



Methods for Organizing and Managing

Regional Support
and Expertise Services
in Special Education



Methods for Organizing and Managing

Regional Support
and Expertise Services
in Special Education

Direction de l'adaptation scolaire

NOTE TO READERS

A first edition of this document was published in 2004. The current edition includes a supplement that provides details on regional services for students with hearing impairments and supraregional services for those with visual impairments. The only changes made to the original document concern the updating of the information.

Original document

Direction de l'adaptation scolaire et des services
complémentaires (DASSC)
Denise Gosselin, Director

Research and writing

Gilles Porlier, DASSC
Pierre Tremblay, DASSC

Special contribution

Germain Tanguay, DASSC
Ghislaine Vézina, DASSC

Layout

Christiane Fortin, secretary, DASSC

Supplement

Direction de l'adaptation scolaire (DAS)
Liette Picard, Director

Research and writing

Ghislain Boisvert, DAS

Special contribution

Annie Beaupré, DAS
Kok Ving Chantha, DAS
Lyse Lapointe, DAS

Layout

Christiane Fortin, secretary, DAS

English version

Direction de la production en langue anglaise
Secteur des services à la communauté anglophone
Ministère de l'éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

@ Gouvernement du Québec

Ministère de l'éducation, du Loisir et du Sport,
2006 – 05-00860

ISBN 2-550-46379-X

Legal deposit – Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
1. OBJECTIVES	4
2. MANDATE	5
3. GUIDELINES FOR THE OPERATION OF SUPPORT AND EXPERTISE SERVICES	7
4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	8
5. FINANCIAL RESOURCES.....	10
SUPPLEMENT: PARTICULARS ON REGIONAL SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS AND SUPRAREGIONAL SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS	11

INTRODUCTION

The education reform, more particularly, the Québec Education Program, which is based on competency development, calls on the entire education sector and its partners to take a new direction to ensure the success of the greatest possible number of students. This reform includes the adoption of the Policy on Special Education and amendments to both the *Education Act* and the Basic School Regulation. Several measures have been put forward to foster student success, such as the requirement that each school establish a success plan that mobilizes all the resources of the educational community around the orientations set out in the educational project to accomplish the targeted objectives. These new realities have an impact on the design of special education and complementary educational services.

It is in this context that the Policy on Special Education was revised. The revised policy provides guidelines for supporting the school in working toward success for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities. This is why the Ministère de l'Éducation sought the cooperation of the Working Group on Special Education, which is made up of the main stakeholders in services for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities.

The basic orientation of the special education policy, which was officially launched in January 2000, is:

To help students with handicaps or social maladjustments or learning disabilities succeed in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications, by accepting that educational success has different meanings depending on the abilities and needs of different students, and by adopting methods that favour their success and provide recognition for it.

Six lines of action were proposed to help achieve this orientation:

- Recognizing the importance of prevention and early intervention, and making a commitment to devote additional effort to this area
- Making the adaptation of educational services a priority for all those working with students with particular needs
- Placing the organization of educational services at the service of students with particular 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
- 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
- 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
- Developing methods for evaluating students' educational success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications, assessing the quality of services and reporting results

The action plan accompanying the special education policy consists of 36 measures to be applied progressively. By the final year of the plan (2004-2005 school year), this will represent a recurring investment of almost \$180 million. Support services for those working in the school are an important part of this action plan. Schools must develop expertise in meeting the particular needs of certain students, ensuring that these students remain in regular classes. Hence the need for the Ministère to provide support and expertise services for schools.

Thus, the Ministère, in collaboration with the school boards, has carried on with the implementation of support and expertise services in order to help keep students in the most natural environment possible. These services, which are intended for school personnel, are geared toward meeting the particular needs of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities.

