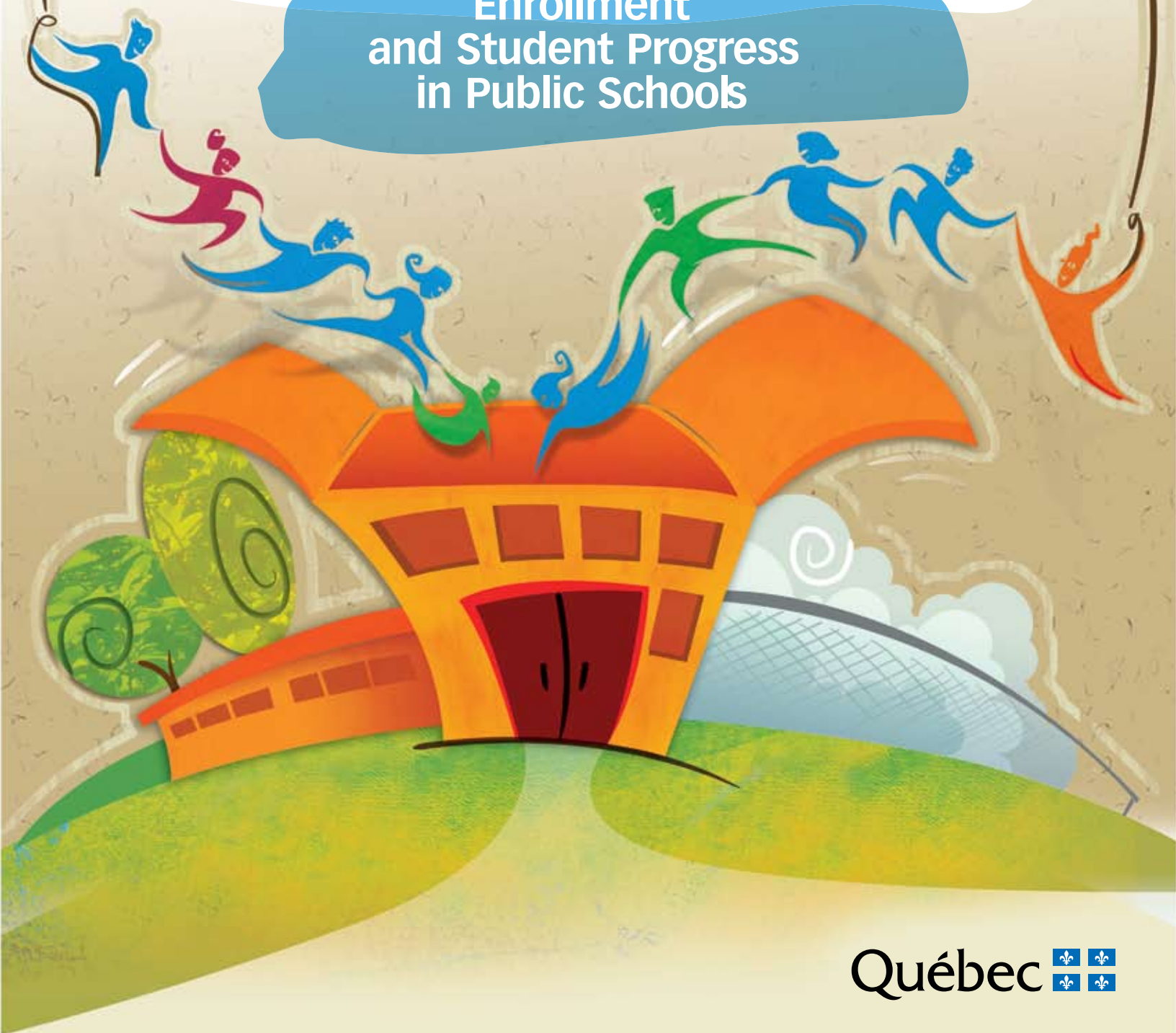


At the Same School!

Students With **Handicaps**, **Social Maladjustments** or **Learning Difficulties**:

Enrollment
and Student Progress
in Public Schools



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCS:	Banque des cheminements scolaires [database of student flow]
DCS:	Déclaration des clientèles scolaires [declaration of enrollments]
EDM:	Entrepôt de données ministerial [corporate data warehouse]
SHSMLD:	Students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties. This includes all students who, for a given school year, have been assigned a code or those who have not been coded but who have an individualized education plan.
MELS:	Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport
MSSS:	Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux

Introduction

In December 2006, the Table de pilotage du nouveau pédagogique (Education reform steering committee) submitted its report on the application of the Québec Education Program – Elementary Sector to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports. Among other recommendations, this report suggested that the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) "take inventory of the students with special needs being integrated into regular classes and the status of so-called 'special classes' in regular elementary and secondary schools, while at the same time examining the educational path and academic success of the students in question."¹

This report is instrumental in implementing this recommendation and focuses primarily on the status of special classes in regular schools. It provides a statistical overview of the situation compiled with administrative data available from MELS as well as data gathered from those in charge of special education at the various school boards.

It covers three aspects of the circumstances of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties (SHSMLD) in regular schools and is thus divided into three parts. The first section presents data on the changing number of SHSMLD from the 1999-2000 school year to the 2006-2007 school year, for each level of instruction. Section two looks at the types of grouping (Appendix 1) selected for four cohorts of SHSMLD, from the beginning of elementary school, and how this changed over time for one cohort. The third and final section of this report examines how the number of special classes has changed and lists various methods for grouping students.

Throughout the report, the data is broken down for two groups of students: the first is made up of students with learning difficulties, i.e. those with an individualized education plan (IEP) but no handicap, and students with severe behavioural disorders. The second group is made up of students with handicaps (Appendix 2). Although both of these groups are defined by specific characteristics (social maladjustment or learning difficulties in one case and handicaps in another), each remains very heterogeneous in the diversity of the problems affecting the students and their specific individual needs.

1. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Bilan de l'application du Programme de formation de l'école québécoise – enseignement primaire*, final report, Table de pilotage du nouveau pédagogique (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, December 2006), p. 138. [translation]

A Change in student enrollment

Every year, MELS collects considerable information on the Déclaration des clientèles scolaires (DCS) forms from schools, data which are then added to the Entrepôt de données ministériel (EDM). Although not exhaustive, these data can be used to create an overall portrait of the students enrolled in the school system. By looking at information on the types of groupings, the groups in difficulty, the various levels of instruction and student gender, one can see how various subgroups of the student population have changed over time. This section begins by examining how the overall student enrollment has changed, how the number of SHSMLD in regular schools has changed and how the number of SHSMLD in special classes in regular schools has changed.

In 1999, the school system experienced the first of many changes. The *Policy on Special Education* was published in 1999,² the new *Québec Education Program* was implemented in 2000, the codes assigned to students in difficulty were changed in 2000-2001,³ and there were changes in the definitions of handicapped students. Readers must be aware of how these various changes could have affected the data examined over time.

1. Change in student enrollment

Let us begin by analyzing the change in the overall student population. Between 1999-2000 and 2006-2007, the number of general education students in the youth sector of the public system dropped, in line with demographic trends. In the past eight years, this number has fallen from 1 027 047 to 946 211 (Table A.1), or a decrease of 8%.⁴ The drop is noticeable at the preschool and elementary levels, but not at the secondary level where the number of students has risen by 5%. During the period studied, the number of students in preschool fell from 10% of the total student population in 1999-2000, to 9% in 2006-2007. The elementary school population dropped from 53% to 49%, while the secondary school population rose from 37% of the total student population in 1999-2000 to 43% in 2006-2007.

As for SHSMLD, it is important to recall that the great majority of these students are found in the elementary and secondary levels, an observation that holds true for all the years examined. For example, during the 2006-2007 school year, 147 074 SHSMLD out of a total of 150 254 were enrolled in these two levels, representing 98%. From 1999-2000 to 2006-2007, the total number of SHSMLD increased by 13%, climbing from 132 538 students to 150 254. This increase can be seen at every level of instruction, but is most dramatic at the preschool and secondary levels.

2. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Adapting Our Schools to the Needs of All Students-Policy on Special Education* (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 1999), [on-line] (consulted June 8, 2008) <http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/dgfi/das/orientations/pdf/polite00.pdf>.

3. The difficulty codes used each year in the Déclaration des effectifs scolaires (DCS) can be found at the following address: http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DOC_ADM/dcs/index.html.

4. To simplify the text, whenever percentages from the tables are used in this report, they have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



**Table
A.1****Total number of general education students in the youth sector of the public system and total number of SHSMLD**

Level of instruction		Total student population			SHSMLD		
		1999-2000	2002-2003	2006-2007	1999-2000	2002-2003	2006-2007
Preschool	N	99 947	91 396	83 448	2 276	3 226	3 180
	%	9.7	9.1	8.8	1.7	2.4	2.1
Elementary	N	544 452	533 276	460 491	63 565	71 137	70 099
	%	53	53.3	48.7	48	52.6	46.7
Secondary	N	382 648	376 409	402 272	66 697	60 941	76 975
	%	37.3	37.6	42.5	50.3	45	51.2
TOTAL	N	1 027 047	1 001 081	946 211	132 538	135 304	150 254
	%	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: MELS, Déclaration des effectifs scolaires (EDM)

Together, the decrease in the total student population and the increase in the number of SHSMLD mean that SHSMLD now account for a higher percentage of the total number of students. In fact, from 1999 to 2007, the number of SHSMLD as a proportion of the total number of general education students in the youth sector in the public system rose from 13% to 16%. This increase can be seen at every level of instruction (Table A.2).

If we examine the findings in Tables A.1 and A.2, we see that even though the absolute number of SHSMLD at the preschool and elementary levels dropped slightly from 2002-2003 to 2006-2007, their proportion of the total student population still rose for the same period.



**Table
A.2****Number of SHSMLD as a percentage of the total number of general education students in the youth sector of the public system, by level of instruction (%)**

Level of instruction	1999-2000	2002-2003	2006-2007
Preschool	2.3	3.5	3.8
Elementary	11.7	13.3	15.2
Secondary	17.4	16.2	19.1
TOTAL	12.9	13.5	15.9

Source: MELs, Déclaration des effectifs scolaires (EDM)

2. Change in the number of SHSMLD in regular schools

From 1999-2000 to 2002-2003, the percentage of SHSMLD enrolled in regular classes rose while the number in special classes fell. Following that year, the percentages have remained more or less stable for the two groups. In 2006-2007, as in 1999-2000, the majority of SHSMLD were integrated into regular classes (Table A.3).

👉 In 1999-2000, 56% of SHSMLD were integrated into regular classes.

👉 In 2006-2007, 62% of SHSMLD were integrated into regular classes.

