# "WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO THE STUDENTS"
## SUCCESS AND RETENTION
## IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

Brief presented to the Minister of Education, Higher Education and Science

Québec

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# ADVISORY BOARD ON ENGLISH EDUCATION

The mandate of the Advisory Board on English Education (ABEE) is to advise the Minister of Education, Higher Education and Research on all matters affecting the educational services offered in English elementary and secondary schools and vocational and adult education centres. The Minister may also ask the Board for advice on a specific topic.

The Minister names the members to the Advisory Board. The term of office is normally three years. Candidates are nominated by 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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# 1.0   Introduction

In February 2015, the Advisory Board on English Education was given a mandate from the former Minister of Education to examine the successes experienced in the English-language schools of the province, identify the conditions present in the schools that contribute to these successes, and suggest how these conditions might be transferred throughout the education network in Québec. The Board has carried out this mandate, believing that the issues are relevant and important enough to be addressed, but aware that many of the factors identified in this brief are not novel and may be recognizable to anyone familiar with good educational practice.

## 1.1   Student success

This topic was the theme of the Board's brief to the Minister in 2011.[1] At that time, we wrote:

*The Board is concerned about how MELS defines success. First, it appears that "success" is used as a euphemism for staying in school* [persévérance scolaire] *and is measured by the number of students in a cohort who obtain either a secondary school diploma (SSD), a diploma of vocational studies (DVS) or other Ministry recognized qualifications. This is one view of success, although it fails to consider student progress, or eschews a more global definition that would include all three aspects of the school's mission* [instruction, socialization, and providing qualifications][2].

In placing emphasis on student development and progress, the more appropriate question may be: "What is the potential of this student and how can we bring him close to it?" Basing success primarily on examination results becomes especially problematic in view of the feedback we have received that Ministry uniform examinations are not always coherent with the curriculum or pedagogy. In addition, the decision to use percentages in the elementary school report card is neither consistent with the focus on student learning nor with competency-based learning[3], and shifts the emphasis away from a developmental approach.

English schools produce bilingual, generally biliterate, well-qualified graduates who are an asset to the province and to the wider community. More than 90% of students with special needs are integrated into regular classes (see Table 3), most of them write the Ministry examinations, and many are in bilingual programs. All English school boards have improved their graduation rates in the past five years, to better than 80% in most cases.

Table 1.

Five-, six-, and seven-year graduation rates (%), 2003 cohort

|  | 5 years | 6 years | 7 years |
|---|---|---|---|
| CQSB | 69.1 | 76.7 | 79.8 |
| ESSB | 37.7 | 47.2 | 50.0 |
| ETSB | 55.7 | 61.2 | 63.5 |
| RSB | 67.6 | 75.8 | 79.5 |
| SWLSB | 67.1 | 74.4 | 76.9 |
| WQSB | 54.4 | 65.9 | 69.3 |
| EMSB | 68.9 | 78.0 | 81.1 |
| LBPSB | 71.0 | 78.2 | 80.7 |
| NFSB | 62.9 | 71.0 | 75.4 |
| LSB | 54.4 | 62.0 | 67.1 |
| CSB | 5.8 | 12.0 | 15.4 |
| **Total for the public education system** | **54.9** | **63.7** | **67.9** |

Source: MELS. DSID. SIS. Indicateurs nationaux. Système Charlemagne. January 2011

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1  Québec, Advisory Board on English Education (ABEE), *Fostering Student Success in Québec's English Schools:Implications for Policy and Practice* (Montréal: MELS, 2011), http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/publications/MELS_MemoireMinistre2011_ANG.pdf.
2  Ibid., 4.
3  https://lceeq.ca/sites/default/files/media/LCEEQPositionPaperEvaluation.pdf