The main mandate of these services is:

- ✓ to provide support to school boards and schools
- ✓ to carry out continuous professional development
- ✓ to provide research and development activities
- ✓ to contribute to the development of provincial expertise

The implementation of regional and supraregional support and expertise services began in 1988 with services for school personnel working with students with visual impairments, and in 1989 with services for those working with students with hearing impairments. Then, in 1993, services for personnel working with students with moderate to severe intellectual impairments and with students with behavioural difficulties were set up. Since 1996-1997, school personnel working with students with pervasive developmental disorders or with psychopathological disorders may also call on these services. Services for personnel working with students with learning disabilities or language disorders or students with severe dysphasia were implemented in 2000-2001 and 2001-2002, and, in 2002-2003, the number of resource persons in these services was increased.

In the English sector, an organizational model was created in 1999 in order to meet the wide range of needs: the Inclusive Education Service (IES). The IES consists of five centres of excellence run by four school boards. Each centre offers services to meet the needs of the school boards, and they all carry out the same mandate as the French sector.

As of 2003-2004, there are over 80 resource persons working in these services in addition to those people working with students with visual or hearing impairments within the regional and supraregional services. This increase over the years means better support for people working to implement services for students with particular needs. Although these services are not formally established for each group of students in each region, it is important to note that a person responsible for overseeing the development of these services has been designated for each region.

Over and above the differences attributable to the different priorities of the various regions, significant disparities exist among the regions in terms of objectives, organization and management of regional support and expertise services. To this day, the lack of documentation specifying management practices and the many major changes in the school system (namely the implementation of the reform, the adoption of the Policy on Special Education, the merging of school boards and the renewal of a significant proportion of the personnel in charge of special

education) have had an impact on the development of these services. In addition, the mobility of resource persons has forced schools to make frequent personnel changes.

The purpose of this document is to define the mandates and identify the respective roles and responsibilities of the Direction de l'adaptation scolaire (DAS), the regional offices and the school boards with respect to the implementation of support and expertise services, and to provide information on financing methods.

Therefore, it seems essential to clarify the objectives pursued and the management and organizational factors that will enable schools and school boards to provide services that, while respecting regional priorities, are in line with the orientations of the Ministère.

Although the orientations, objectives and mandate of the support and expertise services for school personnel who work with students with visual or hearing impairments is similar to that of the other regional support and expertise services, they currently have organizational characteristics that set them apart. As a result, the organization and funding of these services will not be addressed in this document. However, it is important to note that, at the request of their main partners, the regional and supraregional services are currently undergoing a formal evaluation.

1. OBJECTIVES

In defining the mandate entrusted to the resource persons of the regional support and expertise services and clearly identifying the respective roles and responsibilities of the DAS, the regional offices and the school boards regarding the organization and management of these services, the Ministère is working toward the following objectives:

- **To offer quality support and expertise services**

To attain this objective, it is important to provide training and coordination for the resource persons in the regional support and expertise services. Moreover, measures must be in place to enable results to be evaluated and services and expertise to be adjusted according to students' needs.

- **To ensure flexibility in meeting the specific needs of each region by adopting an integrated approach to regional services**

An increase in resources in recent years has led to better support for schools in their work with students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities. This improvement in services reflects the importance of the harmonization and integration of regional services. We should therefore focus on teamwork and on ensuring consistency among interventions.

The realities in the regions and the relationship between the needs of certain clientele and the expertise of resource persons motivated the regions to give these same resource persons the mandate to serve different clientele. This situation necessitates ensuring that the resource persons have the expertise needed to offer quality support to practitioners in different schools and school boards. These interventions should meet students' particular needs, while taking into account both the orientations of the Ministère and regional priorities.

- **To maintain expertise and ensure continuity**

A great effort was made in setting up the regional support and expertise services. To date, this has led to greater integration of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities and increased competence on the part of people working with these students. In this context, the continuity of services has proved to be important in preserving the expertise acquired and fostering its development.

Over the past 10 years, the Ministère has continued to invest resources to support and develop regional support and expertise services. The level of financial and human resources invested in these services illustrates the Ministère's dedication to maintaining them.