**Table
A.3****Percentage of SHSMLD in each type of grouping⁵ (%)**

Type of grouping	1999-2000	2002-2003	2006-2007
Regular class	56.0	60.2	62.1
Special class	37.6	33.5	32.8
Other ⁶	6.3	6.4	5.1
TOTAL	100	100	100

Source: MELs, Déclaration des effectifs scolaires (EDM)

5. Appendix 1 provides more details on the types of grouping.

6. The grouping "Other" refers to students educated in special schools, rehabilitation centres, hospitals or at home.

For both groups (students with learning or behavioural difficulties and students with handicaps), variations in the types of groupings can be observed, starting with the 1999-2000 school year (Table A.4). From 1999-2000 to 2006-2007, with regard to students with learning or behavioural difficulties:

- ✎ the number of those integrated into regular classes increased from 58% to 67%
- ✎ the number of those in special classes decreased from 38% to 31%

As for students with handicaps:

- ✎ a more or less constant percentage of 37% to 38% of the students were integrated into regular classes
- ✎ the number of those in special classes rose from 37% to 45%

The increase in the number of students with handicaps in special classes may be related to the drop in their numbers in the "Other" grouping. In fact, from 1999 to 2007, the percentage of students with handicaps classified in the "Other" grouping fell, dropping from 26% to 17%.

**Table
A.4**

Number and percentage of SHSMLD, by type of difficulty, in each type of grouping

Grouping of students		Students with learning or behavioural difficulties		Students with handicaps	
		N	%	N	%
Regular class	1999-2000	68 689	58.4	5 576	37.4
	2002-2003	74 722	63.7	6 681	37.1
	2006-2007	84 232	66.5	9 061	38.4
Special class	1999-2000	44 394	37.7	5 486	36.8
	2002-2003	38 082	32.5	7 205	40.0
	2006-2007	38 806	30.6	10 505	44.6
Other	1999-2000	4 560	3.9	3 833	25.7
	2002-2003	4 502	3.8	4 112	22.8
	2006-2007	3 642	2.9	4 008	17.0
TOTAL	1999-2000	117 643	100	14 895	100
	2002-2003	117 306	100	17 998	100
	2006-2007	126 680	100	23 574	100

Source: MELs, Déclaration des effectifs scolaires (EDM)



3. Change in the number of SHSMLD in special classes in regular schools

The majority of SHSMLD enrolled in special classes are found at the elementary and secondary level. For the 2002-2003 school year, these students represented 99% of the students in special classes. For the same year, those in preschool accounted for only 1% of all SHSMLD in special classes, or 504 SHSMLD out of a total 45 287 (Table A.5).

From 2002 to 2007, the number of SHSMLD enrolled in special classes increased at the preschool level (from 504 to 702) and at the secondary level (from 32 332 to 36 804). At the elementary level, the number of students enrolled in special classes dropped.

**Table
A.5**

Number and percentage of SHSMLD enrolled in special classes, by level of instruction

Level of instruction	2002-2003		2006-2007	
	N	%	N	%
Preschool	504	1.1	702	1.4
Elementary	12 451	27.5	11 805	23.9
Secondary	32 332	71.4	36 804	74.7
TOTAL	45 287	100	49 311	100

Source: MELES, Déclaration des effectifs scolaires (EDM)

3.1 Description of special classes

Homogeneous and heterogeneous classes

A homogeneous special class is made up of students with the same type of difficulty, while a heterogeneous special class includes students with a variety of difficulties.

The majority of students enrolled in special classes are in heterogeneous classes. From 2002-2003 to 2006-2007, the proportion of those enrolled in a heterogeneous special class rose from 69% to nearly 78% (Table A.6).

The highest percentage of students enrolled in heterogeneous special classes is found at the secondary level. This level also recorded the greatest increase in such students compared to the 2002-2003 school year.



**Table
A.6****Percentage of SHSMLD in heterogeneous
special classes, by level of instruction (%)**

Level of instruction	2002-2003	2006-2007
Preschool	50.4	51.3
Elementary	61.1	61.2
Secondary	71.8	83.3
TOTAL	68.6	77.5

Source: MELS, Déclaration des effectifs scolaires (EDM)

Boys and girls

Approximately two-thirds of all students enrolled in special classes are boys. This proportion has remained stable since the 2002-2003 school year.

However, the percentage of boys decreases slightly from one level of instruction to the next. For example, in 2006-2007, boys represented 76% of those enrolled in special classes at the preschool level, 71% at the elementary level, and only 65% at the secondary level (Table A.7).

From 2002-2003 to 2006-2007, there was an increase in the number of girls and boys in special classes at the preschool and secondary levels. At the preschool level, the increase among boys was greater than that among girls, while at the secondary level, the increase in the number of boys and girls was essentially the same. At the elementary level, the decrease in the number of boys and girls was also about the same.



**Table
A.7****Number and percentage of girls and boys in special classes, by level of instruction**

Level of instruction	Gender	2002-2003		2006-2007	
		N	%	N	%
Preschool	Female	144	28.6	166	23.6
	Male	360	71.4	536	76.4
	Total	504	100	702	100
Elementary	Female	3 794	30.5	3 455	29.3
	Male	8 657	69.5	8 350	70.7
	Total	12 451	100	11 805	100
Secondary	Female	11 295	34.9	13 005	35.3
	Male	21 037	65.1	23 799	64.7
	Total	32 332	100	36 804	100
TOTAL	Female	15 233	33.6	16 626	33.7
	Male	30 054	66.4	32 685	66.3
	Total	45 287	100	49 311	100

Source: MELs, Déclaration des effectifs scolaires (EDM)

3.2 Breakdown of special classes by level of instruction

Preschool

In 2006-2007, students with handicaps accounted for the majority of SHSMLD enrolled in special classes at the preschool level, or 88% (Table A.8).

As we saw earlier in Table A.7, the number of preschool students in special classes increased between 2002 and 2007, from 504 to 702 students. The number of students with learning or behavioural difficulties rose from 56 to 87, while those with handicaps rose from 448 to 615.

Elementary

In 2006-2007, students with learning or behavioural difficulties represented 57% of the SHSMLD elementary population in special classes, while students with handicaps accounted for 43% (Table A.8).

Elementary school is the only level of instruction where the total number of SHSMLD in special classes decreased from 2002-2003 to 2006-2007. This decrease is due to the lower number of students with learning or behavioural difficulties, which fell from 8 530 to 6 765. As for students with handicaps, their numbers actually increased, rising from 3 921 to 5 040.