**Table 2.  Dropout rate (%) per English school board 2010-2013**

|  | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 | 2012-2013 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Central Quebec** | 19.8 | 18.4 | 21.7 |
| **Eastern Shores** | 27.2 | 21.9 | 23.0 |
| **Eastern Townships** | 22.8 | 25.8 | 19.2 |
| **Riverside** | 13.6 | 13.9 | 14.8 |
| **Sir Wilfrid Laurier** | 14.5 | 15.3 | 14.4 |
| **Western Quebec** | 37.3 | 35.8 | 33.3 |
| **English Montréal** | 15.7 | 16.9 | 17.7 |
| **Lester B. Pearson** | 12.5 | 13.7 | 13.1 |
| **New Frontiers** | 20.0 | 22.8 | 13.8 |
| **English public school boards** | **17.1** | **17.9** | **17.2** |
| **Provincial (public school boards only)** | **18.6** | **18.4** | **17.8** |

Source: DSID, Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports, read August 2014
(Record 4, Charlemagne), data as of June 29, 2015.

*. . . Defining success as "staying in school" is complicated, given the variety of methods used to calculate the number of students who stay in school and the number of those who leave. This may be especially true in the English sector, where greater family mobility means that children may leave a particular school to re-enter school somewhere else in Canada or in the rest of the world[4].*

Dropout figures are still being challenged by several English boards because they also include the number of students who leave the province and attend school elsewhere, often in Ontario, New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island. For example, in one school in the ESSB[5], only two students graduated out of the cohort of 10 who started Secondary I, but most of the other eight had moved out of Québec and graduated from schools elsewhere.

## 1.2   Method employed in this brief

Relevant comments (shown in italics) were extracted from earlier briefs of the Advisory Board. After input from Board members and consultation with members of LCEEQ, semi-structured interviews were conducted by telephone or Skype with representatives of each English-language school board as well as the Cree and Littoral school boards. The interview questions were not based on the findings of effective schools research but were sufficiently open-ended to allow the respondents to describe the successes of their boards and the initiatives that produced them. The replies are shown in quotation marks when they are quoted verbatim.

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[4]   ABEE, *Fostering Student Success, 4* http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/publications/MELS_MemoireMinistre2011_ANG.pdf.
[5]   See the Glossary at the end of this brief for an annotated list of abbreviations and acronyms.

## 1.3 Characteristics of effective schools and commonalities present in both the French and English systems

There has been much international research on successful schools, including a recent MELS[6] summary, and similar characteristics appear throughout the findings. After a survey of effective schools research, a list of characteristics was developed and grouped under the headings: School ethos, Student-focused education, Managing change, Collecting and using information, Partnerships, and Staff development.

Given that the *Education Act* governs all public schools in the province, what might explain the generally higher retention and graduation rates in the English sector?

All schools have:

- a well-planned curriculum
- teachers who possess subject and pedagogical knowledge
- clear anti-bullying rules
- common budgetary rules and measures, including additional funding for schools in disadvantaged areas
- defined governance structures
- their own particular culture
- support for students with special needs

Even within the commonalities identified here, there are shades of difference. After a beginning that one respondent described as "painful," English schools seem to have embraced the reformed curriculum, recognizing that the competencies it features are transferable life skills. "The philosophy behind the reform makes so much sense to us."

The Board has heard repeatedly over the years that there are differences between the English and French sectors and we have highlighted many of these in earlier briefs. In this brief, we shall identify some of the characteristics of English education in Québec, suggesting that they contribute to the greater success and retention in English-language schools and, where we are able, propose how they might be transferred to other schools.

English school boards report that partnership agreements among the Ministry, the school boards, and the schools are not viewed as mechanical exercises. They are regarded as living documents that guide and give focus and direction for a proactive approach towards student success. The emphasis on formative assessment has led to reflection followed by action in many English school classrooms. English school boards adjust budgets internally to satisfy local needs and have become entrepreneurial in finding new resources within their communities. These and other features will be elaborated in this document through the lens of research recommendations in the literature.