2. MANDATE

The mandates of the resource persons fall within the orientations of the Ministère, particularly the Policy on Special Education, the education reform and the Québec Education Program, which are the major priorities of the Ministère with respect to schools. Resource persons must therefore fully embrace these elements, become familiar with them and ensure consistency in the implementation of the regional priorities, the development of the regions' action plans and the work they do with schools. As such, they should contribute to the acceptance of change with respect to the implementation of the Ministère's policies in special education.

These services should be implemented in the spirit of guiding the school boards in developing the expertise needed to provide services to students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities. One of the objectives is to help local practitioners acquire greater expertise in adapting their interventions to the needs of specific clientele so that they themselves become agents of change in their own schools.

In this context, the mandate of the regional support and expertise services is:

✓ **To provide support to school boards and schools**

Support activities may be directed toward managers, education consultants, teachers and professional and technical personnel. Care should be taken to train local personnel and to create cooperative networks among partners in the different institutions within the same region or over several regions.

Depending on the situation, this support primarily involves the organization of special education services, the pedagogical and technical means for adapting these services to the real needs of students and the use of the best strategies to provide the help required to develop the competencies needed to increase student success. In addition, school personnel should be encouraged to adopt this approach, to use individualized education plans and to work more closely with parents.

The support services are designed to guide schools and school boards. The resource persons are not there to assume the responsibilities delegated to the school boards nor to compensate for a lack of education consultants or other professional or technical positions. These services are intended for school personnel; the resource persons will not work directly with students.

The support services are not intended for parents. However, as members of the educational community, parents may be invited to participate in certain workshops given by the resource persons on the regional teams.

In addition, the resource persons collaborate with practitioners from other networks (Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille, etc.) to promote the development and the complementarity of services offered, while respecting each one's mandate.

✓ **To organize professional development activities**

These activities should focus on topics that will improve the capacity of school personnel to provide adapted services to students with particular needs (for example, knowledge, competencies, strategies, evaluation and intervention tools, specific pedagogical

approaches). They should also focus on developing expertise in providing services adapted to the needs of these students.

✓ **To carry out research and development activities**

These activities aim to develop knowledge and advance research. They may lead to the design and the carrying out of specific projects. Necessary means must be taken to keep the other regions informed about innovative projects undertaken so that they can be implemented in other interested schools.

✓ **To contribute to the development of provincial expertise**

The Ministère is responsible for ensuring the development of expertise that takes into consideration the progress of knowledge and research, and for making this expertise available in all the regions of Québec.

Although the work of the resource persons is determined according to regional priorities, they are also expected by the Ministère to work on certain projects that fall under provincial priorities in order to enable more people to benefit from their expertise.

3. GUIDELINES FOR THE OPERATION OF SUPPORT AND EXPERTISE SERVICES

By implementing regional support and expertise services, the Ministère hopes to support the school system in meeting the needs of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities. To that end, the DAS has allocated the resources needed according to the guidelines established and is monitoring their proper use. Moreover, it is ensuring that the Ministère's orientations are adopted by the resource persons, establishing provincial priorities, providing support to the resource persons, offering activities on content and promoting the development of their expertise.

The support and expertise services fall under the joint responsibility of the regional office and the school board of the region. Cooperation among regions is essential and is carried out via a regional joint action committee comprising special education representatives from the school boards in the region and the person in charge of special education at the regional office. In the English sector this joint action takes place through the Inclusive Education Management Committee (IEMC), made up of representatives from the centres of excellence, school board directors and a representative from the Secteur des services à la communauté anglophone (SSCA).

Although this joint action is coordinated by the regional office or the SSCA, it should be done in a spirit of co-management. The regional office or the SSCA is responsible for the implementation of an action plan developed according to the needs expressed by the schools and boards, the regional priorities and the orientations, policies and provincial priorities of the Ministère.

The regional joint action committee or the IEMC is responsible for establishing priorities and developing action plans geared toward accomplishing the objectives defined.

The regional office or the SSCA ensures that the orientations of the Ministère are respected, actively supports the carrying out of the regions' mandates and keeps the DAS informed.

