2

- Presentation, depending on the needs of the school, of other references that may help guide reflection on the organization of services<sup>2</sup>

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2. The references are listed in *The Reform and Its Components*.

### Activity 3

- Presentation of references that provide anchor points for individual reflection or group discussion:
  - 3.1 The *Education Act* and the lines of action of the Policy on Special Education (page 6)
  - 3.2 MEQ provisions: ministerial structure, a critical look (pages 7, 8, 9 and 10)
  - 3.3 MEQ orientations for the organization of services for at-risk students in *Secondary Cycle One* (page 11)

### Activity 4

- Discussion: suggestions are given for evaluating the services currently provided by the school<sup>3</sup>
  - 4.1 Evaluation of services provided by the school in view of the characteristics and needs of students experiencing difficulties in school (pages 12, 13, 14 and 15):
    - Services currently provided in the school / A critical look
  - 4.2 Organization of services (page 16):
    - Desired situation in relation to an integrated view of the components of the reform / Actions to be taken to set up services for at-risk students / Impact

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3. Other tools may be used, such as the list of education indicators for the success plan and the portrait and analysis of the current situation and resources available to the secondary schools for the New Approaches, New Solutions (NANS) intervention strategy.

### Activity 1

Presentation of the sheet *The Reform and Its Components* and explanation of the key ideas underlying all documents produced by the MEQ:

#### *The Reform and Its Components*

- Students play an active role in their learning and are responsible for their success
- Determining students' needs and abilities from the perspective of prevention and early intervention
- Adaptation of services on the basis of the abilities and needs of each student
- Education: a process of continuous progress:  
learning - evaluation - regulation
- Partnerships within and outside the school
- Success: recognizing its many forms

Activity 2

**Presentation, depending on the needs of the school, of other references that may help guide reflection on the organization of services**

Other references

Activity 3

**Presentation of references that provide anchor points for individual reflection or group discussion**

3.1 The *Education Act* and the lines of action of the Policy on Special Education

References	Things to consider	Comments
<p><i>Education Act</i>, section 235 (Appendix I).</p> <p>Lines of action of the Policy on Special Education (Appendix II).</p>	<p>The integration of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disorders into regular classes is a major focus of the <i>Education Act</i> and the Policy on Special Education.</p> <p>Special education should be seen, first of all, as the adaptation of regular services. The organization of services should be based on the individual assessment of the needs and abilities of students (not using a category-based approach), and should aim for the students' integration into regular classes or groups.</p> <p><b>The individualized education plan</b>, as prescribed in the Act, defines the services that are best adapted to ensure the student's success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications.</p>	

### 3.2 MEQ provisions

References	Things to consider	Comments
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ministerial structure</b></p> <p>In 1986, the MEQ made the organization of individualized paths for learning (IPLs) compulsory.</p> <p>There are two types of individualized paths: temporary and continuous.</p> <p>The requirements for entering each of these paths have been defined.</p> <p><i>Temporary individualized path for learning</i></p> <p>This path is for students with mild learning difficulties (delay of over a year), according to the old definitions of the MEQ, and its aim is the student's return to regular classes. The students are placed in smaller classes. There are two options: either the first year of secondary school is spread over two years or the first two years of secondary school are spread over three years.</p> <p><i>Continuous individualized path for learning</i></p> <p>This path is for students with too great a delay—generally more than two years—to envision their return to regular classes. It leads, at the age of 16, to the individualized path for learning focusing on life skills and work skills education (LSWSE).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>A critical look</b></p> <p>IPLs were considered an alternative to the "short vocational education programs," which were eliminated in the reorganization of vocational training.</p> <p>They arose from the MEQ's desire to give students a basic education insofar as possible.</p> <p>A critical look at this structure in the context of the reform leads to certain conclusions.</p> <p>The organization of services on the basis of the identification of students with certain categories does not always meet the students' individual needs. It favours labelling.</p> <p>"Categorization may lead to a student's rejection and permanent relegation to less-valued paths, leading to a loss of self-esteem that will be difficult to overcome." [Translation]<sup>4</sup></p>	

4. Québec, Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *Différencier le curriculum au secondaire : vers des parcours scolaires stimulants pour tous les jeunes*, March 1999, p. 183.