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[6] J. Archambault, G. Ouellet, L. Harnois, *Gérer une école en milieu défavorisé: Ce qui ressort des écrits scientifiques et professionnels* (MELS, Programme de soutien à l'école montréalaise, 2006).

# 2.0   Conditions favouring student success

## 2.1   School ethos:

**An effective school is characterized by a positive climate, pedagogically, socially and in its management. It provides students with a safe and organized learning environment.**

In 1999, the Advisory Board wrote about the ethos of *English language schools:*

*Every English school in Québec is a microcosm of the community it serves. This is the basis of the second reason why English and French schools are different in ethos. Québec's English schools can be almost as different from each other as they are from their French-language counterparts. English schools are a product of their surroundings and of who attends them. They are not monolithic. The linguistic and cultural affinities they share do not form a mould into which they all fit. They are shaped by their clients and the communities in which their clients live, the newspapers they read, the radio stations they listen to, the associations they belong to, the churches they attend, and the cultural and demographic mix of their neighbourhoods[7].*

Since then, the Board has heard repeatedly, from all over the province, that the culture and learning climate in English-language schools are different from the culture and learning climate in French-language schools.

*All students need affiliation with the group. This sense of belonging begins in elementary school, is important in the transition from elementary to secondary school and acts as the focus of attention for adolescents. Successful students are often the most involved and participate in the most clubs and sports activities. Board members cited examples of weak students who joined a school activity where membership was predicated on schoolwork and behaviour, and whose attitude, attendance, and performance at school improved because of the attraction of membership in a team or group.[8]*

The small size of the Littoral School Board contributes to an "intensely personalized view of education. How to reach the child always comes before curriculum." The small student/teacher ratio allows for individual attention and each child is known by many adults. This is important in dealing with social-behavioural issues that interfere with learning, and is helped by the board's investment in two psycho-educators, a social worker and a guidance counselor. This team works cohesively to support individual students. This helps to compensate for the "lean" social services in the area, which, when they exist, are usually provided in French.

Teachers, as well as students, need a positive climate in the school to function at their best. Board members visited a secondary school where the principal not only greeted students by name as he walked along the corridors, but supported and encouraged his teachers in their pedagogical initiatives, and it was clear that the teachers supported the principal too. School climate is an intangible and impossible to quantify, but the climate in this school was clearly positive.

[7]   Québec, ABEE, *Culture and English Schools in Play: Report to the Minister of Education, December 1999* (Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, 2000), 32 http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/autres/organismes/CELA_culture-ecoles_a.pdf.

[8]   ABEE, *Fostering Student Success in Québec's English Schools: Implications for Policy and Practice , 12* http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/publications/MELS_MemoireMinistre2011_ANG.pdf.

## 2.2 A clear mission:

**The school has a pervasive and broadly understood instructional goal that is shared by all. Shared vision and goals are characterized by unity of purpose, consistency of practice, collegiality and collaboration among all school personnel.**

A strong alignment of partnership agreements, school board strategic plans, and school MESAs has promoted unity of purpose and common goals within the school boards. There are strong working relationships among all levels within most school boards, with commissioners connected to the school board administrators, the schools and the surrounding community. Board members were invited to visit one school, and toured the classes with three of the board's commissioners. It was clear that they were welcome in the school and familiar with what was happening there.

The common discourse around instructional goals is shared among the English school boards who collaborate on many initiatives and share resources whenever possible. The discourse and philosophy derive from the MEESR Basic School Regulation, but the school boards have appropriated them for themselves and modified them to meet local needs. An example of this occurs in many schools where each school day is lengthened by several minutes, but students start the school day later on one morning. This allows the prescribed contact time with students to be respected, but also provides time for teachers to meet in professional learning situations within the school day. Several interviewees stressed the need for a small number of commonly agreed upon objectives. "Too many objectives don't work!" "It all has to work together." "It's hard to compartmentalize what we do any more." The school board's role is to set priorities and a common vocabulary at all levels, promote trust, develop a culture of learning, and remove silos, so that all levels of the board's community work towards common goals, all hear the same discourse, and teachers work within a consistent framework. Consider the following examples:

- For the past 15 years, the WQSB have based their strategic plans on a Knowledge Management model (KM) that has given them a principled foundation for achieving student success, delivery of instruction, and professional development.