The school boards are involved in all stages of the implementation of these services. The responsibility of the mandated or fiduciary school boards pertains to personnel management and administration concerning the regional resource persons.

The funds allocated by the Ministère are intended to pay the salaries of the resource persons, as well as their travel expenses and operating costs. These budgets cannot be used to pay costs related to substitute teachers or management, for example.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Direction de l'adaptation scolaire, in collaboration with the regional offices or the SSCA:

- ✓ disseminates information regarding the Ministère's orientations and priority projects
- ✓ ensures the adoption of the orientations, policies and priorities of the Ministère by the resource persons
- ✓ establishes guidelines related to this mandate
- ✓ supports the training of regional resource persons
- ✓ facilitates discussion among regions
- ✓ ensures the resource persons' contribution to the development of provincial expertise
- ✓ allocates the necessary funds to finance the services, in accordance with the established guidelines
- ✓ verifies the proper use of the funds allocated
- ✓ reports results to the authorities and to partners
- ✓ ensures that the action taken by the resource persons aims to increase the expertise of school boards

The regional joint action committee or the IEMC

The regional joint action committee or the IEMC, in accordance with the orientations of the Ministère:

- ✓ establishes regional priorities
- ✓ develops a regional plan of action, specifying
 - the needs of the target clientele
 - the objectives regarding its different mandates
 - the regional priorities
 - the means to be used to develop the school boards' expertise
 - a calendar of operations
 - the human, financial and material resources required
 - the methods for evaluating the services provided
- ✓ periodically evaluates the plan of action to adjust the actions according to changes in needs and the development of expertise
- ✓ ensures that the action taken by the resource persons aims to increase the expertise of the school boards
- ✓ ensures an equitable distribution of services among the school boards

The regional offices or the SSCA

In accordance with the orientations of the Ministère, the regional offices or the SSCA, in collaboration with the school boards, specifically:

- ✓ participate in recruiting and selecting resource persons who meet the competency requirements regarding knowledge and professional and personal skills

- ✓ support the carrying out of the regional mandates
- ✓ verify the proper use of the funds allocated
- ✓ inform the DAS about the regional action plan, results and the use of the funds allocated
- ✓ favour regional joint action with partners from other networks
- ✓ provide professional supervision of the resource persons, in collaboration with the mandated school boards

The school boards

In accordance with the orientations of the Ministère, the school boards, in collaboration with the regional offices or the SSCA, specifically:

- ✓ participate in establishing the regional priorities
- ✓ participate in developing and revising the regional plan of action
- ✓ participate in selecting resource persons

In addition, the mandated or fiduciary school boards

- ✓ ensure the administrative management of the regional services
- ✓ recruit resource persons following the recommendations of the regional office or the SSCA
- ✓ provide administrative support for the resource persons
- ✓ provide the resource persons with training regarding the implementation of the reform, the Policy on Special Education, the Québec Education Program, the evaluation policy, etc.
- ✓ provide professional supervision for the resource persons, in collaboration with the regional office or the SSCA
- ✓ remain the employers of their resource persons, in accordance with the provisions of the collective agreements
- ✓ provide suitable premises and the materials and tools required, as well the secretarial services needed to carry out their mandate
- ✓ report on the use of funding allocated to the regional joint action committee or the IEMC once a year

5. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The funding allocated to the mandated school boards is intended to maintain existing knowledge and skills and to ensure an equitable distribution of services available to the regions. The level of resources allocated to each region is established according to the clientele it serves and the size of the area, as well as to whether it provides special education services.

Amounts allocated are based on the maximum salary level of a professional, to which an amount for covering travel expenses and operating costs is added. The amount allocated for travel expenses depends on the dispersion factor and the area covered, in order to favour the implementation of quality services, regardless of the size of the territory.

The amounts required to provide these services are paid in advance as part of the mandated school boards' allocations, in accordance with measure 30051 (Student Support).

Where applicable, some of the funds may be paid as additional allocations under measure 30055; this occurs when new services are being implemented. Once these services have been implemented, the funds may be integrated into the advance allocation of the school board (measure 30051).

