



Policy Environment for the Implementation of School Reform

**REPORT TO THE MINISTER
OF EDUCATION**

DECEMBER 2001

Québec 

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Mandate

The Advisory Board on English Education (ABEE) was established by the Minister of Education in January 1993, following a recommendation made the previous year by the Task Force on English Education. Its mandate is to advise the Minister on all matters affecting the educational services offered in English elementary and secondary schools. The Minister of Education may also ask the Board for advice on a specific topic.

The Minister of Education names the members to the Advisory Board on English Education. The term of office is normally three years. Candidates are nominated by the various English education associations and organizations that represent, among others, teachers, parents, school and board administrators and commissioners, as well as individuals involved in post-secondary education. nominations can be received at any time.

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CONTEXT

POLICY ENVIRONMENT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL REFORM

The reforms called for by the Education Act (1998) are under way: Elementary Cycle One and Cycle Two are in the throes of major change. The reorganization of the education system makes student success the focal point of the challenges facing the new curriculum. The former system, which originally functioned to classify students and to satisfy criteria that were objectively sound but lacked relevance for the individuals who had to go through it, has been replaced by a much more flexible approach based on the needs of the clientele and designed to prepare all students to earn their living eventually, and — just as importantly — to succeed as productive members of society.

It was high time that schools made their classrooms dynamic sites of new, more flexible curricula, capable of meeting the demands of a modern society that is both competitive and inclusive. The successful implementation of this reform must become the main priority of the school system for the coming decade.

Genuine transformation — not a few superficial changes here and there followed by a return to old habits — will require ongoing energy, expertise and determination. Teaching and learning methods and, more generally, the functioning of the whole education system, from its policy centres to its classrooms, are being radically transformed. For many participants, the experience will be a difficult one, and no mere decree or a wave of the government's magic wand will, of itself, make the change easier or more quickly achieved. The reform, to be implemented and to succeed, requires a long-term commitment from all stakeholders charged with weaving its many facets into a concerted new teaching and learning culture.

In its consultations this year, the Advisory Board on English Education found wide and enthusiastic acceptance of the principles of the

reform itself, but much anxiety about how its implementation could be successfully effected with the human, technical and financial resources in hand across a dispersed and disparate English school network. There was wide consensus at all levels of the English-speaking education community that it will take a decade to put a coherent framework into place, and that this implementation will require even more effort and resources than did the conceptual development and implementation planning undertaken to date.

It will take time and planning before teachers in the classroom can benefit from the expertise and dialogue to which curriculum planners and implementers have had access. The challenge is how to bring information to the classroom teacher in a comprehensible and accessible form, and to make it useful to those within the English school sector.

The educational priorities for the English-speaking community in the coming decade are in general similar to those of the francophone community, bearing in mind that the English-language system represents only one tenth of the students in Québec's education system, while serving the same territory. One result of this situation is that practical problems — regarding communication, transportation, isolation, recruitment of personnel, and above all, community networking in regions that are far from urban centres — are extremely difficult to solve, and consequently hamper school management based on innovative and coherent pedagogical approaches.

The Advisory Board sees the implementation of the curriculum reform in the English sector from the following perspective:

Curriculum reform is not taking place in a vacuum. Obviously the many complex issues always present in the school system and the

efforts made by teachers, administrators, parents and students to deal with them with a view to improving education will continue to co-exist during the implementation of the current reform.

Several matters are of particular concern to the English community: the wide dispersion and low concentration of English-language students in many parts of the province produce special problems involving the organization and delivery of services; in certain domains or geographical regions, cultural attitudes may differ between the English-speaking and French-speaking communities; and lastly, the growth of private schools in the English sector presents challenges to the public system that have to be understood.

It is therefore essential that the many levels responsible for implementing the reform in the English sector are aware of these issues and ensure that the reform is tailored to complement the efforts already taking place at levels other than their own.

This report does not examine the content of the Québec Education Program (QEP). Rather, the Advisory Board had decided to examine certain vital support elements to the QEP using one fundamental factor, the policy environment.

Policy environment shapes how the school boards receive funding and support. What are the incentives for the various partners (including teachers, parents, governing boards and the broader community) to support adherence to this policy environment? If the policy environment is a disincentive to getting the cooperation and the best out of any part of the school system mosaic, then the policy should be re-examined and redirected. If the policy environment is implemented as merely one dissociated project after another without an overview and a concern for the

whole system, the vital priorities and common goals will “die of a thousand projects,” (as expressed by Charles Lusthaus, McGill Faculty of Education). A promising and initially productive project can only fulfill its promise and remain effective if it is integrated into the continuum of the system. A policy which provides one-shot support for a “good idea” but allows the program to peter out when the initial short-term, guaranteed funding is no longer available — and financially strapped school boards cannot finance it themselves — does not advance the cause that this support was initiated to serve. In fact, it can have just the opposite effect.

The Advisory Board addresses some of these challenges in this report, but the list is by no means exhaustive.

A) Teaching environment

- 1) Teacher education and recruitment
- 2) Teaching in two languages
- 3) Teaching materials and textbooks
- 4) Technology and distance education

B) Specific programs

- 5) Special education
- 6) Vocational education and technical training

C) Administrative and institutional environment

- 7) Facilitation of closer ties with post-secondary institutions
- 8) Evaluation, data gathering, accountability

I) TEACHER EDUCATION AND RECRUITMENT

Educating teachers for the new interdisciplinary and professional responsibilities that the reform entails is one of the main priorities in making the various participants in the schools and school boards more accountable.

Even before the education of teachers begins, recruitment poses certain problems. There is a shortage of qualified teachers in certain subject areas, particularly math, science and second-language teaching. Previously, the 1-G program (at McGill University's Faculty of Education) allowed graduates of other programs to be certified to teach after taking a one-year program. Now, the time required to receive sufficient instruction in pedagogy in order to become certified has been lengthened. Is the current policy of pre-service teacher education a disincentive to potential teacher candidates? The Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ) should perhaps revisit a fast track one-year program leading to, at least, a temporary or interim license for B.A. and B.Sc. graduates. Other avenues worth exploring are work-study programs. A B.Ed. does not provide a graduate with the academic depth to teach, for instance, advanced math or science. Graduates with degrees in disciplines other than pedagogy are often reluctant to spend another two years at university to be allowed to teach their specialty.