Secondary

In 2006-2007, students with learning or behavioural difficulties still represented the great majority of SHSMLD in special classes at the secondary level, or 87% (Table A.8).

From 2002-2003 to 2006-2007, the number of students with handicaps experienced the greatest relative increase, with the number rising by just over 2 000 students. For the same period, their share of the SHSMLD population rose four percentage points. As for students with learning or behavioural difficulties, their numbers also increased, by nearly 2 500 students. However, their share in the total SHSMLD secondary population actually fell.

**Table
A.8**

Number and percentage of students in special classes for each type of difficulty, by level of instruction

Type of difficulty by level of instruction		2002-2003		2006-2007	
		N	%	N	%
Preschool	Students with learning or behavioural difficulties	56	11.1	87	12.4
	Students with handicaps	448	88.9	615	87.6
	TOTAL	504	100	702	100
Elementary	Students with learning or behavioural difficulties	8 530	68.5	6 765	57.3
	Students with handicaps	3 921	31.5	5 040	42.7
	TOTAL	12 451	100	11 805	100
Secondary	Students with learning or behavioural difficulties	29 629	91.6	32 090	87.2
	Students with handicaps	2 703	8.4	4 714	12.8
	TOTAL	32 332	100	36 804	100

Source: MELs, Déclaration des effectifs scolaires (EDM)



Highlights

- ✦ From 1999-2000 to 2006-2007, despite an overall decrease of 8% in the total student population for all levels of instruction, the number of SHSMLD increased by 13%.
- ✦ In 2006-2007, like in 2002-2003, the majority of SHSMLD, or 62%, were still integrated into regular classes (Table A.3).
- ✦ From 1999-2000 to 2006-2007, the number of students with learning or behavioural difficulties or handicaps enrolled in regular classes rose. However, the proportion of students with learning or behavioural difficulties in regular classes was greater, i.e. 67%. Among students with handicaps, there was a decrease in the percentage of students in the "Other" grouping and an increase in the proportion of those enrolled in special classes. In 2006-2007, 45% of students with handicaps were in special classes (Table A.4).
- ✦ Despite more students with learning or behavioural difficulties being integrated into regular classes, this group still accounts for most of the students in special classes. In 2006-2007, 38 806 students with learning or behavioural difficulties were in this type of grouping, compared to 10 505 students with handicaps (Table A.4).
- ✦ Most students enrolled in special classes, or 78% of them in 2006-2007, are in heterogeneous classes. The percentage of SHSMLD in heterogeneous special classes is highest at the secondary level, at 83% (Table A.6).
- ✦ From 2002 to 2007, approximately 2/3 of the students in special classes were boys. The proportion of boys does decrease from one level of instruction to the next, however, and in 2006-2007, their numbers fell from 76% at the preschool level to 65% at the secondary level (Table A.7).
- ✦ From 2002 to 2007, the overall increase in the number of SHSMLD in special classes was due primarily to those enrolled at the secondary level, and to a lesser extent to those in preschool (Table A.8).



B Types of grouping in four SHSMLD cohorts

Part two presents the types of grouping selected for four different cohorts of students entering Elementary 1 for the first time: those in 1999-2000, 2001-2002, 2004-2005 and 2006-2007. We will then examine the educational path for one of the cohorts in the various types of grouping over time. As in the previous section, readers must be aware that changes made in the school system since 1999 may have influenced the change in these data. The data used in this section come from the MELS Banque des cheminements scolaires (BCS).

1. *Overall profile upon entering elementary school*

To begin, we will look at the four cohorts in terms of the number of SHSMLD and their types of grouping upon entering elementary school.

Change in the number of SHSMLD

Between the 1999-2000 cohort and that of 2001-2002, the total number of SHSMLD entering Elementary 1 rose from 4 668 to 6 100 (Table B.1). The “students with learning or behavioural difficulties” group recorded a particularly impressive increase during this period, rising from 3 185 to 4 703 students. Beginning with the 2004-2005 cohort, the number of SHSMLD entering elementary school has declined, falling from a high of 6 100 in 2001 to 5 231 in 2006. In effect, it is simply following the demographic trend affecting all students entering elementary school. Since the 2001-2002 cohort, the number of SHSMLD entering elementary school has decreased by nearly 7%.

Table B.1 also illustrates that as of 2001-2002, the trend is actually towards a decrease in the number of students with learning or behavioural difficulties and an increase in the number of students with handicaps.

Types of grouping upon entering Elementary 1

Generally speaking, the breakdown of SHSMLD by type of grouping upon entering elementary school changed from 1999-2000 to 2001-2002, illustrating a change in common practices (Table B.1).

In fact, as of 2001-2002, there is an increase in the number of SHSMLD entering elementary school who are integrated into regular classes and a decrease in the number of students placed in special classes.



1999 - 2000

64% were in regular classes

27% were in special classes

2006 - 2007

75% were in regular classes

19% were in special classes

When it comes to the type of grouping upon entering elementary school, the situation varies greatly, depending on the type of disability. In the case of students with learning or behavioural difficulties, the number placed in regular classes increased from 1999-2000 to 2001-2002, and then levelled out until 2006-2007.

1999 - 2000

72% were in regular classes

24% were in special classes

2006 - 2007

90% were in regular classes

8% were in special classes

As for students with handicaps, the proportion of those integrated into regular classes has varied little since the late 1990s. However, the proportion of students with handicaps placed in special classes has increased. This increase may be related to the decrease in the number of students placed into types of grouping other than special or regular classes.

