

CSQ

MAGAZINE

GROWING BETTER, TOGETHER

A fair and equitable
school system.
Really?

Aiming for the
success for
all children

Literacy: An issue even
at the college level



Centrale des syndicats
du Québec

Special Edition



GROWING BETTER, TOGETHER

“Education must remain our top priority!” and “Our children are the future!” declared the newly reelected Premier during his victory speech. If only education had been given pride of place during an election campaign that utterly failed to live up to the needs and challenges that our society should be discussing.

None of the political parties addressed any key challenges in education head-on, or put forward a project or a vision, or even came up with tangible solutions to ease the burden across the networks. Not before, not during and not after the election campaign. And that is how things stand as we make preparations for the fifth edition of the Rendez-vous CSQ de l'éducation.

Education is in our centrale's DNA and will always be what drives our movement. Today, the CSQ is one of the key players in the education sector and sets itself apart thanks to the breadth and depth of its members' expertise.

We are proud to represent the personnel working in all the networks—in early childhood, schools, colleges and universities—throughout a wide variety of employment categories. These individuals, by working together and sharing their experiences and different realities, allow us to see the whole picture, find solutions, improve issue coordination and take concerted action.

As such, our organization's greatest strength lies in our unique insight, our decisive leadership and a scope of action that impacts all aspects of education. This great gathering will provide us with an ideal opportunity to take up our pilgrim's staff to bring important issues forward and push for the constructive debates we need right now.

We specifically chose “Pour mieux grandir ensemble” [Growing better, together] as our theme to reiterate the essential role education plays in a society we hope to see evolve into something fairer and more united. Across our workplaces, staff shortages, heavier workloads as well as a serious lack of resources, time and means have left our workers stretched too thin. Workers who keep telling anyone who will listen how they feel, day-in and day-out, about their steadily eroding agency, moving further away from their true mission.

Every week brings news of yet another challenge faced by less fortunate populations or those with special needs.

Not only are social, economic or school inequities not receding, they are actually increasing, as these stories illustrate.

The time has come to ask how we can make sure that no one is left behind. How can we ensure that once their educational journey comes to an end, each student will have the means to be the best they can be and contribute fully to our society? How can we rein in the logic of competition that places excessive pressure on the system and accentuates the fragmentation of educational journeys?

Other questions have been raised as to the organizational arrangements of services supporting children, students and students with special needs. The inclination to individualize special needs response (instead of focusing on collective solutions) and its impacts have led to much debate as to the burden shouldered both by individuals and staff.

The issue of literacy must also be addressed given the worrying findings as regards to literacy teaching. An alarming increase in reading and writing difficulties suggests that significant challenges lie ahead, clearly increased tenfold by the pandemic. Our education system must ensure that each individual acquires basic literacy skills and that its personnel have the leeway and means to do so.

In short, the very mission of our education system needs to be discussed.

Our members are both actors and firsthand witnesses of what is going on in the field on a daily basis. And our role as a centrale is to carry these findings, these concerns, these thoughts and these solutions forward.

With the 2022 Rendez-vous CSQ de l'éducation, we will also begin to shape our position with respect to various current issues in education.

An organization exercising decisive leadership, such as ours, must not shy away from re-examining itself and reconsidering its positions given the current context, when necessary. This event is not to be missed. On December 14, we may well set the tone for months to come in education.

Enjoy your discussions!



Éric Gingras | CSQ PRESIDENT



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A FAIR AND EQUITABLE SCHOOL SYSTEM. REALLY?

The school system is certainly accessible to everyone in Québec. But is it equitable? The competition that secondary schools – and sometimes preschools and elementary schools – engage in to attract students contributes to reproducing and even exacerbating inequalities. How can we escape this spiral?

Anne-Marie Tremblay
COLLABORATION

Karine Dubois is the mother of three children. Although they are still little, she has begun thinking about their start in high school while she observes parents she knows around her. “Many of them seem to think that the future of their child is being played out when they make this choice. And it places tremendous pressure on children,” she explains. A reality that the producer and founder of Picbois Productions decided to explore in the podcast series *Chacun sa classe*, broadcast on Ohdio.



Karine Dubois

In the course of her research, Karine Dubois noticed that the situation had changed considerably from when she was a high school student in the 1990s. “We didn’t ask too many questions at the time and we went to the polyvalent school in our neighbourhood,” she recalls. Today neighbourhood school is no longer an automatic choice. The proportion of students attending private schools has steadily increased since the 1990s, rising from 5% in 1970 to 20% today, based on data from the *École ensemble* movement. To compete with private schools and retain students, the public schools have multiplied the number of special program offerings, most of which are selective. In 2022, over one in every five students attend public schools offering specialized projects, according to *École ensemble*. The parents’ ability to choose a school other than their neighbourhood school, based on the projects offered, has also contributed to the trend.

