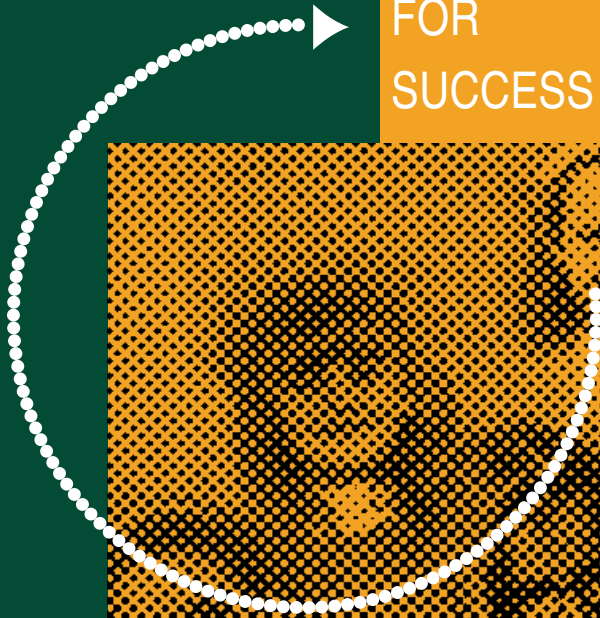


Adapting Our Schools to the Needs of All Students

A NEW
DIRECTION
FOR
SUCCESS

PLAN OF ACTION
FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

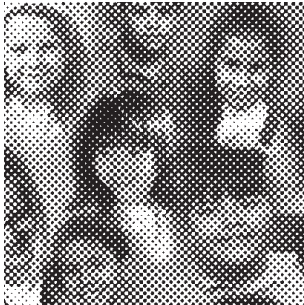


Québec 

Ministère
de l'Éducation

Adapting Our Schools to the Needs of All Students

A NEW
DIRECTION
FOR
SUCCESS



PLAN OF ACTION
FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

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It gives me great pleasure to be able to submit this ambitious Plan of Action. When I was appointed Minister of Education, I wanted to bring a wind of change to Québec's school system. This Plan of Action, consisting of concrete and innovative measures, will certainly contribute to the achievement of that goal. The willingness to intervene early to ensure success and to help all Quebec students get a good start in life is, in my opinion, the key to achieving our ideal, namely success for the greatest possible number of students.

I wish to affirm my commitment to support schools in their efforts to give concrete expression to the fundamental orientation and lines of action of the *Policy on Special Education*. I am firmly convinced that, together, we can help young people with special needs experience success.

The achievement of this social goal calls for new attitudes towards educational success, a variety of instructional approaches and close cooperation among all partners in the community. I am thoroughly convinced that the success of this undertaking depends on the commitment of everyone involved.

This Plan of Action is a contribution to the collective effort required. It was designed as a set of interrelated measures aimed at supporting the participation of all educators and every level of the school system. It will be implemented gradually over the next five years.

The additional financial resources required to implement this plan of action will be devoted first and foremost to measures that are of particular importance in ensuring success for all students: measures designed to prevent difficulties as well as measures aimed at providing students and teachers with the pedagogical and professional support required to achieve this objective.

Early intervention in order to ensure success: this is the challenge we must meet. By working together and bringing to bear the resources of the whole education community, I am confident that we will give the Québec school system the momentum to greet the new millennium in a spirit of optimism.

Minister of State for Education and Youth

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Legault', with a stylized, cursive script.

FRANÇOIS LEGAULT

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INTRODUCTION

The *Policy on Special Education* and this Plan of Action are part of the education reform. They emphasize the fact that we must aim for success for all students, and that this success may mean different things for different students, according to their individual abilities and needs.

Educational success for students with special needs constitutes a challenge both for the students and for those who guide them. Attaining this objective will be possible only if the education system as a whole is committed to helping these young people succeed in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications.

This Plan of Action is intended to support schools in their work with young people with special needs. It is based on the six lines of action defined in the Policy. For each of these lines of action, the contribution the schools can make is shown, and the means the Ministère de l'Éducation plans to implement to help the schools are presented.