1999 - 2000

45% were in regular classes

32% were in special classes

23% were in another type
of grouping

2006 - 2007

45% were in regular classes

41% were in special classes

14% were in another type
of grouping



**Table
B.1**

Breakdown of four cohorts of SHSMLD entering elementary school, by type of difficulty and by type of grouping (%)

		Type of grouping entering elementary school			TOTAL	
	Cohort	Regular class	Special class	Other	N	%
Entire cohort	1999-2000	63.8	26.8	9.4	4 668	100
	2001-2002	77.7	16.0	6.3	6 100	100
	2004-2005	76.9	17.4	5.7	5 666	100
	2006-2007	75.3	19.0	5.6	5 231	100
Students with learning or behavioural difficulties	1999-2000	72.4	24.4	3.2	3 185	100
	2001-2002	88.1	10.0	1.9	4 703	100
	2004-2005	90.1	8.4	1.4	3 984	100
	2006-2007	89.8	8.4	1.7	3 527	100
Students with handicaps	1999-2000	45.4	31.9	22.7	1 483	100
	2001-2002	42.7	36.3	21.0	1 397	100
	2004-2005	45.4	38.6	15.9	1 682	100
	2006-2007	45.3	41.0	13.7	1 704	100

Source: MEELS, Banque des cheminements scolaires (BCS), July 2007



2. *Student flow of SHSMLD in the 1999-2000 cohort*

The 1999-2000 cohort is the only one with information on the percentage of students in each type of grouping six years after entering elementary school. It is important to specify that our analysis of the situation of these students after six years does not take into account the intervening years. For example, some students may have always been enrolled in a regular class, while others may have been integrated into a special class or some other type of grouping before returning to a regular class. We will look at the students in each type of grouping upon entering elementary school, and examine which type of grouping these students belong to six years later.

SHSMLD who entered elementary school in regular classes

In 1999-2000, of the total number of SHSMLD, 64% began elementary school in regular classes. Following up on this group, six years later we see that (Table B.2):

- 👉 36% are still in regular classes
- 👉 34% are no longer classified SHSMLD and are in regular classes
- 👉 24% are grouped in special classes
- 👉 4% are grouped in another type of grouping
- 👉 3% are absent

Therefore, approximately one-third of the students integrated into regular classes at the beginning of elementary school were no longer classified SHSMLD six years later. In addition, most of the students integrated into regular classes upon entering elementary school were still in regular classes six years later.

SHSMLD who entered elementary school in special classes

In 1999-2000, 27% of all the SHSMLD entering Elementary 1 were placed in special classes. Among these students, six years later:

- 👉 20% are in regular classes
- 👉 16% are no longer classified SHSMLD and are now in regular classes
- 👉 54% are grouped in special classes
- 👉 9% are grouped in another type of grouping
- 👉 2% are absent

Therefore, over half of the students who began elementary school in special classes remain in special classes, six years after starting elementary school. Moreover, a little over one-third are in regular classes, including those who are no longer classified SHSMLD.



**Table
B.2**

Number and percentage of SHSMLD in each type of grouping after 6 years, according to initial grouping upon entering elementary school

1999-2000			2005-2006		
Type of grouping entering elementary school	N	%	Type of grouping after 6 years	N	%
Regular class	2 978	63.8	Regular class SHSMLD	1 061	35.6
			Regular class non-SHSMLD	1 003	33.7
			Special class	710	23.8
			Other	121	4.1
			Absent	83	2.8
			Total	2 978	100
Special class	1 251	26.8	Regular class SHSMLD	246	19.7
			Regular class non-SHSMLD	196	15.7
			Special class	669	53.5
			Other	111	8.9
			Absent	29	2.3
			Total	1 251	100
Other	439	9.4	Regular class SHSMLD	42	9.6
			Regular class non-SHSMLD	35	8.0
			Special class	97	22.1
			Other	245	55.8
			Absent	20	4.6
			Total	439	100
TOTAL	4 668	100	Regular class SHSMLD	1 349	28.9
			Regular class non-SHSMLD	1 234	26.4
			Special class	1 476	31.6
			Other	477	10.2
			Absent	132	2.8
			Total	4 668	100



Highlights

- ✦ After 2001-2002, more students were integrated into regular classes and fewer were placed in special classes. A higher proportion of students with learning or behavioural difficulties were integrated into regular classes. Among students with handicaps, there is a decrease in the number of students classified in the "Other" type of grouping and an increase in the number enrolled in special classes (Table B.1).
- ✦ After six years, a cohort of SHSMLD entering Elementary 1 for the first time experienced some changes in the types of grouping. However, the majority of students, or 69%, who were initially enrolled in regular classes still are. The same holds true for students who entered Elementary 1 in special classes, with 54% of them still in this type of grouping (Table B.2).
- ✦ Six years after entering Elementary 1 for the first time, 26% of SHSMLD are no longer classified SHSMLD. The percentage of students no longer classified SHSMLD is higher among students who were integrated into regular classes, or 34% of them (Table B.2).



C Change in the number of special classes and methods of grouping

This third section looks at the change in the number of regular and special classes from 2004-2005 to 2007-2008 in the regular schools of the Québec school boards surveyed. We also present some of the methods for grouping SHSMLD in regular classes.

As the MELS databases do not contain this type of data, a questionnaire was sent to the special education coordinators of 70 of the 72 school boards in the province's 11 administrative regions.⁷ A total of 64 school boards completed and returned the questionnaire.

1. *Change in the number of special classes*

Table C.1 lists the number of regular and special classes for each level of instruction from 2004-2005 to 2007-2008 for the 64 school boards that completed the questionnaire. The drop in the total number of classes between 2006 and 2008 follows the drop in the overall student population mentioned in the first section of this document. While this decrease can be seen at the preschool and elementary levels, the secondary level has actually recorded an increase in the number of classes. The first section of this report noted, moreover, an increase in population for the secondary level of instruction. Some classes include students from two different levels of instruction, e.g. preschool-elementary classes and elementary-secondary classes. The category "Other" includes students from various levels, with a specific problem, for example a resource class for students with behavioural difficulties, an all-purpose class for little ones, or a welcoming class for preschool, elementary and secondary students.