Such much so that between private schools and secondary schools offering special projects, it’s a frantic race to avoid being left behind, that is to say, being stuck in the regular sector, as the students say. “What also struck me are the selection standards for special project programs in the public schools,” says Karine Dubois. “For example, to register in an arts and media program in a Montréal school in my neighbourhood, you needed a letter of recommendation from a specialist teacher and from a tenured teacher, a video in which the child introduces themselves, a form and so forth. It’s really intense for a child in Elementary 6.” And this is not unique to Montréal, she noted.

Many have denounced this system, described as having three or even more tiers, including the Conseil supérieur de l’éducation, explains Stéphane Vigneault, cofounder and coordinator of the *École ensemble* movement. According to the Conseil, the Québec school system is the most unequal in the country, and has the highest student dropout rates in Canada. Even the UN formally requested the Québec government, in 2020, to identify which “measures had been taken to ensure equal access to education in a three-tiered school system in Québec, regardless of the economic situation of parents,” reports *École ensemble*. “We are still waiting for the answer that was supposed to be sent to Geneva in June 2021,” adds Stéphane Vigneault.

THE WEIGHT OF COMPETITION

“This system, with two, three or even several tiers, promotes the differentiation of education pathways, segregation and subtle exclusions. Yes, school is compulsory, free and open to all. However, the competition between public schools and private schools has led them to separate students. Thus, the pathways offered are different and unequal when we compare those in the regular, specialized and private programs,” explains Pierre Canisius Kamanzi, professor in the département d’administration et fondements de l’éducation at the Université de Montréal.

First, by selecting students based on their academic results and requiring tuition fees, even minimal fees, means that many children do not have access to the most motivating and formative programs. “There may be a huge price tag, but for less affluent families, the costs don’t have to be very high to make these options inaccessible. As soon as an invoice is introduced, a divide opens up,” emphasizes Stéphane Vigneault.

The separation that occurs starting at age 11 or 12 thus reproduces social inequalities by putting all the most vulnerable students, often those who are the most disadvantaged, together in the same place. “Nor does it allow much opportunity for children to catch up,” says Pierre Canisius Kamanzi. In addition, the classes in which the strongest students are concentrated generally benefit from superior support – from parents, but also from the school. “There is a tendency to demand more from students who succeed, to display higher expectations and to require children to be more committed,” he notes. Conversely, expectations tend to be lower in classes where the most vulnerable students are concentrated.

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– Pierre Canisius Kamanzi, professor in the département d’administration et fondements de l’éducation at the Université de Montréal

This is also reflected in the subjects taught during the students’ educational path, adds the researcher. “The content is also different, because students registered in the regular sector do not have access to sports, music or art programs, which enables them to develop their self-esteem and acquire new knowledge.” Studies have shown that socially diverse classes do not have negative impacts on stronger students but tend to help the weaker students get ahead when they are not in the majority. In a word, striking a balance benefits everyone.

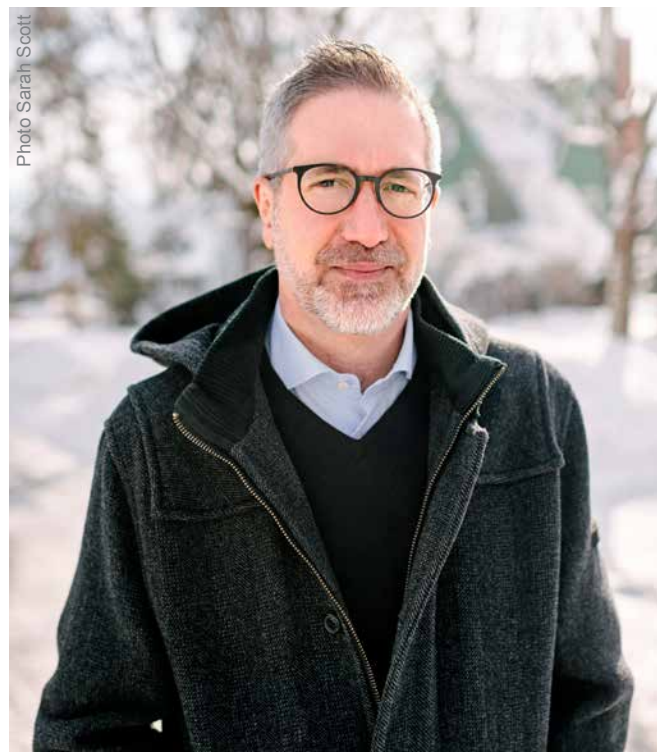
The researcher has assessed that the consequences of this segregation are felt over the long term. More than 90% of students in enriched public schools or private schools go to CEGEP, while only half of students from regular schools enrol, reports Pierre Canisius Kamanzi. The divide is even greater at university. Only about 15% of student graduating from regular schools go on to higher education, while this proportion climbs to 60% and to 50% of graduates from private schools or enriched public school programs, respectively.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS?