Pre-service teacher education and in-service support for practising teachers are very important for the mastery and delivery of new curriculum content. Over and above the academic qualifications traditionally required of practising teachers must now be added the skills and expertise needed for collaborative teaching, inclusive classrooms and teaching in two languages.

MEQ exit profiles¹ outline the basic competencies required of student teachers at the end of their pre-service education. These profiles outline the competencies with which teachers must be

familiar before they ever have to teach a class of their own and give some indication of the complexities of classroom teaching today:

- To act as a professional who is inheritor, critic and interpreter of knowledge or culture when teaching students.
- To communicate clearly in the language of instruction, both orally and in writing, using correct grammar, in various contexts relating to teaching.
- To develop and present teaching/learning situations that are appropriate to the students concerned and the subject content with a view to developing the competencies targeted in the programs of study.
- To evaluate student progress in learning the subject content and mastering the related competencies.
- To plan, organize and supervise a class in such a way as to promote students' learning and social development.
- To adapt his or her teaching to the needs and characteristics of students with learning disabilities, social maladjustments or handicaps.
- To integrate information and communications technologies (ICT) in the preparation and delivery of teaching/learning activities and for instructional management and professional development purposes.
- To cooperate with school staff, parents, partners in the community and students in pursuing the educational objectives of the school.
- To cooperate with members of the teaching team in carrying out tasks involving the development and evaluation of the competencies targeted in the programs of study, taking into account the students concerned.
- To engage in professional development individually and with others.

1. "Teacher Training: Orientations — Professional Competencies" MEQ, 2001 code 69-2099A

- To demonstrate ethical and responsible professional behaviour in the performance of his or her duties.

A common thread running through these competencies is the need to provide teachers with opportunities to upgrade their professional skills and to contribute to the profession. The Advisory Board was very interested in the recommendation found in the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation's college-level teacher education report that suggests "...assigning experienced teachers to new roles, including those of mentoring, teaching partner and co-coordinator of teaching. Teachers assigned to these roles should meet specific criteria and enjoy full recognition of their work." As the Education Act (s. 22.6.1) specifies that the training of future teachers and the monitoring of newly certified teachers are professional obligations, some form of recognition, including remuneration, of these additional professional activities would also seem warranted. An organized mentoring approach is already in effect in various other professions. English school boards and teachers' unions should be encouraged to collaborate at the local level to implement mentoring on a large scale in their schools.

From another perspective, English school boards outside urban areas are suffering from a serious lack of substitute teachers. Hiring back recently retired teachers to substitute may be necessary in some cases, but not always advisable: retired teachers have generally not been trained for the new curriculum or teaching methods, although this will, of course, change over time.

A large body of research has been developed over the last three decades that provides a more coherent basis for the professionalization of teachers and teacher education. Professionaliza-

tion is at the heart of the new curriculum reform that emphasizes a common core of competencies for all teachers regardless of level or subject matter. The role of the university is paramount in the building of this professionalism. "The full leadership of the Education Faculty (or its equivalent) in teacher education is important in ensuring that teacher education is consistent and maintains a professional thrust...Moreover, the partnership ties between universities and the schools must be intensified and extended beyond arranging practice teaching sessions." (La formation à l'enseignement, MEQ, Direction de la formation et la titularisation du personnel scolaire, p. 165). Resources and infrastructure support are required to facilitate the necessary networking and exchanges of information among all the stakeholders.

In the Partnership for School Improvement,² the resources and the shared priorities exist to strengthen links between universities and school professionals but this aspect still needs addressing as it appears to be missing from the overall curriculum reform which links, but does not bind, faculties of education to what goes on in the classroom. Training in pedagogy is just the beginning of a teacher's education. Universities have a responsibility to initiate teachers into what goes on in a real classroom with live students. Teachers would greatly benefit from intensive two-week seminars during the summer. School boards have professional development budgets that could perhaps go towards making such individual professional development compulsory for teachers at regular intervals at no cost to teachers themselves. Such a policy is very much in line with the thrust of the MEQ document *Teacher Training: Orientations — Professional Competencies*.

2. The Partnership for School Improvement is a collaborative project involving McGill University, the professional associations for school and school board administrators, teachers and the Services à la communauté anglophone of the MEQ. Its mandate is to provide support to the process of school improvement with a particular focus on developing and carrying out School Success Plans. It provides resource persons to assist schools, administers a teacher/administrator Scholarship Program and co-ordinates the animators of the Québec School Improvement Network (QSIN).

At the CEGEP level, Performa³ is an in-service teacher and professional training program sponsored jointly by the MEQ, the Université de Sherbrooke and the colleges. Programs are offered at many CEGEPs and colleges, including Dawson College.

The reform places great emphasis on the increased use of students' personal knowledge (experiences, histories, values and beliefs) in a problem-solving, action/research-oriented approach to real-life challenges, commonly referred to as reflective practice. While admirable as a goal of teacher education, resources, time and energy will be required to actually implement the approach. The "encadrement" as well as administrative and financial resources would seem to be important factors in the success of the policy. Sustained action and networking must be built up among universities, schools and student teachers to ensure integrated teaching. A new teacher must be well versed in the education system. It is important that only people who have first-hand classroom experience be assigned the task of conveying teacher skills. In light of the reforms, universities and school boards should, on an ongoing basis, separately and together, re-assess what is needed in schools.

Recommendation 1

That universities and school boards intensify their collaboration in identifying the components of initial teacher training.

Recommendation 2

That English-language school boards and teachers' unions be encouraged to explore ways to extend mentoring beyond student teachers, for whom such a policy is already in place, to include newly qualified teachers, who would greatly benefit from a structured association with a senior teacher.

Recommendation 3

That the MEQ, English-language school boards, teachers' unions and universities be encouraged to explore incentives (including professional development budgets) for incorporating accessible professional development programs into the teachers' workload.

3. (<http://www.educ.usherb.ca/performa>) Performa is an acronym for *PER*fectionnement et *FOR*mation des *MA*îtres en exercice. "The general objective of the program is to improve the quality of instruction and learning within the college setting. Performa also aims to stimulate pedagogical experimentation, innovation and growth; involve teachers and professionals in an ongoing process of professional skills development; encourage interaction between colleagues and departments; and promote the transfer to the classroom of skills and knowledge in education, psychology and teaching techniques."