Table C.1 also lists the number of special classes for all the levels of instruction combined. From 2004-2005 to 2007-2008, this number grew from 3 296 to 3 693, an increase of 12%. This rise coincides with the increase in the number of SHSMLD noted between 1999-2000 and 2006-2007 (Table A.1). Depending on the level of instruction, the increase in the number of special classes was more or less significant. For 4-year-old preschool programs, the number of special classes rose from 24 to 35 and for 5-year-old preschool programs the numbers were 47 to 54. At the secondary level, the number of special classes rose from 1 739 to 2 085.

Among the school boards surveyed, four indicated that they had no special classes. Three of these were anglophone school boards while the fourth was francophone.

7. Given the special status of the Cree and Kativik school boards, they were not approached to take part in the survey.



**Table
C.1****Number of regular and special classes for all general education students in the youth sector of the public system, by level of instruction**

School year	Type of grouping	Preschool (4 years old)	Preschool (5 years old)	Preschool and elementary	Elementary	Elementary and secondary	Secondary	Other	TOTAL
2004-2005	Regular class	400	3 334	3 000	18 573	730	7 758	19	33 814
	Special class	24	47	93	1184	160	1 739	49	3 296
	Total	424	3 381	3 093	19 757	890	9 497	68	37 110
2005-2006	Regular class	402	3 259	2 955	17 937	711	8 331	21	33 616
	Special class	30	45	94	1 227	140	1 818	53	3 407
	Total	432	3 304	3 049	19 164	851	10 149	74	37 023
2006-2007	Regular class	402	3 276	1 907	17 406	684	8 849	20	32 544
	Special class	32	52	95	1 200	151	1 964	55	3 549
	Total	434	3 328	2 002	18 606	835	10 813	75	36 093
2007-2008	Regular class	366	3 296	1 844	17 024	670	8 262	22	31 484
	Special class	35	54	102	1214	162	2 085	41	3 693
	Total	401	3 350	1 946	18 238	832	10 347	63	35 177

Table C.2 lists the number of special classes as a percentage of all the classes for each level of instruction. The following example will help clarify what these percentages represent. At the preschool level for 4 year-olds, in 2004-2005, Table C.1 indicates that there were 24 special classes out of a total 424 classes. This 24/424 ratio corresponds to a percentage of 6%, meaning that special classes made up 6% of the total number of classes in this level of instruction for the year 2004-2005.

For all the years surveyed, the number of special classes as a percentage of all classes is the highest at the secondary level. In 2007-2008, 20% of all secondary classes were special classes.



The proportion of special classes rose slightly for all levels of instruction combined from 2004-2005 to 2007-2008, climbing from 9% to 11%. The biggest increase was observed at the preschool (4 years old) level, where the number rose by three percentage points. As for the category “Other,” it decreased by seven percentage points.

**Table
C.2**

**Number of special classes as a percentage of all classes,
by level of instruction (%)**

Level of instruction	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Preschool (4 years old)	5.7	6.9	7.4	8.7
Preschool (5 years old)	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.6
Preschool - elementary	3	3.1	4.7	5.2
Elementary	6	6.4	6.4	6.7
Elementary - secondary	18	16.5	18.1	19.5
Secondary	18.3	17.9	18.2	20.2
Other	72.1	71.6	73.3	65.1
TOTAL	8.9	9.2	9.8	10.5

2. *Types of special classes*

Homogeneous classes of students with the same specific difficulty are increasingly rare in schools. Instead, special classes welcome students with a range of difficulties; they are said to be “heterogeneous.”

The following chart lists, for each level of instruction, some of the types of special classes used and mentioned by the school boards surveyed.



Preschool

- • Handicapped (4 year olds)
- • Handicapped (5 year olds)
- • Developmental delay
- • Global developmental delay and atypical impairment

Preschool - elementary

- • Multiple impairments
- • Multiple disorders
- • Behavioural difficulty and severe behavioural difficulty

Elementary

- • Mild to moderate intellectual impairment
- • Mild intellectual impairment and language disorder
- • Multiple impairments
- • Development (6 year olds)
- • Severe developmental disorder
- • Multiple disorders
- • Multiple handicaps
- • Language disorder
- • Developmental delay
- • Attachment and behaviour disorder
- • Pervasive developmental disorder and moderate intellectual impairment
- • Specific learning disability

Secondary

- • Individualized path for learning
- • Class covered by an agreement with a detoxification centre
- • Communication
- • Moderate and severe intellectual impairment and psychopathological disorder
- • Mild to moderate impairment
- • Mild impairment with or without a related disorder in LSWSE and VTT
- • Organic impairment
- • Learning disability and handicap
- • Multiple handicaps
- • Pre-secondary (remedial activities)
- • Pervasive developmental disorder with intellectual impairment



3. *Methods for grouping students in regular classes*

In the first section of this report, it was noted that the majority of SHSMLD were grouped in regular classes (62% for the 2006-2007 school year) (Table A.3). In this type of grouping, various methods may be used to best meet the needs of SHSMLD. In the questionnaire used to compile the data for this section of the report, school boards had to indicate how often some of these methods were used. The following is the list of methods they were given to rate:

1. The students spend all their time with the other students and a resource person comes into the classroom to provide the teacher or students with additional support.
2. The students spend most of their time with the other students, and are taken out of the classroom solely to receive specific supplemental services.
3. The students spend most of their time in class, but are taken out for instruction on specific subjects.