To eliminate such competition and the segregation it engenders, we need to return to the concept of neighbourhood schools and eliminate the selection of students, argues Stéphane Vigneault. “How might that take shape? First, by setting up a common network including public schools and private schools in which each school would be assigned a school catchment area. School shopping, parental stress, children’s anxiety and school brand marketing would become something of the past,” he explains. As is the case for elementary schools, every residential address would be assigned a school. At least

that is one of the key ideas of the *Plan pour un réseau scolaire commun*, presented by the movement in May 2022.

The group also proposes inviting private schools to join this network. They would then be subsidized at 100%, and in exchange they would be obliged to accept all the students in their catchment area, without selection or fees. “Should certain private schools don’t want to join this common network, they would have the choice. They would continue to exist but would not receive any public funds. This is already the case in Ontario,” explains Stéphane Vigneault.



Stéphane Vigneault



This common network would eliminate competition between schools. “However, schools do not all have to be the same, all beige,” he adds. To give each school some colour, the group suggests including special projects that are accessible to all, at no cost. This is a way to enhance motivation, to stimulate a sense of belonging and to enrich the education of all students, according to Stéphane Vigneault.

Every school could invent its own model, as long as it abides by the principle of the freedom to choose projects. Stéphane Vigneault cites an example of a school in Princeville that cut 15 minutes from each subject period. The time gained made it possible to add a spot in the schedule dedicated to the special projects of every student. The formula seems to please everyone, the coordinator stresses.

Lastly, the school catchment area of the common network would be delineated so as not to reproduce social inequities in the schools. A number of countries have tested this formula which generally works quite well. But when it does not, “we propose improving school budgets for projects, expansion, purchasing books, equipment or cultural outings,” says Stéphane Vigneault.

Pierre Canisius Kamanzi supports this vision. “Simply put, in Québec, the admission requirements for private and public schools should be the same. In other words, each institution, be it public or private, should be obligated to educate all the students in its territory, and no conditions for expulsion

should be allowed.” No longer separating children would also have an impact on social cohesion, because being in contact with people from all walks of life promotes openness and community life both at school and in society.

A COLLECTIVE PROJECT

In summary, for Stéphane Vigneault, learning together means “raising the bar.” “When we present our plan, people question it at the outset. But once they’ve understood, they dare to have hope. Because, here, it’s about political choices. And these changes would benefit everyone,” he argues. The movement is working on changing perceptions and policies.

This is also the path that Karine Dubois advocates. She thinks that this cause cannot be borne by parents alone and that it should be collective. “It’s all the more difficult because the families who are in the third lane do not always have the time, the knowledge or the resources to wage this fight.” The producer would also like to see the rules of the game changed before her youngest, now 3 years old, goes to secondary school, even though she thinks a rule change is not very likely. In the meantime, she hopes that her podcast series will help raise public awareness of school segregation.



AIMING FOR THE SUCCESS OF ALL CHILDREN

Many children with special needs face challenges in school.
How can we better help them?

Sylvie Lemieux | COLLABORATION

In Quebec, one in five elementary school students has adjustment or learning difficulties that would require adapted educational services to foster their academic success. However, because of a shortage of professional and support personnel, schools are struggling to meet the needs of these children. A report published in June 2022 by the Quebec Ombudsman shows that services are limited as a result of available funding and how it is allocated. Yet, the Education Act guarantees that each student has the right to complementary educational services—free of charge.

“The needs are great, but the resources are not keeping pace. This results in delays for students to receive services, and others not receiving help at all. Some parents have been told that their child’s difficulties are not as serious as those of other pupils in the class, therefore they will have to wait. Several students are being forgotten,” laments Kévin Roy, President of the Fédération des comités de parents du Québec (FCPQ), which represents most of the province’s school service centre and school board parent committees.

DISPARITIES IN SERVICES

Who are these special need students? They may be students with learning difficulties attributable to dyslexia or attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity, for example. There are also students with behavioral disorders or others who suffer from impediments due to disabilities, or physical or mental limitations. In other words, the spectrum of causes and needs is wide.

To succeed, these children need additional services—speech therapy, psychoeducation, remedial education, special education, psychology—or adapted school material. The problem is that there are disparities in terms of service offering.

“Each school is autonomous in how it supports students in their success. What we observe in the field is that some school service centres are more advanced than others. So, there are many inequalities in how things are done,” states Nathalie Trépanier, full professor at the Université de Montréal's Faculty of Education.