To ensure fairness and transparency, the mandated school board submits a report detailing the use of the resources to the regional joint action committee or the IEMC once a year.

Supplement

Particulars on

**Regional Services for Students With Hearing Impairments
and
Supraregional Services for Students With Visual Impairments**

Background

In 1988 and 1989, the Ministère de l'Éducation proposed orientations regarding the organization of supraregional services for students with visual impairments and regional services for students with hearing impairments. It also standardized their management and funding and the additional support provided by the Ministère to mandated school boards.

Fifteen years later, it became necessary to evaluate and update these orientations in order to take into account the new context of restructured school boards and education reform. The latter involved the development of the Québec Education Program, the adoption of the Policy on Special Education, changes to the *Education Act* and adjustments to the *Basic school regulation*. Additional reasons for this update were the establishment of new regional support and expertise services to meet a range of needs in special education in recent years and the need for greater harmonization and better linkage of mandates and methods of intervention.

It is still essential that support and expertise services be implemented with a view to helping school boards to develop the expertise to provide services for their students with hearing or visual impairments. An important objective of these services is to help local personnel to acquire greater expertise in adapting their interventions to students' needs so that they themselves become agents of change in their institutions.

In the English-speaking sector, the Ministère is maintaining the status quo with regard to the operation of supraregional services, the methods of providing services and the levels of resources allocated, because of the dispersion of the student population, the small proportion of students with handicaps or difficulties, the existing organization and the satisfaction of the users.

General orientation

The mandates given to all support and expertise services established by the Ministère in recent years are applicable to the regional services for students with hearing impairments and supraregional services for students with visual impairments, and their activities should now be based on these mandates. They are:

- to provide support for school boards and schools
- to provide ongoing training for their personnel
- to carry out research and development
- to develop expertise in the province

1. The operation of regional services for students with hearing impairments

The mandates of the regional support and expertise services for students with hearing impairments are carried out through the participation of resource persons in activities on the regional and provincial levels.

- **On the regional level**

Regional support and expertise services for students with hearing impairments, like other regional services, have now been integrated with the regional professional development, joint action and coordination activities of the regional joint action committee, which consists of the special education coordinators from the school boards in the region and the person in charge of special education at the regional office. The action plan takes into account the needs and priorities of the region and the orientations of the Ministère.

- **On the provincial level**

The Direction de l'adaptation scolaire organizes meetings of resource persons in the regional services in collaboration with those resource persons.

1.1 Provision of services

- The activities of the regional support and expertise services must remain available to all school boards and schools that have students with hearing impairments. These students thus do not need to be enrolled individually.
- It may sometimes happen that resource persons in regional services, in order to better help people working with certain students, have to find out the characteristics and particular needs of these students. Nevertheless, regional support and expertise services are not direct services to individuals.
- Resource persons may sometimes act as advisors on the adaptation of instructional materials or on special equipment needed by a student. With regard to special equipment, their role should be limited to finding out what the student needs, training personnel on its pedagogical use and suggesting or providing referrals to professionals.
- Exceptionally, at the request of the school administration, resource persons may, when needed, be present at a meeting for drawing up a student's individualized education plan in order to offer their expertise to school personnel working with the student. However, it is not their responsibility to administer tests or make assessments. Rather, they should train and equip school personnel with regard to the adaptation of teaching methods to the particular needs of students with hearing impairments.
- For students with hearing impairments who need an interpreter, resource persons should advise and prepare school personnel to have an interpreter present and make them aware of the requirements this entails.
- Intervention with the students themselves is the responsibility of the school boards, and not the regional services. However, exceptionally, certain school boards may have concluded specific agreements for these services with the school board mandated by the regional service. In such cases, the cost of these services should be fully covered by the school board requesting them.