Looking at the responses given by the 63 respondents, methods 1 and 2 (in other words, the students are in regular classes all the time or at least most of the time, but are taken out to receive support services) seem to be the most commonly used in the schools of the various school boards. In a majority of cases, method 3 (in other words, the students are in class most of the time and taken out only for specific subjects) seems to be a method used in only a few schools (Table C.3).

**Table
C.3**

**Frequency of use of various methods for
grouping SHSMLD in regular classes**

Frequency of use	Method 1		Method 2		Method 3	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Used by all the schools	27	42.9	30	47.6	10	15.9
Used by over half of the schools	26	41.3	23	36.5	5	7.9
Used by at least one-third of the schools	5	7.9	4	6.3	5	7.9
Used by several schools	5	7.9	6	9.5	31	49.2
Not used by any school	0	0	0	0	12	19
TOTAL	63	100	63	100	63	100



Nineteen school boards indicated that they also used other methods for grouping SHSMLD. Sometimes they specified which students these methods were used for. In the description of these various methods, the respondents were also asked to specify how often each method was used by the schools in their school board: used by all the schools, over half, at least one-third or several. This information is included in parentheses, for each method named. It is interesting to note that none of the methods put forth by the school boards was mentioned by more than one board.

Methods without specifying the type of student difficulty:

- • Integration into another class group in order to participate in certain activities or breaking up the group for specific activities (several schools).
- • Breaking up the group according to different needs, a buddy system for each cycle, motivational groups (several schools).
- • At the elementary level, development of a service for classes involving communication issues and severe social maladjustments in which students are integrated full-time. They receive the same services (resource teacher, psychologist, special education technician and others). These classes have the same teacher-student ratio as special classes. Resource personnel work in regular classes with the regular class teachers (several schools).
- • At the secondary level, the students following individualized paths for learning are integrated into regular classes that suit their age and interests. This integration accounts for 33% of their time at school (several schools).

Methods for students with behavioural difficulties:

- • An intensive, short-term (maximum of three months) service providing special education and rehabilitation (all schools).
- • A temporary class for students with behavioural difficulties in elementary school. While maintaining a connection with their regular class, students attend this special 4-6 week class and then return to their home school (all schools).
- • A service that partners a community organization with a school for secondary students (12-14 years old). This service is voluntary and on an as-needed basis. It helps young people avoid getting suspended while keeping up with their schoolwork. This service helps give young people a reason to stay in school (all schools).
- • A respite service for elementary students (over half of schools).

Methods for students with handicaps:

- • In regular classes, a hearing impairment support service (direct and indirect service), a visual impairment support service (indirect service) and an oral interpretation service (all schools).
- • Groupings of 3 to 4 handicapped students at the same grade level in the same regular class with full-time support from a special education technician (one-third of schools).
- • The use of a "reverse integration" approach in which "regular" students integrate the special class. One individual or part of a regular class agrees to do a project or study with a group of young people with handicaps (several schools).



Other arrangements that facilitate working with SHSMLD:

- • Access to various technological tools, both in and outside the classroom (all schools).
- • Various direct or indirect support services, in accordance with the needs identified in the student's individualized education plan (IEP) or the school's success plan: resource teacher, speech therapist, caregiver, psychologist, regional resource persons, etc. (over half of schools).
- • A consulting service to support school teams in their work with students with learning delays and behavioural difficulties (over half of schools).
- • At the elementary level, use of team teaching with the resource teacher (several schools).
- • Based on the principle that schools should be designed for a group of students, the school develops an expertise and shares it with other schools who integrate consulting services into their regular classes for teachers with SHSMLD (several schools).
- • Instead of taking students out of their classrooms, resource teachers co-teach with regular teachers. Students with learning or behavioural difficulties are also accompanied in class. All schools have expert teachers to support the other teachers (all schools).
- • A very organized program of early intervention for reading problems. This program targets the weakest third of the students in preschool and cycle one of elementary school. The program offers two additional hours of support to improve reading skills (all schools).

4. General comments

The last survey question was used to gather general comments from the respondents about special classes and their methods for grouping SHSMLD in regular classes.

These comments clearly highlighted the willingness of schools to meet the needs of their students, whether they are in special classes or regular classes. The ideal formula for selecting the best services and thereby responding as effectively as possible to the needs of students is to have a multidisciplinary team perform a needs analysis of the SHSMLD. One school board mentioned, in fact, that children benefited when their true needs were properly identified and the school tried to meet these needs in a creative manner.

Several comments emphasized that, in regions outside major urban centres, it is harder to group students in special classes, given the lower numbers of SHSMLD. It is more difficult to organize services, and respondents felt funding was insufficient. According to one school board, the smaller number of SHSMLD means that the school team at each school often has to accompany students in an individualized way to meet their needs. For special classes, it was suggested that the programs provided in these services be better defined.

Among other comments on integration into regular classes, it was suggested that integration be supported both financially and organizationally, for example, by specifying the circumstances that facilitate integration into regular classes and by better equipping teachers who will have to teach this type of student. Teacher training should enable teachers to develop creative methods for meeting students' needs. Moreover, one school board noted that support in regular classes is provided more often at the elementary level than at the secondary level.



At least two different respondents mentioned the importance of collaboration between special classes and regular classes as a way to encourage at least a partial integration of the students. Therefore, even if not all of the students' needs may be met in a regular class, these groups can work together on projects as often as possible.

As for information technology, one school board mentioned the benefits that IT could have for all SHSMLD. In particular, it highlighted the need to extend Measure 30810⁸ to all students, not just those with handicaps.