2) TEACHING IN TWO LANGUAGES

Teaching in two languages in elementary and secondary school is of prime importance to the English-speaking community.

Since the traditional notion of functional bilingualism is now considered inadequate for preparing English-speaking students for Québec's job market, the teaching and learning of French have become key concerns of schools in the English sector. Although French immersion classes have existed in some schools in the English sector for many years, it was not until the present reform that the MEQ has recognised immersion as a formal program. Suddenly a host of enriched French programs and programs for increasing the use of French in teaching certain subjects were set up throughout the system, with the intention of giving greater importance to the intensive teaching of French and allowing the level of the teaching of French to greatly exceed the guidelines prescribed by ministry regulations.

The limited number of content-area teachers who are competent in second-language instruction has become an extremely thorny problem for certain school boards which, because of their financial resources and size, cannot recruit twice as many teachers per subject to teach in both languages. Although a significant number of students acquire proficiency in French today, not all do so or do so early enough in their schooling to be able to handle a program taught in French without problems. Those who sit for examinations in French, language of instruction, have a greater ability to understand the content and instructional materials of a course given in French. But those who experience difficulties with French may fail to understand aspects of the program or may take longer to master its content. The most appropriate people to help these students are second-language specialists, but this specialty is not part of basic teacher training. Such teachers are hard to find; they have only one specialty, the teaching of a second language, and no training to teach mathematics, history, geography or social sciences, the subjects most often chosen as a

bridge between the languages. The two requirements, content knowledge and the ability to speak and teach in the second language of instruction are not readily found in the pool of available teachers.

There is a serious lack of curriculum resources on second-language teaching at both the pre-service and in-service levels of teacher education. English programs doubled with French immersion or bilingual ones will face problems. In the new curriculum reform, the teaching of French as a second language is considered to be a single subject; the same is true for anglais langue seconde. French immersion programs, on the other hand, are based on the assumption that the second language should be taught through subjects such as history, math, social studies, etc., as we have mentioned above. It would appear that in the new reform, this might be particularly difficult because subject teachers may not be qualified to teach these subjects in French, and French-speaking teachers may not be qualified to teach the subjects. It will take the co-ordination and dovetailing of these sometimes-contradictory new policy thrusts to implement with success the overall principles of the curriculum reform in the light of the mission of Québec's English schools.

One of the changes in elementary and secondary education recommended by the new Education Act is for schools to have greater self-determination; many schools are indeed following more individual policies than in the past. However, the task of managing this linguistic double mission cannot be left entirely up to individual schools. Not all of them have the resources to take equally appropriate measures. The availability of excellent instructional materials, the accessibility of teaching programs for teachers destined for immersion subjects and some correlation between the teaching permit and the language of instruction in which its holder is authorized to teach should be encouraged. It may also require English and French-speaking teachers to develop appropriate curricula together.

English schools do not have the luxury of time. Devoting more time to second-language learning than is specified in the curriculum may be necessary to offer students the bilingual skills they will need to function in a predominantly French-speaking society but that time must be

put to the most effective use possible. English remains the principal language of instruction in an English school. Mother-tongue proficiency is the primary mission of an English school, its *raison d'être*. It must not be sacrificed.

3) TEACHING MATERIALS AND TEXTBOOKS

Another obstacle that affects teaching in English schools is the strict control exercised by the MEQ over the selection of textbooks and instructional materials, which are designed to reflect faithfully the objectives and the steps of the teaching process as they are presented in each course description. The reform may relax this vice grip somewhat, but the reform alone cannot change the context of the textbook market. The French school system represents a market that is large enough for publishing houses to produce specific materials adapted to rigidly defined curricula. By contrast, preparing the same textbooks for the much smaller English market provided is not an economically viable activity.

The problem is not that there is a lack of high-quality instructional materials in English, language of instruction or second language. On the contrary, there are many such materials in North America, but their content does not necessarily correspond to the objectives stated and approved by the MEQ, especially as concerns the project-oriented, hands-on curriculum now being implemented.

Teachers need authentic textbooks and other teaching materials (print and multimedia) for their classrooms. The new curriculum is project oriented and requires much hands-on documentation to demonstrate the application of what is being taught. Teaching materials are also a homework issue, if parents are to support the learning of their children.

A newly established Learning Materials Centre (LMC), under the responsibility of the English Educational Resources Foundation (EERF) and funded through the Canada-Québec Agreement for Minority Language Education, has been set up to provide learning materials and resources to support curriculum delivery in English. The mandate of the LMC is to identify Québécois material for translation and make recommendations to the MEQ, to explore adaptation of suitable materials from outside of Québec, and to

design and develop learning materials in line with the curriculum reform. This is a very promising initiative, one that must be encouraged. Much is expected of it.

It is, however, a difficult and complex exercise. Furnishing materials for an entire curriculum has never been attempted before and deciding where to start is just the beginning of a long process. When starting to find appropriate teaching materials in the past, one approached school boards and asked teachers what they would find acceptable. Today, with the opening up of the curriculum, the field is wider and more diffuse.

The EERF exercise is still in formation mode. Originally conceived as a quality-control clearing house for school-developed materials, its mission is evolving into a more ambitious venture based on mining resources rather than re-makes. The production of textbooks is not necessarily the only objective: modules and materials developed from various sources, such as schools and universities, are also areas for exploration. The amount of subject-area teaching which goes on in French immersion programs is another challenge still to be met.

Another example of an ongoing activity in the development of curriculum materials is the work begun under the direction of Joanne Kingsley at Bishops University where 3rd year students worked on producing materials for curriculum units. The same students, now in 4th year, have divided up the 2nd and 3rd cycles to develop materials for each curriculum.

Recommendation 4

That the English-language school boards ensure that English Educational Resources Foundation (EERF) becomes a professional agency with sufficient and appropriately trained staff made available to ensure professional standards.

Recommendation 5

That English-language universities and school boards ensure that teacher education and in-service training for practising teachers be designed to equip teachers with an understanding of the design of curriculum, in addition to the capacity to teach it.