1.2 Financial resources allocated

The funding allocated by the Ministère to the mandated school boards is intended to cover the costs they incur in carrying out their mandates in accordance with the Ministère's orientations and to maintain equity in the distribution of resources to the regions. Hence, the Ministère is abolishing the billing of \$1000 and will provide funding on a new basis, which will take into account the following:

- the number of students in the region recognized as having hearing impairments
- the maximum salary of professional personnel in the school boards and the amount established for travel costs
- the organization of other regional support and expertise services
- the Ministère's orientations, which lead to adjustments in practices

2. Operation of supraregional services for students with visual impairments

The mandates of the supraregional support and expertise services for students with visual impairments are carried out through the participation of resource persons in activities on the regional, supraregional and provincial levels.

- **On the regional level**

Regional support and expertise services for students with visual impairments, like other regional services, have now been integrated with regional professional development and joint action activities, under the shared coordination of the mandated school board and the regional offices in the two administrative regions concerned.

- **On the supraregional level**

Since the services the Ministère makes available for students with visual impairments are supraregional services, the regional offices concerned should set up a supraregional joint action committee in collaboration with the mandated school board for their regions and those school boards to which it provides services. The role and responsibilities of this committee will be the same as those of the regional joint action committees. An action plan should take into account the needs expressed by the various schools and school boards and the Ministère's priorities and orientations.

- **On the provincial level**

The Direction de l'adaptation scolaire organizes meetings of resource persons in the regional services in collaboration with those resource persons.

2.1 Provision of services

- The *general activities* of these services remain available to school boards and to all schools that have students with visual impairments. However, students who need *individualized adaptation services* must still be "enrolled" individually for support and expertise services because of their particular characteristics and needs. The cost of enrollment is \$1000 per year.
- In the case of students "enrolled" individually, the resource persons in the support services create a personal file on the particular needs of each one in order to help and support personnel working with these students.
- At the request of the school administration, resource persons may, when needed, be present at a meeting for drawing up a student's individualized education plan in order to offer their expertise to school personnel working with the student.
- Resource persons should train and equip school personnel to adapt their teaching methods to the particular needs of students with visual impairments.
- For students who are functionally blind, resource persons see to the quality of the teaching of Braille.
- Resource persons may sometimes act as advisors on the adaptation of instructional materials or on special furniture or equipment needed by a student. Their role should be limited to making the personnel aware of the student's needs, training them on the

pedagogical use of materials, furniture or equipment, and suggesting or providing referrals to professionals or professional services.

- Intervention with the students themselves is the primary responsibility of the school boards, and not the regional services. However, the resource persons may have to meet with students who are individually “enrolled” to identify their particular needs, in order to be better able to advise local personnel.

2.2 Financial resources allocated

The funding allocated by the Ministère to the mandated school boards is intended to cover the costs they incur in carrying out their mandates in accordance with the Ministère’s orientations and to maintain equity in the distribution of resources to the regions.

In the specific case of supraregional support and expertise services for students with visual impairments, the Ministère is maintaining the existing method of funding, which will be reassessed as the Ministère’s orientations are integrated with the practices of the school boards and accepted by all of them.

The mandated school boards bill each participating school board \$1000 per student “enrolled”; the difference between the revenues from the billing and the cost of the services provided by the supraregional centres is covered by the Ministère through supplementary allocations, provided that the activities are consistent with the model of services that has previously been approved.

Since the number of students to whom services have to be provided in a territory varies little from year to year, the funding is determined on the basis of a period of several years. However, the Ministère has agreed to consider the possibility of an ad hoc adjustment where there is a major disparity.

PERSPECTIVES

Fifteen years after the publication and implementation of the organizational frameworks for supraregional services for students with visual impairments and regional services for students with hearing impairments, and following an evaluation of these services at the request of the various people involved (school administrators and personnel, parents, etc.), the development of expertise on the local level has become a priority.

It seems necessary to reaffirm the importance of the role played by resource persons working on the regional level with students with hearing impairments and on the supraregional level with students with visual impairments, and to update it in order to make it more consistent with the mandates of support and expertise of everyone involved with the school boards. This should allow the regions to more easily set priorities that are consistent with the Ministère's orientations and create action plans that better foster the development of local competency in providing services to students with visual or hearing impairments.