Highlights⁹

- ✎ The number of special classes in all the school boards has increased by 12%.
- ✎ For all the years examined, the secondary level accounts for the highest proportion of special classes (anywhere from 18 to 20%). From 2004-2005 to 2007-2008, the preschool level recorded the greatest percentage increase in the number of special classes (Table C.2).
- ✎ Among the methods for grouping students listed in the survey, method 1 (the students spend all their time with the other students and a resource person comes into the classroom to provide support) and method 2 (the students spend most of their time with the other students, and are taken out of the classroom solely to receive certain services) are the most commonly used (84% of the school boards use these methods in either all or over half of their schools) (Table C.3).
- ✎ Special classes are, for the most part, heterogeneous, and schools have developed various ways of grouping students so as to best meet their individual needs.
- ✎ The school board respondents mentioned the difficulty of organizing services to meet the many needs of students. Funding was also said to be insufficient (general comments).

8. Under Measure 30810, schools can purchase adapted furniture, devices and equipment and thereby facilitate access to technological tools for students with handicaps.

9. This data was gathered from the 64 school boards who completed and returned the questionnaire.



Conclusion

This study was conducted at the request of the Table de pilotage du nouveau pédagogique, as a way of developing an overview of the situation in special classes. The document also includes data on the student flow of SHSMLD and their integration into regular classes.

Our analysis of the data shows that, despite a drop in the overall student population, the number of SHSMLD has increased at the preschool and secondary levels. At the elementary level, the absolute number of SHSMLD has fallen, but their relative share of the total student population has increased slightly. These changes mean that we must closely monitor any changes in student enrollment in the years to come.

Regarding students with learning or behavioural difficulties who are integrated into regular classes, the analysis of the MELS data shows that the majority of these students are still integrated into regular classes and that their numbers are growing. When it comes to students with handicaps, their numbers have increased in special classes and in regular classes. Although there has been an increase in the number of students integrated into regular classes, the data supplied by school boards show that the number of special classes has also climbed from 2004-2005 to 2007-2008.

In the section of this document that examined the four cohorts of SHSMLD entering Elementary 1, we saw that, after six years, just over one-quarter of them were no longer classified SHSMLD and that half of the students who began in either regular classes or special classes were still in the same grouping. However, the data available could not be analyzed in detail to determine any links between the method of grouping SHSMLD, their educational path and their academic success. In addition, several years ago, MELS conducted a study on cohorts of students with learning or behavioural difficulties at the secondary level, noting whether they were enrolled in regular classes or in temporary individualized paths for learning (IPL-T).¹⁰ The study notably showed that students enrolled in regular classes upon entering secondary school are more likely to stay there, have a higher graduation rate after 5 years and be slightly less likely to have dropped out of school than those originally enrolled in IPL-T.

Although school boards have developed various methods for meeting the needs of SHSMLD, they do encounter problems, particularly when it comes to organizing services. The Minister's action plan,¹¹ published in the spring of 2008, sets forth various measures to promote the success of SHSMLD and address the concerns raised by the school boards. Among other things, these measures aim to support the organization of services, encourage better integration of students with special needs, and increase training and support for teachers.

10. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. *Classe ordinaire et cheminement particulier de formation temporaire. Analyse du cheminement scolaire des élèves en difficulté d'adaptation ou d'apprentissage à leur arrivée au secondaire* (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 2006), 40 p..

11. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. *Action Plan to Promote Success for Students With Handicaps, Social Maladjustments or Learning Disabilities (SHSMLD)* (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 2008) [on-line], (Consulted June 8, 2008) http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/publications/publications/EPEPS/Formation_jeunes/Adaptation_scolaire/PlanActionEHDAa_a.pdf.

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———. *Guide de la déclaration de l'effectif scolaire des jeunes en formation générale (DCS)*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2007-2008 [on-line], (consulted June 8, 2008), [http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DOC_ADM/dcs/DCS2007.pdf].



APPENDIX 1

Types of SHSMLD grouping¹²

Regular class:

This covers values 1 and 2 of the “type of grouping” variable. In the case of value 1, the teacher and student receive support and the student may be taken out of the group for a maximum of three hours to receive services. In the case of value 2, the student takes part in a resource class or receives support and is taken out of the classroom for more than three hours per week for certain activities.

Special class:

This covers values 3 and 4 of the “type of grouping” variable, which designate homogeneous special classes and heterogeneous special classes, respectively.

Other:

This covers values 5 through 8 of the “type of grouping” variable, which designate students who are educated in special schools, rehabilitation centres, hospitals or at home.

12. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Guide de la déclaration de l'effectif scolaire des jeunes en formation générale (DCS)* (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 2007-2008) [on-line], (consulted June 8, 2008), http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DOC_ADM/dcs/DCS2007.pdf.



APPENDIX 2

Groups of difficulties¹³

SHSMLD students are classified in two major groups:

Students with learning or behavioural difficulties:

This refers to students who have no code, but who do have an active individualized education plan (IEP), and those with severe behavioural disorders (codes 12, 14, 21 and 98 and codes under 13 for the 1999-2000 school year).

Codes	Description
13	Covered by an agreement between MELS and the MSSS
14	Severe behavioural disorder
98	Aged 18 to 21 years old and recognized as handicapped under <i>An Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration</i>

"Students with handicaps:"

This refers to students with a difficulty code of 23 or higher, with the exception of code 98 (code 23 or higher with the exception of code 71 for the 1999-2000 school year).

Codes	Description
23	Profound intellectual impairment
24	Moderate to severe intellectual impairment
33	Mild motor or organic impairment
34	Language disorder
36	Severe motor impairment
42	Visual impairment
44	Hearing impairment
50	Pervasive developmental disorder
53	Psychopathological disorder
99	Atypical impairment

13. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Guide de la déclaration de l'effectif scolaire des jeunes en formation générale (DCS)* (Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, 2007-2008) [on-line], (consulted June 8, 2008), http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DOC_ADM/dcs/DCS2007.pdf.





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