LINES OF ACTION

Recognizing the importance of prevention and early intervention, and making a commitment to devote additional effort to this area

Prevention is the first step toward achieving lasting results and making sure that students do not experience setbacks in their education.

A school that takes into account the diversity of students' needs and abilities from the outset, adopting a flexible, open approach that respects differences, will foster learning and success for students, including students with special needs.

Special attention should be devoted to children with difficulties, so that the school does not lose any time in finding the approach best suited to their needs.

While the school plays a very important role, it is not the only actor in the area of prevention. Care must be taken to ensure that its actions complement whatever steps may have been taken in early childhood by the parents and the school's other partners.

Those involved in intervention seem to be convinced of the benefits of prevention. However, the challenge consists in making prevention a priority in practice and in devoting to it the financial and human resources required to carry it out.

In this context, the Ministère de l'Éducation undertakes:

To create an environment conducive to learning and success for all students.

To recognize the first manifestations of problems and intervene quickly.

Means of achieving this objective

- In order to make it possible to implement preventive measures and adapt teaching practices to the specific needs of each student, the Ministère de l'Éducation will reduce the average number of students in preschool and Cycle One elementary school classes. This measure will be implemented gradually, beginning with the most disadvantaged areas in September 2000 and being extended to all areas by 2003.

In kindergarten, Elementary 1 and Elementary 2 classes in disadvantaged areas, the average number of students per class will be 18. In all other schools, the average number of students per class will be reduced to 18 in kindergarten, 20 in Elementary 1, and 22 in Elementary 2.

Furthermore,

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will ensure that the diversity of the needs of handicapped students and of students

at risk will be taken into consideration in the revision of the curriculum and in initial and ongoing teacher training.

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will publicize educational projects and initiatives that take into account the diverse needs and abilities of these students.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation, in conjunction with the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux and the Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance, will determine the services to be offered to four-year-old students with handicaps as well as mechanisms for cooperation among these ministries.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation will make prevention the primary focus of research in the field of special education.

Making the adaptation of educational services a priority for all those working with students with special needs

Teachers are the first line of response in the adaptation of services. Their task is not an easy one, since they have to meet the individual students' needs while being responsible for the learning of an entire group. They must be supported in this endeavour and must be provided with conditions that facilitate their work.

It goes without saying that school administrators have a particularly important role to play in the adaptation of services.

In particular, they must, as part of their plan of action on the new information and communication technologies, promote the use of these technologies by students with special needs and encourage school staff to acquire the expertise needed.

To ensure that students with special needs have a better chance of obtaining qualifications, it is important that schools offer a variety of paths suited to the interests and abilities of each student, that they provide access to the existing paths, especially those in vocational education, and that they facilitate the transitions between the different paths.

Measures should be taken to better prepare young people for the job market and there should be cooperation with outside partners — employers, rehabilitation service providers, etc. — to smooth the transition from the school to the workplace.

In this context, the Ministère de l'Éducation undertakes:

To adjust or modify existing methods.

Means of achieving this objective

- To ensure a greater presence of personnel responsible for providing support to students and teachers in the school, the Ministère de l'Éducation will increase the professional resources and pedagogical support resources. These resources will involve, specifically, remedial, psychological, psycho-educational and speech therapy services. This measure will be implemented gradually over the next three years. The needs of disadvantaged areas will be given special attention.

Furthermore,

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will propose measures so that the ongoing progress and achievements of students with special needs are given due recognition.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation will publicize its initiatives in providing alternatives to grade repetition.

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will evaluate and revise, as applicable, the orientations and guidelines for individualized paths for learning at the secondary level.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation will seek to improve access to information and communication technologies and will support the development of the expertise required by the personnel concerned in order to facilitate learning for students with handicaps and students at risk.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation will ask publishers who produce instructional material to take into account the diverse abilities and needs of the students, notably those with special needs and those at risk.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation, in conjunction with the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux and the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, will ensure that there is continuity between schools, rehabilitation centres and the job market.