According to this researcher, the school system is betting on inclusive education as the way forward. “Therefore, the milieus are putting everything in place so as to keep students in regular classes, but is this the right solution for everyone? The question is a valid one. I am convinced that, for some students in difficulty, a special class can be helpful and foster their success, whereas others will achieve their goals in a regular class, if the necessary support is available to them and the teacher,” says the professor.

SUPPORT IS NEEDED

To effectively help students with learning difficulties, teachers also need support. Far too often, teachers are left to themselves while their workload constantly increases. “There are still too many teachers who, despite their training, do not always know what to do with special needs children in their class,” explains Nathalie Trépanier. “We cannot expect them to know everything either. Supporting them is vital.”

She adds that support teams can make all the difference. “These teams take on different forms, depending on the needs, which may include educational, health and social services. They are made up of different professionals, such as pedagogical advisors, social workers, or psychoeducators, who partner with school management even if they are external resources. This means that quick interventions can prevent a situation from escalating, both for the child and the teacher.”



Courtesy picture

Kévin Roy



Courtesy picture

Nathalie Trépanier

These support teams, which have proven themselves, particularly in Ontario, make sure that all is not resting on the teachers' shoulders.



Marie-Christine Brault

PREMATURE SCREENING?

The allocation of the services is not the only aspect that needs improving. “We also need to better understand what causes learning impediments,” says Nathalie Trépanier. “Different reasons can explain a child’s difficulties. It is important to get an overall picture to determine the most appropriate intervention model. By taking time to question what is not working, we will be better equipped to help both students and teachers.”

We must also question whether children are being identified with adjustment or learning difficulties too quickly. “Teachers want the best for their students, therefore, they request early screening to ensure they quickly have access to services. But perhaps we need to be patient. Some children are not ready to learn to read in first grade. If they experience difficulties, they are labeled as ‘having problems,’” explains Marie-Christine Brault, Canada Research Chair in Childhood, Medicine and Society, and associate professor at the Université du Québec in Chicoutimi.

Consequently, these students come up against a rigid school system that focuses on performance at all costs. “Pupils have always been grouped into classes according to age. Maybe we need to rethink things. For example, a less linear sequence with multi-program classes could help some children progress at their own pace,” she points out.

Greater flexibility could certainly help students diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) who, as we know, are swiftly medicalized. “In Quebec, one in four children is prescribed psychostimulants,” says Marie-Christine Brault. “I believe that medication should be used as a last resort. Many things can be done in the school environment. Additional curricular flexibility, even at the elementary level, would help.”

Even if the school system is not solely responsible for increased medicalization—families and the healthcare system also play a role in this phenomenon—the fact remains that ADHD perceptions undoubtedly impact interventions.

As part of a comparative study between Quebec schools and those in Flanders, Marie-Christine Brault surveyed teachers about their ADHD-related views. “In Quebec, the views are very standardized, that is, the disorder is of biomedical origin. Therefore, the children who bear the burden of their difference. This means that the way we do things is not overly questioned. In Flanders, views are more diverse. The most common is that ADHD is the result of an environmental cause, and the other is that these students’ profiles are not sufficiently valued in society. Teachers are more inclined to prioritize pedagogy in their approach.”

To recap, the challenges are many and there is not only one solution. The Québec Ombudsman believes that it is necessary to foster collaboration and innovation to offer services that are adapted to students with special needs and consequently promote academic success for all.



LITERACY: AN ISSUE EVEN AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL

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Catherine Bélec has been working to help and support college students since 2006. Given her experience, she is now an authority in literacy at the college level.

CSQ Magazine met with her.

Pierre Avignon | FEC-CSQ ADVISOR



Catherine Bélec

Catherine Bélec, a French literature teacher at CÉGEP Gérald-Godin, noticed her students' reading difficulties early on in her career. Even then, the educator—who recently submitted her thesis toward a professional doctorate—wondered: "What could we do better?"

She began by laying the foundations for projects which focused on reading circles with colleagues across various disciplines with similar concerns. "We wanted to identify a model which would allow this teaching activity to help all types of students, who may have marked differences in skill levels, to become independent learners thanks to improved reading abilities," she says.

TACKLING WIDER ISSUES

As she continued her work, the teacher-researcher examined the concept of literacy itself, namely the reading and writing skills required for an individual to participate fully in wider society. In 2018, she started her CEGEP's Laboratoire de soutien en enseignement des littératies (LabSEL, or Literacy teaching support laboratory).

"Reading and writing skills vary according to a given individual's current context. For instance, someone with good reading skills in philosophy might not be as good reading mathematics. That is why literacy skill development needs to be incorporated to the subjects we teach."