4) TECHNOLOGY AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

A generation after the personal computer has become common, the priority for technology in education is not simply a question of installing workstations throughout the school system. The state should be concentrating its efforts and investments on constructing networks and connecting schools with each other, with partner in higher education and professional education institutions, and with the world, so that schools in remote regions are less isolated. This applies not only with respect to the English-speaking community, but also to schools in the French sector.

While MEQ policy currently applies to both English and French schools in remote areas with small populations, the needs of the English sector and the communities in which they are located have to be clearly defined. The proportion of small, geographically dispersed schools is high in the English sector, and such schools will become increasingly dependent on distance education in order to offer required and optional courses to a handful of students per school. The particular characteristics of the English sector make distance education even more important as a tool and more difficult to access as a system. Added to the cost of the hardware and putting the network in place is the cost of maintaining the content in English.

Establishing an adequate network, including broadband hardwiring, pipelines, fibre optics and so on, represents an almost insurmountable challenge for a single school board. There is likely to be more economic viability for a single regional infrastructure, allowing each school board to use it for its own purposes, than a solely English-based one; thus working with French boards and municipalities has a greater chance of producing successful results. Bringing the schools up to par may even be too vast a project for the MEQ to handle alone. The participation of other ministries, such as the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, the Ministère des Affaires municipales et de la Métropole and the Ministère des Régions, should be actively sought.

A necessary complement to building the infrastructure and the platforms that make it possible to use and share communications technology is the supervision and training of the human resources — teachers, technicians and specialists — required to set up and develop the most advantageous plans of action, plans which have been difficult to set up and apply in the past because of a relative scarcity of qualified personnel and the difficulty of recruiting and retaining them in a competitive market.

The Advisory Board is aware that the MEQ's Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) Policy is currently being renewed and updated and that in recent budget pronouncements, the government announced its intention to invest in this area. The Board recommends that the policy include the provision of assistance to ensure that all schools become connected to a network. As well, it should contain a focus on training systems technicians (those who know how to use the tools) for the schools; this would contribute greatly to the development of ICT which would, in turn, lead to a more equitable sharing of information and knowledge and would notably enable schools to keep up with what is being done elsewhere.

Three English school boards (Central Québec, Western Québec, and Eastern Shores) have developed a proposal for distance education services, the Distance Education and Community Network (DECN) with a view to supporting the delivery of courses at the secondary level, especially mathematics and physics. The group is seeking funding for its projects. The DECN will use a variety of technologies, including video, audio, graphics and text-based conferencing in both synchronous and asynchronous modes. Technologies will be chosen for their ease of use, flexibility and interconnectivity. The network will serve various client groups including educational, social and/or medical services, professional or work-related and community groups, depending on interest and the availability of financing. Each of the boards involved is

responsible for building relationships with its local and regional community and professional associations.

Other boards have initiated plans to connect to fibre optic networks. In remote areas of Québec where it is unlikely that fibre optic or broadband networks will be installed, it has been suggested that the MEQ seriously examine the use of satellite services. Web-based training and instruction is under development at various levels, but the mechanisms for ensuring that the funding, training and sophisticated technology needed for interactive distance education across the school system are still to be established. The technological dossier is advancing but it is a case of project-by-project implementation rather than a universally applicable policy.

Far more resources have been devoted to equipping postsecondary education with ICT. The universities and colleges are already well ahead of the elementary and secondary schools in this regard. Universities and CEGEPs are part of RISQ (Réseau Interordinateurs Scientifique Québécois), a non-profit telecommunications consortium of higher education that is owned by Québec universities with representation from the CEGEPs. RISQ provides a telecommunications backbone to higher education and research institutions. This fibre optic deployment project will be carried out through partnerships with private and public industry in order to build the "higher education information highway" at the best cost possible, while at the same time bringing numerous benefits to the education community. The MEQ has provided the program with a \$21 million subsidy, \$15 million of which has been allocated to the universities, both to repay RISQ and the universities for their contribution to the implementation of the optical network and to help extend the infrastructures to all university campuses not yet connected to the RISQ backbone.

The remaining \$6 million will be used by colleges to start the first phase of a program aimed at connecting the CEGEPs to RISQ.

Why not link up the school boards with these services? It is in the interests of the colleges that the programs to which their students have been exposed are as broadly based as possible in order for them to keep up their range of collegial options. Establishing avenues of collaboration between school boards, colleges and universities should be encouraged in the interest of providing much-needed connection systems for schools in regional clusters. A program that encourages investment in bandwidth in cooperation with RISQ, as has been done for postsecondary education, would be of great benefit to students for distance education services. Avenues of collaboration would also be of benefit to parents who are asking for tutoring and a range of educational services as well as to communities at large.

Preferential rates for Bell, Québec Telephone and Telus lines and sponsoring are two of the considerations that lead to RISQ involvement in public access to information technologies. Why is education not considered for a special rate by phone companies rather than the normal commercial rates? In the corporate world, the English-speaking community's market is supposedly too limited to warrant sponsorship; linking up with colleges and universities and French boards to create one network would appear to be a policy option that should be given serious consideration.

The recently released Report of the National Broadband Task Force, commissioned by Industry Canada, defines "broadband" as a high-capacity, two-way link between an end user and access network suppliers capable of supporting full-motion, interactive video applications.⁴ Broadband services that meet this standard would be able to support interactive video conferences between

4. (http://broadband.gc.ca/Broadband-document/english/executive_summary.htm) The Report estimates that the most revolutionary aspect of broadband is its potential to greatly reduce, and even eliminate, distance and time as cost factors in economic activity and in providing public services. It recommends that governments facilitate "the deployment of broadband networks, services and content through policies and regulations that favour private sector investment, competition and innovation, as well as by supporting communities, the creation of Canadian content and the use of broadband to deliver public services." Also recommended are that publicly assisted programs to deploy broadband infrastructure to communities unlikely to be served by market forces alone be put in place by the federal government in conjunction with other governments by 2004.

groups of people at different locations in office, school and health care environments. For the foreseeable future, however, in spite of continuing technological progress, the basic facts of Canadian geography and demography continue to mean that it will not be profitable for the private sector to provide broadband service in scarcely populated areas of the country, even though the need for broadband communications is higher in these areas than in urban centres.

Technological capacity building is also a community responsibility and a community pre-occupation in many English-speaking areas. The Québec Community Groups Network (QCGN), composed of 18 organizations, has received start-up funds from Canadian Heritage, the federal government department responsible for official languages support services.