3.2 MEQ provisions (cont.)

References	Things to consider	Comments
<p><b>Ministerial structure</b></p>	<p><b>A critical look</b></p> <p>The services are organized a priori and become a fixed parallel structure in the school. This is not a preventive system and it leads to differentiation through structures.</p> <p>According to the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, "many people feel that differentiation through paths rather than through teaching strategies may allow the school to neglect its responsibility to certain types of students." [Translation]<sup>5</sup></p> <p>Few students are reintegrated into regular classes and their graduation rate is low.</p> <p>"Placement in a remedial or life-skills path between Secondary I and IV is often irreversible and there is rarely any correction of errors in placement." [Translation]<sup>6</sup></p>	

5. Québec, Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *Différencier le curriculum au secondaire : vers des parcours scolaires stimulants pour tous les jeunes*, March 1999, p. 170.

6. Québec, Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *Différencier le curriculum au secondaire : vers des parcours scolaires stimulants pour tous les jeunes*, March 1999, p. 170.

3.2 MEQ provisions (cont.)

References	Things to consider	Comments
<p><b>Ministerial structure</b></p>	<p><b>A critical look</b></p> <p>The teaching strategies used in this type of path do not always meet these students' needs. Concrete, meaningful projects are required.</p> <p>There has been an increase in the number of requests for exemptions in order to enter LSWSE at the age of 15, because the students lack motivation and want to leave school.</p> <p>The recognition of prior learning is difficult in these paths.</p> <p>There is often an exaggerated increase in teaching time devoted to the basic subjects.</p> <p>Education in other subjects is dropped.</p> <p>There is a negative perception of students by teachers of regular classes, parents of students in regular classes, other students in the school and people in general.<sup>7</sup></p>	

7. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction de la recherche, *Les cheminements particuliers de formation : enquête auprès des enseignants, des enseignantes et des responsables de ce type de formation*, 1994, p. 57 and p. 69.

3.2 MEQ provisions (cont.)

References	Things to consider	Comments
<p><b>Ministerial structure</b></p>	<p><b>A critical look</b></p> <p>Certain elements of this structure should nonetheless be <b>retained</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the assistance measures provided in many schools</li> <li>▪ the resource teachers and professionals needed to serve these students</li> <li>▪ the possibility of forming smaller groups of students and providing them with individual support</li> <li>▪ tutors and homeroom teachers, with whom students can form meaningful relationships</li> <li>▪ the innovative aspects of some projects</li> <li>▪ the involvement of teachers in special education</li> </ul>	

### 3.3 MEQ orientations for the organization of services for at-risk students in Secondary Cycle One

References	Impact
<p>Organize the services in accordance with the aims, orientations and structure of the QEP.</p> <p>Assess the needs so as to meet them through pedagogical differentiation or by means of an individualized education plan, where necessary.</p> <p>Organize the services on the basis of the student's needs and abilities and the cycle team's resources.</p> <p>Aim for the development of the competencies in the QEP.</p> <p>Aim for progress in learning.</p> <p>Act from the perspective of lifelong learning.</p> <p>Recognize acquired competencies.</p> <p>Opt for the implementation of services that allow students to stay in regular classes.</p> <p>Provide a range of assistance measures and different types of groupings to meet particular needs, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ preventive, consolidation and remedial measures</li> <li>▪ integration into regular classes with support for the teacher or the student, as needed, in certain subjects</li> <li>▪ integration into regular classes and grouping in resource classes for certain subjects</li> <li>▪ grouping of students on the basis of stimulating pedagogical projects rather than categories</li> </ul> <p>Provide students that have the most severe difficulties with learning situations that take into account their interests and learning styles while targeting the development of the competencies of the QEP.</p> <p>Make accessible the areas of concentration or options offered to other students in the school when a student is capable and it would allow him or her to progress.</p>	

Activity 4

**Discussion: suggestions are given for evaluating the services currently provided by the school**

4.1 Evaluation of services provided by the school in view of the characteristics and needs of students experiencing difficulties in school

Useful information	Services currently provided in the school	A critical look
<p><i>Transition from elementary to secondary school</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How many students who have just barely achieved the end-of-cycle outcomes for Elementary Cycle Three are integrated into regular classes in Secondary I?</li> <li>▪ How many students who have not achieved the end-of-cycle outcomes for Elementary Cycle Three are integrated into regular classes in Secondary I?</li> <li>▪ What support measures could be provided to help integrate these students?</li> <li>▪ What contribution do complementary educational services make?</li> </ul>	<p>What is the situation?</p>	<p>What are the advantages and disadvantages of the choices made with respect to student success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications?</p>