"While reading skills are essential, addressing learning difficulties from a literacy standpoint makes for a broader approach, taking into account how various types of information, be they oral, written or visual, interact. This way, we can interpret and reuse them to learn, communicate and become independent," states Catherine Bélec.

COMPLEX ISSUE

We often hear about social issues associated with functional illiterate adults. But Catherine Bélec explains that the literacy issue is more complex than one might suspect: "Reading and writing skills vary according to a given individual's current context. For instance, someone with good reading skills in philosophy might not be as good reading mathematics. That is why literacy skill development needs to be incorporated to the subjects we teach," she explains.

Catherine Bélec adds that "rather than explaining, in theory, how to take notes, a history teacher should explain how to take notes for a history class. It's about communicating to students the relationship with knowledge and information for a specific subject. Literacy should not be seen as something that only has to do with literature!"

POOR COMMAND?

Are younger generations in poorer command of the language than previous generations? Catherine Bélec believes that “the quantity and complexity of information dealt with in today’s society are much greater than ever before. What used to be a ‘functional level’ 30 years ago no longer applies. In the past, reading and writing were considered as integral to official and professional practices. The need to read or write was therefore less frequent and, when required, people would apply themselves. Nowadays, people are writing and reading like never before, but the written word now belongs to a more casual and familiar realm.”

She says that “the current perception of a poor command of the written language stems in part from our asking young people to shift from a common informal practice [people write as they speak, as seen on social media] to formal language proficiency [professional writing, presentation, etc.]. Unfortunately, deconstructing any habit is no easy task.” She adds that comparing student levels over a period of time is difficult, especially since the very notion of literacy is constantly evolving.

BREAKING THE CYCLE

Catherine Bélec and her colleagues have also noticed that the needs and backgrounds of students now entering our colleges are increasingly diversified. In the wake of issues seen in our high schools, namely with the oft-criticized three-tier system, she explains that “one problem is probably our dealing too narrowly with the issue in the school system, expecting secondary 2 students to know how to read and write, even though studies have shown that these skills are still in development at that level and, as such, may also be squandered.”

She adds that “when faced with school difficulties, simplifying readings, summarizing them, reducing them [to assist in student success] could be dangerous. This leads to fewer literacy skills and creates a vicious cycle for the rest of their school journey.”

In this expert’s opinion, it would be best to create a virtuous circle to counter a cycle of “bad relationship with writing, bad grades, school failure.” “Instead of saying that young people don’t have the skills, we need to build on their strengths to foster the development of a positive relationship with writing. This could include building on their oral or written skills in a familiar setting and then to encourage them to develop their writing and reading skills in less familiar and more complex situations later on. We need to see language evaluation, whether written or read, amount to something other than sanctions for students. On the contrary, it needs to become an opportunity to highlight both progress and strengths. In other words, to stop putting a damper on student learning.”

One of the challenges in implementing this approach is wanting standardized and measurable results in the short term. Development in literacy skills is measured over the long term and varies from one individual to the next, according to Catherine Bélec. “Literacy skill enhancement should be seen as a social investment. These skills allow people to become self-reliant members of our society and more involved in their professional environment. They will also make any further learning easier throughout their lives.”

A KNOWN ISSUE ACROSS ALL NETWORKS

Needless to say, the literacy issue goes far beyond the college network. Nonetheless, for Catherine Bélec, CEGEPs are environments which are particularly conducive to literacy skill development. “This is where we can have a significant impact because CEGEP students, having reached a certain maturity, are now learning independently. And, as they can choose their own program, there is greater motivation on their part,” she concludes.

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CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS

A PROJECT WITH GREAT PROMISE

A new classroom assistant pilot project has been underway in 100 schools since September 2022. Not only does it meet the needs of both teachers and students, it also provides support staff with an opportunity to put their expertise and skills to good use.

Étienne Richer | FSE-CSQ ADVISOR
Martin Cayouette | FPSS-CSQ ADVISOR

First announced in the 2021-2022 Revitalization plan for educational success, this pilot project allows participating schools to dedicate two full-time equivalents to this role. Classroom assistants will supplement existing support and professional services provided in each school. The purpose of this new role however is not to replace them nor to compensate for current shortages.

The role of a classroom assistant is to support the teacher with tasks that are not related to teaching and to help ensure the students' wellbeing and safety. For instance, they could help students with simple follow-ups, help uphold classroom

rules, attend parent-teacher meetings, support the teacher in certain administrative tasks such as taking attendance, or take on certain tasks related to the students' school work. As such, the classroom assistant could be called on to supervise or help a student during an evaluation.

The relationship between the teacher and the classroom assistant is one of collaboration. The teacher is not in charge of supervising or managing the classroom assistant. As such, classroom assistants are not subordinates of the teaching staff: they report to school principals.