The QCGN is endeavouring to have closer contacts with Québec government departments in order for minority language community groups to have direct access to resources. Their aim is to facilitate cross-sector, cross-regional collaboration to counter the isolation of rural English-speaking communities, rather than counting on the piece-meal, project-by-project approach.⁵

Other community initiatives include the Québec Learners' Network, working out of Heritage College in the Outaouais, set up to promote lifelong learning. Its mission is to help community-based projects get off the ground by offering partnerships and support in the use of technology. It is a not-for-profit human resources network for Québec's rural English-speaking pop-

ulation in the informal learning sphere. As such, it has become an accessible resource for the Québec Farmers' Association as well as for the Distance Education Community Network (DECN) mentioned above, for which it provides training of instructors and staff. It has become part of a burgeoning movement of regional outreach activities aimed at helping rural communities to learn, through networking, how to maintain or reinstate vital community services.

Recommendation 6

That the government ensure that technology infrastructures be installed in those regions which the private sector does not consider to be economically worthwhile.

Recommendation 7

That the government and English-language school boards, given the large expenditures and technical difficulties required to complete a broadband infrastructure, explore and develop alternative technologies. These should range, where appropriate, from non leading-edge technologies to satellite service in order to keep options open so that distance education programs can be made available to all schools within the shortest possible time.

Recommendation 8

That English-language school boards place immediate emphasis on recruiting and training systems technicians competent to teach skills and navigate systems.

5. Amongst the needs which have been identified in the isolated communities are: the quality and availability of instruction in French, the availability of continuing education services in French for English-speakers who may not have been in Québec all their lives, the maintenance of small English schools, and the promotion of cooperation with the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications and MEQ programs which support theatre, arts and library development for English-speaking communities and schools. The QCGN intends to support job fairs, forums with local businesses and industry so students can be exposed to career and work opportunities in their communities. The Québec government has already recognized the importance of that type of service. The "Fonds de jeunesse" associated with "l'école ouvert sur son milieu," is aimed at easing the transition from student to productive member of the wider community, an avenue for English-speaking communities to explore and pursue.

5) SPECIAL EDUCATION

The recent policy directive of the MEQ in this area *Adapting Our Schools to the Needs of All Students* (1999) and *Plan of Action for Special Education* (1999) has been welcomed by the English sector. The identified lines of action are, indeed, critical to the success of students with special needs and are consistent with widely held beliefs about inclusion. The Policy is comprehensive. It puts the child first and allows for the flexibility required to meet individual needs. Apart from some specific programs funded by the MEQ, each school board has the responsibility for applying the Education Act and the special education policy and action plan in its schools.

In many of the English sector schools and regular classes, inclusion has been a fact of life for some time. Rates of inclusion of children with special needs in regular classrooms are significant. Recent statistics show that 64 per cent of students with handicaps and 86 per cent of "at risk" students, that is, students who present a range of learning disabilities, from mild to severe, as well as behavioural problems, mild to severe, mild intellectual impairment, etc., are integrated into regular classrooms for more than 50 per cent of their studies.

While educators in the English community are generally enthusiastic about the policy and appreciate the supportive measures announced in the accompanying *Plan of Action for Special Education*, there are serious concerns about implementation.

The framework for the delivery of special education consists of the Education Act, the special education policy, the teachers' collective agreements (which require identification and coding of students) and the financial parameters used to cap the number of "at risk" students. These four elements do not necessarily have a common thrust as they have been arrived at separately, not as a function of one another.

Access to adequate resources in the local community is difficult, if not, in many cases,

impossible. Many English schools serve many communities and the special needs students may be widely dispersed. School boards are often faced with the complexities of having to deal with a dozen or so CLSCs to service their far-flung schools; even a single school can be obliged to find the services it needs from several CLSCs. In some cases, school boards either have to buy services that should be provided by regional health and social services or go without.

The English sector has been out of the loop in developing these resources for its schools and communities. Specific solutions are needed to bring into being a gamut of accessible services from the health and social services sector. The MEQ's agreement with the *Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux* (MSSS) is currently being renegotiated. This could provide an opportunity for the MEQ and MSSS to examine this particular and difficult situation in the English sector.

In some English school boards, there is a clear policy favouring inclusion, while in some cases, there are no other services available in the community as an alternative to inclusion. Statistics must also be examined with care as reporting is not uniform throughout the system. School boards have different practices for the identification and/or coding of special needs students and the funding for special education is limited by the percentage of students in that category, not by the severity of their disabilities.

Section 96.14 of the Education Act makes every school principal, with the assistance of parents, staff and the student, responsible for establishing "individualized education plans" (IEPs) for all students with handicaps or disabilities. For principals to be able to carry out these responsibilities and support teachers and other professionals, it is essential for their school boards to provide the necessary moral and financial support.

To this end, the Inclusive Education Services (IES) program has been set up to support each English school board in building the capacity (by enabling its personnel) to adapt their schools to the needs of all their students. This is being done through the development and training of networks of local resource people, consultation and workshops with school teams, improved access to educational resources and information, the sharing of best practices as well as research and development activities. To be effective, the IES cannot be developed in isolation. There must be a commitment on the part of the boards to invest and reinvest in the knowledge and expertise gained. It is a service that should continually evolve to reflect the changing needs of the system. The boards must be able to clearly define and express those needs and the MEQ must monitor the situation in order to facilitate the accessibility of government services to a dispersed and isolated English school network. More effective special education can be a matter of more efficient use of funds. But even the best management cannot achieve the desired results if the required services are simply unavailable for the English sector.⁶

Such an initiative represents a significant addition to a policy environment conducive to helping English sector boards meet the challenges they have in common in the way of funding, resources, transport, qualified consultants and aides for providing the optimum possible special education integration in their respective regions and situations. It should encourage the development of a culture of inclusion as well as build up solid data on which to base future regulations for improvement of special education in the English sector.

Teachers working with special education students are under considerable pressure. Pre-service and in-service teachers need support to be able to deal effectively with inclusive classrooms. Services in early literacy, in conformity with curriculum reform which is designed as inclusive, put that much more strain on teachers

to find the time for students who require greater individual attention. As teachers' working conditions have great bearing on their input, the development of competencies and the availability of inclusive educational services for teachers are issues that urgently need addressing. Teachers in English schools perceive a lack of information on the policy and regulations concerning special education and inclusion and this produces frustration.