To offer students various options.

Means of achieving this objective

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will facilitate access to the various options at the secondary level, notably in vocational education. The admission requirements, methods of evaluation, rules for certification and funding will have to be reviewed to ensure that they are not discriminatory.

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

The challenge for school administrators is to plan the overall organization of educational services while taking into account the evaluation of each student's needs and abilities. The individualized education plan is the best tool for coordinating the interventions to be carried out with students.

School boards must adopt a policy concerning the organization of educational services for students with special needs that complies with the *Education Act* and the ministerial policy. The policy must also demonstrate the willingness of the school to give handicapped students or students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities the best possible chance for success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications.

Furthermore, as the governing board has a great deal of decision-making power, it is essential that its members be made well aware of the situation of students with special needs.

In this context, the Ministère de l'Éducation undertakes:

To understand the situation of students with special needs.

Means of achieving this objective

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will see that members of governing boards are provided with materials that promote awareness of the characteristics and needs of students with handicaps or social maladjustments and learning disabilities.

To organize the services on the basis of an individual evaluation of the students' needs and abilities and to favour the students' integration into regular classes or groups.

Means of achieving this objective

- In order to facilitate the organization of services that are adapted to the needs and abilities of each student and to provide staff with more time to do preventive work with students, the Ministère de l'Éducation will reduce the administrative constraints involved in declaring students as having special needs, notably by

revising the definitions and reducing the number of categories of students declared as having special needs.

Furthermore,

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will revise the framework of the intervention plan in order to clarify its role and to make it the instrument of choice for monitoring students and coordinating the services offered to them.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation will improve its funding program for the integration of students with handicaps into regular classes by reviewing the management practices for the program and gradually adjusting the financial resources allocated to it.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation will consolidate the list of specialized services to meet the very specific educational needs of certain young people for whom not all schools can develop the expertise required and will regularly update this list in keeping with the changing needs. The list will also include regional or supra-regional support and expert services that will be implemented to help the schools in their interventions with students with special needs.

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

Students are the main authors of their own success in school. However, they still need guidance and support to develop their competencies and integrate into society. The greater the student's needs, the more he or she will require support from individuals and organizations in order to succeed. Since parents have the prime responsibility for their children's education, they must be recognized as key partners of the school. One of the ways this may be done is by welcoming them and involving them in the evaluation and decision-making process with regard to their child. This will enable them to better understand the school situation and provide support for schools.

The roles of the school principal and the governing board are crucial for creating a true educational community in the school. Together, they must encourage the school personnel to play an active role in this educational community. Conditions conducive to collaboration among colleagues and cooperation with parents must be established, particularly during the preparation of the individualized education plan; such conditions include time in the schedule for the sharing of expertise.

Other community organizations or institutions will be called on to work with students with special needs. It is important to foster cooperation among the partners, by devising complementary measures or by supporting the efforts of those who work directly with the students. It is important to enlist the participation of a greater number of partners in the school's educational activities.

The school board must establish concrete mechanisms for cooperating with its outside partners, particularly those in the health and social services system.

In this context, the Ministère de l'Éducation undertakes:

To consider the student the main author of his or her own success.

To welcome the parents to the school and support their participation.

Means of achieving this objective

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will support the use of the individualized education plan, particularly by school administrators, to ensure that both parents and their children are actively involved.

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will consider cooperation between the school, the family and the community a priority in the development of research in the field of special education.

To provide better coordination of interventions.

Means of achieving this objective

- The Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux will adopt common orientations for the organization of services, specifically, by defining a common frame of reference to promote coordinated action. They will also favour implementation of local and regional mechanisms for joint action.

To open the school to partners, starting with parents, in order to create an educational community.

Means of achieving this objective

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will promote agreements between school boards, municipalities and community organizations to make educational, sports and cultural activities more accessible to young people, to provide better supervision outside school hours and to provide opportunities for increasing the students' sense of belonging to the community.