“ We have been working on this project alongside the Ministry of Education and believe that it will provide teaching personnel with some much-needed breathing room.”

THE STRENGTH OF THE CSQ SCHOOL NETWORK

When came the time to define the tasks of a classroom assistant, the CSQ and its federations across the school network drew on their shared expertise. Their goal was to provide guidance to the Ministry of Education to see that the project met as many of the teachers' needs as possible and supplement what was already done in classrooms and schools.

“We have been working on this project alongside the Ministry of Education and believe that it will provide teaching personnel with some much-needed breathing room, says the President of the Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement (FSE-CSQ), Josée Scalabrini. We've seen related tasks steadily increasing for far too long, at the expense of our teachers' primary mission.”

Éric Pronovost, President of the Fédération du personnel de soutien scolaire (FPSS-CSQ), reminds us that “the support staff is already actively involved in the direct services provided to students. Whether as educators in our childcares, attendants for handicapped students, special

“ The support staff is already actively involved in the direct services provided to students. Whether as educators in our childcares, attendants for handicapped students, special education technicians or in any other support staff role, they have the skills to take on these new tasks.”



Photo Maryse Cléro-Nobrega

Josée Scalabrini

education technicians or in any other support staff role, close relationships with the students they support already exist. They have the skills to take on these new tasks.”

The classroom assistant project is the result of months of efforts to determine what it would entail. At the CSQ, this is a tangible measure which will certainly have a positive impact in participating schools. “It won't solve all our problems,” says Line Camerlain, Vice President of the CSQ. But this project will help make jobs more attractive in the midst of the ongoing staff shortage.”

The Centre de recherche et d'intervention sur la réussite scolaire (CRIRES) has been mandated to document and assess the implementation of this pilot project.



Photo FPSS-CSQ

Éric Pronovost

GOING BACK TO SCHOOL QUITE THE CHALLENGE!



Photo courtesy of "Maman va à l'école"

Jennyfer Lafayette and her children with Mathieu Lessard, President of the Syndicat de l'enseignement de Lanaudière. She received a \$500 scholarship from the "Maman va à l'école" organization.

Resolute: that's the only way to describe Jennyfer Lafayette as she went back to school in 2021, determined to obtain her high school diploma. An ambitious undertaking for this single mother of four... but she will succeed. You can count on it!

Amélie Cournoyer | COLLABORATION

Ten years ago, while in secondary four, Jennyfer Lafayette closed all her school books one last time. The young 17-year-old woman had just learned that she was pregnant. In the years that followed, she was entirely dedicated to her family, welcoming three children in four years. Sadly, her life took a turn for the worse as she dealt with two painful losses, one after the other: a separation and the sudden passing of her young son.

Ultimately, she survived this difficult period for her daughters. And therein lies her decision to go back to school last year. "I want to show them that, no matter how old you are, you should never give up because a little determination can go really far. Even though it's hard, good things will happen because of all our efforts," she explains.

A MODEL FOR HER CHILDREN

In recent years, Jennyfer Lafayette had been making her way in the job market, particularly in a maison de la famille childcare centre from 2014 to 2016 and then in a cardboard plant for a 3-month period in 2019. Having found love again, she was entitled to preventive withdrawal as soon as she found out she was pregnant for the fourth time. The following year, she welcomed her fifth child.

In 2021, after a second breakup, the Lanoraie resident decided to sign up to the Centre de formation de Lavaltrie and earn her high school diploma. She wants to be financially independent but, much more importantly, to be a model for her daughters. Her two eldest are currently in second and fourth grade in primary school. Even when faced with some challenges with their school work, they do their best, just like their mom, to succeed.

"They still love learning and going to school each morning, says the young mother. I am so happy to see all this energy. I keep telling them to never give up, that they are doing great, that they can do it and to give it their all. It will pay off."

RUNNING ON ADRENALINE

Jennyfer Lafayette has sole custody of her daughters, and being a full-time student and a full-time mother of four is very demanding. Days are short and there is so much to do with taking care of the children and of their home, the morning and bedtime routines, on top of being in school all day. "I'm always running on adrenaline, she says. I have to admit that I like it, most of the time, but at night, I am tired. When everyone is in bed, I tell myself that today was a success, but that tomorrow morning, it starts all over again."

This young mother readily admits that she does think about quitting school sometimes. "It would be so easy to just stay home, she says. But I know that all this will pass quickly enough. I'm not doing this just for myself. I'm also doing it for my children, to make sure they have a great future."

A HOUSE AND A HOLIDAY AT WALT DISNEY WORLD

To stay focused, Jennyfer Layette thinks about the future. "I've always dreamed of having my own house," she says. Once she has her high school diploma, she would like to apply to the school service centre to become an attendant for handicapped students. "I want a job that I'll love, that will keep me motivated, and that will help me spoil my kids a bit, she adds. We'll leave for a week-long holiday at Walt Disney World. I definitely want to bring them there. We'd spend some time together and just enjoy ourselves."