The integration of students with special needs into regular classrooms requires many different types of support services, depending on the needs of the particular students concerned. The best way of putting these pieces together is through networking and the examination of best practices. This policy should be actively followed. The goal should be to use the resources to the maximum.

There are now Centres of Excellence operating in two English school boards, one concerned with autism, the other with behaviour. These Centres of Excellence are designed to assist teachers and other board staff — non-teaching professionals, administrators, technicians — to learn and to develop expertise in delivering services to specific clientele. These centres will also advise boards on how to meet the needs of specific students. They do not, however, act directly with students.

Each school board now has a Special Education Advisory Committee whose purpose is to advise on how board finances are used to deliver services to students with special needs. These committees would benefit from a clear and functional mandate that included monitoring the delivery of special education in each school as a way of providing a process of accountability which is not evident at the present time.

Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of the successful implementation of the policy on special education is the input of teachers who must deal directly on a daily basis with whatever students make up their classrooms. Of particular

6. For example, the Advisory Board was told of the case of a profoundly handicapped student who did have an aide, but little access to educational services. The tools to develop her potential were not available or not used. The entitlements were in place but some important ingredients were missing. Was the missing ingredient money, expertise or the availability of professional specialization?

concern are the emphasis on early literacy; the adaptation of teaching practices to meet the needs of diverse learners; the addition of aides/technicians into the classroom and the role of the teacher in regard to them; the difficulties of regrouping teachers (time and cost) when they are dispersed across the province for the purposes of specific in-service training; strategies for students with attention deficits and behavioural problems; the acquisition, appropriateness and use of suitable material resources and understanding how to employ them, including understanding the advantages and uses of new technologies.

Another factor to be taken into account is that the bilingual education provided in many English schools can have a negative impact on special education. Teachers of French as a second language should be provided with the knowledge, resources and skills to respond to children with special needs in their classrooms. This will be critical as these children move up the grades and into secondary school. Many special needs students are selected out of immersion and placed in disproportionate numbers in the "English" stream. Some teachers are obliged to develop as many as a dozen individual education plans in one class. This would seem to be a specific area for further study in the English sector since all students in English schools must have access both to quality French instruction and to quality instruction in the various subject areas, with neither being sacrificed for the other.

Recommendation 9

That efforts be made to harmonize the elements that form the basis of the special education policy; the principal's responsibilities, the individual education plan (IEP), the teacher's role, and collective agreements. On paper, all these elements contribute to the implementation of the policy. In practice, they are not always applied with any overall coherence.

Recommendation 10

That the Special Education Advisory Committees be encouraged to monitor the implementation of the special education policy on which they are to be consulted by law, to evaluate it annually/regularly with particular attention to the quality of the IEPs and the appropriateness and coherence of procedures.

Recommendation 11

That the determination of financial support available to the new classification of "at risk" students be examined since it has become a disincentive to a rigorous identification of individual "at risk" students and has consequently led to a lack of effective IEPs for many students.

6) VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL TRAINING

The capacity of English school boards to deliver high quality, diverse course offerings is a challenge in many English elementary and secondary schools. That challenge is even greater in the vocational sector. The English-speaking community must be encouraged to engage in a serious examination of its mandate, commitment and capacity to provide truly diverse educational paths for its young people.

Vocational education does not yet enjoy a prestige within Québec commensurate with its growing importance in the economy. Historically, programs offered in English were promoted as options for weaker or less-motivated students, even after a major ministerial upgrading of the sector began in 1986. This problem has been difficult to overcome for the English-speaking community. A variety of factors have subsequently limited the number of programs offered in English. Obtaining a vocational program authorization is a complex, labour-intensive process for a school board, tied to regional priorities and involving collaboration with many stakeholders outside the school boards themselves. The subsequent purchase and maintenance of high-technology equipment and the recruitment and in-servicing of teaching personnel from the various trades is costly. Since 1997, there has been money earmarked for program development, but there has been less emphasis on the professional development of teachers in the vocational sector.

English-language vocational education and technical training has been targeted by a vigorous government promotional campaign launched in 1999. Feedback regarding the impact of various promotional initiatives after the initial two years has been very encouraging, but attaining the campaign objectives, particularly for training in English, will require a sustained and expanded plan with increased “buy-in” from the school boards and colleges.

One of the consequences of curriculum reform at the secondary and college levels has been the excellence of programs which results in high employer satisfaction and high graduate placement rates. Nevertheless, the level of support for vocational education and technical training from the English-speaking community remains low. What appears to be needed in secondary school, college and adult education sectors is increased institutional support to develop responsive and innovative programs, and unique delivery approaches that fit the small and dispersed client base of English institutions.

A research study commissioned by the English sector has confirmed the urgent need for more readily available information about employment training programs and career opportunities. Dialogue with educational personnel in English schools boards and CEGEPs regarding promotion priorities also confirmed a serious lack of accurate knowledge about vocational education and technical training. The study concluded that altering the perceptions and attitudes of young people and their parents hinges on first informing and engaging guidance counsellors and teachers. Educational administrators and commissioners have their part to play but counsellors and teachers, those who have direct access to students, remain the greatest single source of pertinent information. School boards have a special responsibility in making sure the information is available and the opportunities clearly communicated.

Increasing enrollment in vocational and technical programs will also depend on initiating career-orientation activities in elementary schools and, within the new curriculum, developing programs leading to employment in non-traditional sectors at the secondary level. It also calls for greater collaboration with communities in which the schools function. Such initiatives confirm and celebrate the variety of career paths that do not always involve the better-known university

route. The English vocational and technical sector needs authorization for programs that English-speaking parents of youth sector students will identify with. The setting up of “national centres” in the English sector, as has been done by French school boards, where the development and teaching of an upcoming technology is concentrated in one centre, would greatly enhance the scope and prestige of technical education for the English-speaking community.

When school boards were run along confessional lines, Protestant and Catholic boards were authorized to provide French and English vocational and technical programs. French boards have retained the dual language possibility, whereas the jury is still out in the case of English boards. It is important that concrete decisions along linguistic lines be arrived at quickly. It would clarify access to avenues for partnerships and collaborative ventures with French boards.