Useful information	Services currently provided in the school	A critical look
<p><i>Transition from elementary to secondary school</i> (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How many students who finish elementary school are not integrated into regular classes in Secondary I?</li> <li>▪ What types of classes are they placed in? Why?</li> <li>▪ What adaptations are made in these classes?</li> <li>▪ What contribution do complementary educational services make?</li> <li>▪ What kind of connections are there between regular classes and special education classes?</li> <li>▪ How many of these students are integrated into regular classes in their second year at secondary school?</li> </ul>	<p>What is the situation?</p>	<p>What are the advantages and disadvantages of the choices made with respect to student success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications?</p>

Useful information	Services currently provided in the school	A critical look
<p><i>Progress in secondary school</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How many students are not integrated into regular classes?</li> <li>▪ What types of classes are they placed in? Why?</li> <li>▪ What adaptations are made in these classes?</li> <li>▪ What contribution do complementary educational services make?</li> <li>▪ How many students in individualized paths return to regular classes?</li> <li>▪ What kind of connections are there between regular classes and special education classes?</li> <li>▪ Are there innovative projects in the school that can meet the range of these students' needs?</li> </ul>	<p>What is the situation?</p>	<p>What are the advantages and disadvantages of the choices made with respect to student success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications?</p>

Useful information <sup>8</sup>	Services currently provided in the school	A critical look
<p><b>Other information</b></p>	<p>What is the situation?</p>	<p>What are the advantages and disadvantages of the choices made with respect to student success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications?</p>

8. Suggestions have been provided for evaluating the services currently offered by the school. However, other tools may be used, such as the list of indicators for the success plan and the portrait and analysis of the current situation and resources available to the secondary schools for the New Approaches, New Solutions (NANS) intervention strategy.

#### 4.2 Organization of services

Desired situation in relation to an integrated view of the components of the reform	Actions to be taken to set up services	Impact

## APPENDIX I

### SECTIONS OF THE *EDUCATION ACT*

#### Students with handicaps or difficulties Organization of educational services

##### THE PRINCIPAL:

- The principal, under the authority of the director general of the school board, shall ensure that educational services provided at the school meet the proper standards of quality. (s. 96.12)
- In the case of a handicapped student or a student with a social maladjustment or a learning disability, the principal, with the assistance of the student's parents, of the staff providing services to the student, and of the student himself, unless the student is unable to do so, shall establish an individualized education plan adapted to the needs of the student. (s. 96.14)

##### THE SCHOOL BOARD:

- Every school board shall, subject to sections 222 and 222.1, adapt the educational services provided to a handicapped student or a student with a social maladjustment or a learning disability according to the student's needs and in keeping with the student's abilities as evaluated by the school board according to the procedures prescribed under subparagraph 1 of the second paragraph of section 235. (s. 234)
- Every school board shall adopt, after consultation with the advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities, a policy concerning the organization of educational services for such students to ensure the harmonious integration of each such student into a regular class or group and into school activities if it has been established on the basis of the evaluation of the student's abilities and needs that such integration would facilitate the student's learning and social integration and would not impose an excessive constraint or significantly undermine the rights of the other students.

The policy shall include:

- 1) procedures for evaluating handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities; such procedures shall provide for the participation of the parents of the students and of the students themselves, unless they are unable to do so;
- 2) methods for integrating those students into regular classes or groups and into regular school activities as well as the support services required for their integration and, if need be, the weighting required to determine the maximum number of students per class or group;
- 3) terms and conditions for grouping those students in specialized schools, classes or groups;
- 4) methods for preparing and evaluating the individualized education plans intended for such students. (s. 235)

## APPENDIX II

### LINES OF ACTION OF THE POLICY ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

- 5) Recognizing the importance of prevention and early intervention, and making a commitment to devote additional effort to this area.
- 6) Making the adaptation of educational services a priority for all those working with students with special needs.
- 7) Placing the organization of educational services at the service of students with special needs by basing it on the individual evaluation of their abilities and needs, by ensuring that these services are provided in the most natural environment for the students, as close as possible to their place of residence, and by favouring the students' integration into regular classes.
- 8) Creating a true educational community, starting with the child and the parents and continuing with outside partners and community organizations working with young people, in order to provide more consistent intervention and better-coordinated services.
- 9) Devoting particular attention to students at risk, especially those with learning disabilities or behavioural difficulties, and determining methods of intervention that better meet their needs and abilities.
- 10) Developing methods for evaluating students' educational success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications, assessing the quality of services and reporting results.