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¹ 2018 SOM Client Experience Benchmarking Report on leading home and auto insurers in Ontario and Quebec.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AT SCHOOL THE BEST OPTION FOR STUDENTS

Whether speech therapists, educational advisers, psychologists or others, school-based professionals benefit the school system—and make a huge difference in the lives of students.

Johanne Lachance | FPPE-CSQ ADVISOR

Under the Education Act professional services, including speech therapy, psychology and psychoeducation, are an integral part of the educational services offered free to all students who need them.

In a recently published research note, the Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation du Québec (FPPE-CSQ), wrote that the best professional services to support students are public services because they are offered in the students' daily environment.

"Our contribution is much more effective in person, directly with students, thanks to our observations, evaluations, follow-ups, and discussions with school staff," explains Claudine Blouin, a school-based speech therapist for nearly 25 years.

This speech therapist says that "as professional staff, our role also entails observing students in the classroom, on the playground and at lunchtime. Our practice is to co-intervene, offer support in class, encourage in groups and carry out crisis analysis with special needs students. To understand such situations and promote inclusion for each student in the classroom, we must be in the schools."



Claudine Blouin

RESORTING TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Even so, parents of children with difficulties turn to private resources, concludes the Fédération des comités de parents du Québec. At least 65% of educational organizations also depend on the private sector to offer complementary services.

Why? The increase in the number of students with special needs and the medicalization of school difficulties are certainly matters to explore, believes the FPPE-CSQ. It is also the consequence of government choices in education: chronic underfunding, three-speed education, categorical funding of services for students with handicaps or social maladjustments or learning difficulties, etc.

In its fact-finding report, the Québec Ombudsman nonetheless states that the private sector's recommendations are less adapted to school realities. Therefore, for the FPPE-CSQ, it is urgent to regulate the use of the private sector for complementary services offered to students in the province.

WATER ACCESS IN NUNAVIK CONDITIONS DENOUNCED



Running and potable water supply is a major issue in Nunavik, with associated issues that create breaks in education services and impact learning and the delivery of programs.

Audrey Parenteau
CHIEF EDITOR

The impacts on the physical and mental well-being of Nunavik inhabitants are real and significant, according to the results of a consultation led by the CSQ with members of the Association des employés du Nord québécois (AENQ-CSQ) and of the Syndicat du personnel professionnel de l'éducation du Nunavik et de l'ouest de Montréal (SPPENOM-CSQ) who work and live there.

Issues faced include skin infections, digestive problems, body odour that impairs daily activities and physical activity, clothes deteriorated by the impossibility to wash them, and difficulty with cooking since the dishes stay dirty. 84% of the consultation respondents mentioned having issues

to access water, 73% need to ration it and 79% need to boil it.

Many respondents claimed that managing the issue generates a continuous stress which often ends up causing anxiety. Constantly being worried about running out of water, needing to reduce consumption, limiting showers and washing of clothes and dishes all end up being extremely difficult at all times.

"Imagine the situation when you have young children still in diapers or when people at home are sick. What our on-site members tell us is simply not acceptable, and it wouldn't be anywhere else in Québec!" says the CSQ's Vice President, Anne Dionne, outraged.

BREAKS IN EDUCATION SERVICES

Problems related to water create temporary school closures, which lead to a break in education services, having impacts on teaching and learning. “And it’s the students who pay the price! Every school day missed has direct consequences on them, which in no way helps school perseverance,” emphasizes Anne Dionne.

In such conditions, we can worry about the low graduation rate in Nunavik. Indeed, according to a report from the National Student Ombudsman, it stands at 25.9%, comparatively with 77.7% for Québec as a whole.

A KNOWN SITUATION

In the majority of Nunavik’s villages, potable water and waste water are transported by tanker truck a few times a week. This is why limiting potable water consumption, especially on weekends when the delivery service isn’t always offered, is important.

Furthermore, just like the potable water supply problems, those related to the draining of waste water are still too prevalent. In many northern communities, the average time elapsed between the moment when residents call to indicate the tank is full and when the draining is done is six days.

“I can’t believe that, these days, we aren’t able to offer decent living conditions to Inuit communities, says Anne Dionne, outraged. The problem has been known for a long time, the situation is downplayed and nothing is done to develop a concrete plan



Photo François Beauregard

Anne Dionne

“ The issue has been known for a long time, the situation is downplayed and nothing is done to develop a concrete plan to improve their quality of life. It’s the dignity of these people that is directly affected.”

to improve their quality of life. It’s the dignity of these people that is directly affected.”