To encourage English-speaking Quebeckers to build their lives in Québec, they must have access to Québec-based job information. Databases, such as AREF-REPÈRES, currently available only in French, should also be available in English and will require not only translation but also adaptation and updating for the English market. Emploi-Québec has named the English-speaking clientele as a distinct client of its mandated objectives. However, serious difficulties exist in various regions in carrying out that mandate with its MEQ partners. Improved collaboration in this regard, at a provincial rather than regional or local level, is called for to assure adequate access to training services in English.

English school boards have been slow to implement ministerial initiatives to promote more responsive and innovative vocational and technical programs; for example, the work-study delivery model and the alternate entry options for youth are virtually unavailable. Most boards cite logistical and financial constraints for this lag behind their French counterparts. Some boards

are beginning to experiment with distance education models but lack the funds and personnel to move quickly into this promising alternative for their dispersed clientele.

Increased collaboration with English-language colleges may provide some of the solutions to respond to the mandate of providing more program diversity. Unfortunately, the development of vocational and technical programs in English school boards and colleges has been so uncoordinated to date that few “passerelles” linking vocational and technical training are presently in place to encourage English-speaking Quebeckers to continue their studies in the province. Universities are in the throes of re-evaluating their commitment to vocational and technical education. Retaining and building on the links between secondary school, college and higher education in this area is a factor in upgrading the quality and prestige of vocational and technical programs as well as in making them more academically open-ended.

Recommendation I2

That the English-speaking community be encouraged to engage in a serious examination of its mandate, commitment and capacity to provide truly diverse educational paths for its young people.

Recommendation I3

That the MEQ and the school boards ensure that the question of the linguistic status of vocational authorizations be settled promptly.

Recommendation I4

That the MEQ ensure that English-language school boards be granted authorizations for vocational programs that have the best prospects for job opportunities in the new technological environment.

7) THE FACILITATION OF CLOSER TIES WITH POST SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

The Advisory Board feels that it is important that there be a degree of harmonization amongst the policy approaches present at different levels of the education system. As there is a greater tendency to emphasize diversified career paths, it is important to develop and improve the forms of communication between the schools and the different postsecondary educational institutions.

Many French colleges already work with school boards. In certain regions, the MEQ regional office takes part in a Table Inter-ordre with representatives of all levels of education in the region. There is no such established partnership between English school boards, CEGEPs and universities and yet they have many of the same concerns and they share the same clientele. The list of the areas in which school boards, CEGEPs and universities could benefit from adopting joint approaches is long: staff replacement, orientation and training, curriculum planning in areas such as science, and vocational and technical programs, etc.

In the regions, joint approaches to equipment and facility sharing could be productive; for example, school boards could supply facilities and colleges, personnel for various programs. Universities, colleges and school boards could cooperate on English-language web-based education. There could be joint approaches to technology in the classroom. Institutional/system research, for example, the tracking of students, would provide useful data. The most appropriate of all — the preparation of information and

services for secondary school students about college programs, options, expectations, standards and workload — becomes more and more important as the changes to the school curriculum have a greater effect on career choices. This is an area where guidance counsellors for grades 5 through 11 have a particular responsibility.

A better way of countering the most constant criticism of secondary school education levelled by colleges would be for the two levels to work together, now that school board structures are so much more flexible. As colleges deem many secondary school graduates to have weak academic skills in English, French and mathematics, due in part to the students' thinking, analysis, work habits, study skills and attitudes toward school, more communication and mutual support could lead to the building of appropriate partnerships and structures that would address common preoccupations with demography, physical capacity, critical mass and personnel changes.

Recommendation 15

That the MEQ initiate the setting up of a tripartite committee, made up of English-language school boards, CEGEPs and universities, that would meet at regular intervals to address areas of common concern on which more inter-institutional cooperation could have a beneficial effect.

8) EVALUATION, DATA GATHERING, ACCOUNTABILITY

The increased responsibility which educational institutions have acquired as a result of the decentralization of decision-making power should be supported by clearer statistical data, including comparative socioeconomic information on each region and realistic appraisal of how the mission of each school is being met.

The confusion concerning report cards is merely one example of the difficulties that arise. The evaluation of a student's progress toward the attainment of the various competencies (which, in the new curriculum, replace objectives) must be accompanied by a document that can be understood by parents who may be completely unfamiliar with the new approach to learning. A report card which uses evaluation methods that were designed for the more rigid, pre-reform concepts of progress in connection with the new curriculum is not appropriate and causes confusion. The essence of a report card is that it communicates to parents what individual teachers find in their classrooms. A one-size-fits-all report card will not necessarily provide the kind of information parents and students need as the child moves through the system. Some form of standardized evaluation will always be required for the purposes of moving from one level of education to another or from one system to another.

Classifying schools as good or bad, as successfully meeting one set of rigid standards or failing to do so, distorts and undermines the philosophy of having schools set their own specific missions. Information based on unprocessed data cannot give an accurate reflection of the situation of each school, given the great variety of institutions. Individual schools and several school boards are working on developing a series of reporting methods that truly reflect the child's progress and that can convey important pertinent information for the use of next year's teacher. These reporting methods are being devised to integrate the requirements of the reform into the teaching of interdisciplinary and cross-grade projects. These methods should be encouraged

rather than set aside by a decreed uniformity of all reporting.

The data regarding graduation and retention rates are compiled by approximation, assumption and rough statistics. They are not nuanced, and there is no tracking of the many reasons students leave the system (e.g. moving within or outside Québec, getting jobs). For instance, it is hardly surprising that boards which include military bases (e.g. Central Québec) have exceptionally high dropout rates. Not all boards know what happened to these students and those who do have not always kept proper records. There is a need to collect data accurately to indicate real strengths and weaknesses.

In Québec there are two distinct sectors in the education system: French and English. They are not identical in culture, size or demographics. Consequently, data corresponding to the specificity of the English sector must be developed, and it must be accurate enough to provide reliable feedback for purposes of evaluation, accountability and policy orientation. We should perhaps be calling for more focus on the performance of the English sector as a separate entity since researching, monitoring and reporting on the English system could contribute to improved policy alignments.