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

One cannot think about students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities without thinking about certain social problems experienced by this generation: drug abuse, violence, suicide, dropping out of school, etc. Young people's needs are complex and varied, and certain social factors, such as poverty and unemployment, have exacerbated these needs.

It is essential to form a comprehensive, integrated view of the difficulties experienced by young people and of strategies for intervention.

Much work remains to be done in order to improve our current understanding of students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities and to determine appropriate strategies for ensuring their educational success. One avenue that appears particularly promising for these students, as well as for students with handicaps, is that of prevention. The soundness of this approach seems to be well established. However, whether prevention or some other strategy is adopted, we must be ready to devote the necessary resources to it.

The governing board must be particularly attentive to the situation of these students when it defines the educational

project of the school, develops the student supervision policy, and establishes rules of conduct and safety measures. The school board must also cooperate with its outside partners in order to ensure the complementarity and continuity of services in all sectors of intervention.

In this context, the Ministère de l'Éducation undertakes:

To acquire more knowledge and determine appropriate methods of intervention.

Means of achieving this objective

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will make the understanding of success factors and approaches for better meeting the needs of students at risk a priority in the development of research in special education.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation will publicize initiatives for promoting reading, particularly among boys, through the use of diverse approaches and with the cooperation of parents.

To develop a comprehensive, integrated view of the difficulties experienced by young people with social maladjustments or learning disabilities and of strategies for intervention.

Means of achieving this objective

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will propose a framework to guide interventions with students at risk, especially those with learning disabilities.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation will see that regional support services and expertise are provided to help school personnel organize services for students with learning disabilities or behavioural difficulties.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, in conjunction with their partners, will propose means of helping the personnel concerned deal with students with attention deficit disorder, whether or not they are hyperactive.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation will make school staff aware of the process of socialization of boys and girls and the impact that the school's expectations and attitudes have on boys' and girls' success.

Developing methods for evaluating students' educational success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications, assessing the quality of services and reporting results

One of the main concerns of the Policy on Special Education is the evaluation of results. In order to help students with special needs to succeed, we must have the information required to make sound decisions and to improve and account for the results shown.

Student evaluation must make it possible to monitor the students' progress from the viewpoint of knowledge, social development and the acquisition of qualifications. It must also focus on the organization of services and be aimed at improving the quality of the services provided. In keeping with the principle of greater transparency in the management of resources, student evaluation must provide the information required to ensure that the schools are able to report the results obtained.

The school authorities, together with the personnel concerned, are encouraged to develop evaluation practices that are aimed at adjusting interventions and services in keeping with the orientations of the Policy and at continually improving results, both from the viewpoint of the students' progress and the quality of the services provided.

In this context, the Ministère de l'Éducation undertakes:

To evaluate students' progress in order to adjust intervention strategies.

Means of achieving this objective

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will ensure that the policy on the evaluation of learning will take into account students with handicaps or social maladjustments or learning disabilities.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation will propose indicators that make it possible to evaluate the students' progress in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications.

To improve the quality of the services provided.

Means of achieving this objective

- Together with the schools, the Ministère de l'Éducation will establish indicators for evaluating the services offered and adapting them to the real needs of the students.

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will support the implementation of self-evaluation procedures for schools.

To report the results obtained.

Means of achieving this objective

- Together with its partners, the Ministère de l'Éducation will develop a model for evaluating the application of the Policy on Special Education, specifying the focuses of evaluation, the measures to be taken and the main results expected.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation will continue its efforts to improve the funding rules, so as to ensure greater visibility of the resources allocated to special education to allow school boards to report the results obtained and to ensure the equitable distribution of financial resources.

To support the implementation of all these lines of action

Means of achieving this objective

- Together with the universities and using research funds, the Ministère de l'Éducation will support the development of research in the area of special education and determine priorities in connection with the objectives identified earlier under each line of action.
- The Ministère de l'Éducation will promote discussion among the various people concerned with the services provided for students with special needs, and will publicize interesting projects, notably through the creation of an Internet site on special education.