COMMITMENTS REQUIRED

During the last electoral campaign, the CSQ asked the political parties for concrete commitments aiming to improve the living conditions of the people residing in Nunavik.

Beyond the implementation of necessary measures to globally improve the living and housing conditions in the northern

communities, the Centrale’s recommendations aim notably to ensure a better access to a reasonable quantity of potable water, guarantee regular draining of waste water and provide a better supply and drainage service for school establishments to avoid closures.

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84%

OF RESPONDENTS

mentioned having water access problems.

Source: CSQ consultation.

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WHOSE REVOLUTION IS THIS?

An unsubstantiated claim, no matter how often repeated, is not necessarily true. Yet the Health Minister asserts that greater private-sector involvement in the public healthcare system will improve efficiency. Really?

Lise Goulet | CSQ ADVISOR

Health Minister Christian Dubé's health plan sets out significant, urgent changes required to improve the performance of the health and social services network. The time for making assessments is over, it's time to take action! The minister expects to give the private sector a larger role, which he describes as a real "revolution."

The choice of words is not innocuous. According to the *Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, a revolution is "a sudden, radical, complete change; an activity or a movement designed to effect fundamental changes in the socioeconomic situation; a fundamental change in the way of thinking about or visualizing something; a change of paradigm." "Of course certain ways of doing things need to change. But flinging the door wide open to the private sector on the pretext of unproven greater efficiency is out of the question," warns Luc Beaugard, Secretary-Treasurer of the CSQ.

HEALTH MINISTER'S INTENTIONS

The public health crisis has been used to justify a paradigm shift that could destroy the advances won through over fifty years of hard-fought battles. The government appears to be taking advantage of a state of collective psychological shock to impose its vision and to once again reform the healthcare system with no real public debate.

The minister wants to "give intelligent leeway to the private sector in healthcare." In particular, he intends to make greater use of private medical clinics, ensure better control of the use of private recruitment agencies instead of stopping it, and provide for temporary investigative and administrative powers when required with regard to private long-term care centres.

For many years, private investors have played a greater role in the Québec healthcare system and yet, significant problems with access continue to exist and the costs continue to rise steadily. Is the minister's solution proving to be the problem that needs to be solved?

PRIVATE SECTOR ABUSES NOT NEW

In her inquest report concerning 53 deaths that occurred in long-term care centres during the first wave of the pandemic, coroner Géhane Kamel explained how private CHSLDs were one of the major blind spots of the crisis. The death rate was higher in the private centres. The temporary service agreements and purchase contracts for beds to relieve congestion in hospitals that were granted to the lowest bidders could not guarantee the quality of services and care required.

Private recruitment agencies are costly; the total cost more than tripled over three years, reaching a record \$875 million in 2022. In addition, using private recruitment agencies destabilizes the care teams, fuels a sense of injustice, demotivates staff and thereby increases the outflow of public resources toward the private sector. The use of recruitment agency workers directly contributes to worsening labour shortages. Instead of ensuring better control of the use of private recruitment agencies, the government must put an end to this practice as soon as possible.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

The government wants to call on the services of more private medical clinics to take charge of more day surgeries, as a variety of pilot projects has made possible up until now. Now, the government wants to go further by establishing more partnerships.

"What will the real costs of these services be and why aren't public investments allocated to public hospitals? We should remember that despite our repeated demands, none of the pilot projects put forward since 2016 has been subjected to a public evaluation demonstrating their greater effectiveness and measuring their impacts on the network," emphasizes Luc Beauregard.



Luc Beauregard

GROWING ALARM

Recent research on private-sector healthcare conducted by the Institut de recherche et d'informations socioéconomiques (IRIS) gives us reason to be outraged. One study reveals that, despite their "local" appearance, the major groups of private seniors' residences (RPAs) in no way resemble small Québec family businesses. Concealed within them are "complex, multinational structures having several dozen companies, for the most part empty shell companies with no employees." For example, the Cogir Manoir Outremont residential home has a property structure containing 31 organizations around the world, including in Luxembourg, a well-known tax haven.

Family medicine groups (FMGs) were supposed to promote access to family doctors, relieve congested emergency departments and facilitate access to psychosocial services. Despite the significant public funds and additional professional resources allocated to them, several private super clinics still do not provide the minimum number of medical visits promised to patients without a family doctor. The IRIS study shows that 48% of them also use sham companies in order to conceal their profits for tax purposes.

DO WE WANT TO PLAY RUSSIAN ROULETTE?

Vast numbers of private investors are siphoning off our public funds at breakneck speed. At this pace, we will be further reducing access to other public services that are nevertheless essential.

Even though the government claims that giving the private sector a bigger role in healthcare is in no way an infringement of the principle of universality, it has the moral obligation to act in the interests of all citizens in Québec.

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