It is important that the MEQ start to collect and publish distinct data concerning the English sector at all levels including vocational education and technical training so that it will no longer be necessary to guess to what extent the trends in both the English and French sectors correspond.

A place to start would be at the organizational level, working with those who are gathering and monitoring information about their own performances, such as the school success process. It is the policy environment that is the key to the fair and useful monitoring that could provide a solid framework for assessing regional and spe-

cial education needs as well as the school board funding issues that are particular to a widely dispersed school network, such as transportation and buildings.

Data gathering has close ties to the policy environment; it is on data that policies are based. Inaccurate data can therefore have a negative effect on the policy environment which shapes, among other things, how and for what the school boards receive funding. If the policy proves to be a disincentive, then it should be examined and redirected. But in order to have productive results, the process cannot be based on information that does not reflect the real situation on the ground.

Although there is a general movement toward statistics-based accountability, the exercise is not yet fully understood or universally applied. School boards have to verify the validity of the data about themselves or the data will have no credibility. Clear definitions for measurement are needed to avoid a multiplicity of ways of interpretation. The choice of indicator (e.g. dropout rate, retention rate, performance on exams, etc.) can produce quite different results for the same school.

Boards are going through their first experience in the administering of success plans with a very problematic understanding of targets. Some statistical percentage rates measure rates of change, not changes in actual numbers, which can be confusing. As well, reducing the rate of explained dropouts by 20 per cent a year is different from reducing the rate of all drop-outs (explained and unexplained) by 20 per cent. Such nuances are not always understood or taken into account, even by the MEQ.

Recommendation 16

That the MEQ collect and publish distinct data concerning the English-language sector at all levels including vocational education and technical training.

Recommendation 17

That the MEQ evaluate the implementation of the reform in relation to the support elements that have been discussed in this report, and that an annual report on the situation be submitted as the reform progresses.

Appendix

Individuals Consulted by the Advisory Board on English Education 2000-2001

Dyane Adam	Commissioner of Official Languages
John Cyr	Representative, Distance Education and Community Network (Central Québec School Board)
David D'Aoust	Executive Director, Community Table, National Human Resources Development Committee for the English Linguistic Minority
Diane Fyfe	Representative, Distance Education and Community Network (Western Québec School Board)
Deborah Hook	Executive Director, Quebec Community Groups Network
Charles Lusthaus	Faculty of Education, McGill University
Hugh Maynard	President, Quebec Community Groups Network
Anthony Paré	Faculty of Education, McGill University
Ainsley Rose	Co-Chair, Committee of Anglophone Curriculum Responsables (CACR)
Lynn Travers	MEQ, SCA-DPP
Laurent Trudel	MEQ, SCA-DPP
Patrick Woodsworth	Director General, Dawson College

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List of Acronyms

DECN	Distance Education and Community Network
EERF	English Educational Resources Foundation
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IES	Inclusive Education Services
LMC	Learning Materials Centre
MEQ	Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec
MSSS	Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux
PSI	Partnership for School Improvement
QCGN	Quebec Community Groups Network
QEP	Quebec Education Program
RISQ	Réseau Interordinateurs Scientifique Québécois
SCA-DPP (MEQ)	Services à la communauté anglophone — Direction des politiques et des projets (MEQ)

Recommendations

Recommendations of the Advisory Board on English Education
Report 2001: Policy Environment for the Implementation of School Reform

The Advisory Board's recommendations concern the activities of the following sectors:

Government and MEQ:	3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
School Boards	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15
Universities	1, 3, 5, 15
Teachers' Unions	2, 3, 9

1. That universities and school boards intensify their collaboration in identifying the components of initial teacher training.
2. That English-language school boards and teachers' unions be encouraged to explore ways to extend mentoring beyond student teachers, for whom such a policy is already in place, to include newly qualified teachers, who would greatly benefit from a structured association with a senior teacher.
3. That the MEQ, English-language school boards, teachers' unions and universities be encouraged to explore incentives (including professional development budgets) for incorporating accessible professional development programs into the teachers' workload.
4. That the English-language school boards ensure that English Educational Resources Foundation (EERF) becomes a professional agency with sufficient and appropriately trained staff made available to ensure professional standards.
5. That English-language universities and school boards ensure that teacher education and in-service training for practising teachers be designed to equip teachers with an understanding of the design of curriculum, in addition to the capacity to teach it.
6. That the government ensure that technology infrastructures be installed in those regions which the private sector does not consider to be economically worthwhile.
7. That the government and English-language school boards, given the large expenditures and technical difficulties required to complete a broadband infrastructure, explore and develop alternative technologies. These should range, where appropriate, from non leading-edge technologies to satellite service in order to keep options open so that distance education programs can be made available to all schools within the shortest possible time.
8. That English-language school boards place immediate emphasis on recruiting and training systems technicians competent to teach skills and navigate systems.
9. That efforts be made to harmonize the elements that form the basis of the special education policy; the principal's responsibilities, the individual education plan (IEP), the teacher's role, and collective agreements. On paper, all these elements contribute to the implementation of the policy. In practice, they are not always applied with any overall coherence.

10. That the Special Education Advisory Committees be encouraged to monitor the implementation of the special education policy on which they are to be consulted by law, to evaluate it annually/regularly with particular attention to the quality of the IEPs and the appropriateness and coherence of procedures.
11. That the determination of financial support available to the new classification of "at risk" students be examined since it has become a disincentive to a rigorous identification of individual "at risk" students and has consequently led to a lack of effective IEPs for many students.
12. That the English-speaking community be encouraged to engage in a serious examination of its mandate, commitment and capacity to provide truly diverse educational paths for its young people.
13. That the MEQ and the school boards ensure that the question of the linguistic status of vocational authorizations be settled promptly.
14. That the MEQ ensure that English-language school boards be granted authorizations for vocational programs that have the best prospects for job opportunities in the new technological environment.
15. That the MEQ initiate the setting up of a tripartite committee, made up of English-language school boards, CEGEPs and universities, that would meet at regular intervals to address areas of common concern on which more inter-institutional cooperation could have a beneficial effect.
16. That the MEQ collect and publish distinct data concerning the English-language sector at all levels including vocational education and technical training.
17. That the MEQ evaluate the implementation of the reform in relation to the support elements that have been discussed in this report, and that an annual report on the situation be submitted as the reform progresses.