- The SWLSB's goals allowed it to focus its budgeting on Complementary Services and technology for three consecutive years, allowing for continuity.

- About 12 years ago, the ETSB addressed a serious dropout problem by establishing four "pillars" that established objectives for all aspects of the school board's mission. These pillars were research-based, data-driven, and established intellectually challenging objectives based on a developmental approach.

- All school boards prioritize bilingualism and biliteracy from Kindergarten to Secondary V.

- Several boards have made elementary mathematics their focus and some have stressed early literacy, although they employ different strategies.

## Literacy strategies

In the EMSB, the province's largest English board, 80% of the schools, especially those in the inner city, have included literacy in their success plans, since student success, predictable from Grade 1, is based on the literacy competency. The EMSB created the position of a literacy consultant, who developed a board-wide, research-based proposal for balanced literacy. He works closely with other consultants, and aims to build capacity among the teachers to shift the culture over time. In 2014, after five years of implementation, 90% of the board's Grade 5 students had improved enough to be reading at or above grade level.

The Cree School Board found that in 2007-2008, only 25%-30% of Grade 6 students were reading at grade level and that the five-year graduation rate was about 10%. Commissioners made the goal of reading at level in the early years a priority and invested money from didactic funding, AANDC funding, and grants to address the problem, which was compounded by the fact that early literacy must include second-language strategies. They hired external professionals, provided extensive professional development, shared best practices, bought resources, employed extra coaching, and trained teachers to do regular literacy assessments. These interventions have improved reading levels in all the communities where they were carried out and have been credited with contributing to improved graduation rates.

## 2.3  Focus on achievement:

**There is a concentration on teaching and learning that provides intellectual challenges for all students and there are high expectations of students.**

Students need to be intellectually engaged and teachers must ask: Is the learning relevant? The SWLSB has responded to parents' requests about how they can help their children with mathematics by suggesting appropriate software for drill and practice. This frees up instructional time in class for the teacher to address higher order skills such as problem solving.

Both the ETSB and the Littoral Board have based their pedagogy on the SAMR[9] model since 2003. Expectations are high: "high learning for all" is the motto at the ETSB. This is achieved by differentiation, and teaching based on a developmental model. Littoral approaches student success and retention globally and collectively. In both school boards there is a focus on retention and the dropout rate is declining. The overall success rate in the Littoral School Board has increased to 85% and the board tracks the remaining students, who generally follow another path and stay in the system. "Very few fall through the cracks."

One interviewee suggested that a contributing factor in the differential success in the French and English systems might be the different ways that reading is taught, since literacy is such an important component of schoolwork. In the French sector, the emphasis is on decoding text, while in the English sector, the emphasis is on taking meaning from reading, a more challenging activity. This approach does not neglect the fact that students need appropriate vocabulary to understand subject matter and then answer questions on examinations. This has led to the EMSB's development of the Literacy in History project—a joint initiative by two consultants—starting in elementary school, in order to increase success in secondary school.

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[9]  See Québec, ABEE, *Québec Schools On Line: Opportunities for English-Language Education* (Montréal: ABEE, MELS, 2014), 28, for a representation of the model. http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/autres/organismes/CELA_Ecoles-queb-en-ligne_AN.pdf.

## Putting theory into practice

Schools use opportunities to incorporate experiential learning to increase the relevance of the curriculum for students. Lindsay Place High School runs a model United Nations for Secondary V students, eagerly anticipated from the time students enter Secondary I. Students participating in the model United Nations apply cross-curricular competencies, seeking and organizing information to integrate their knowledge of geography, history, writing and speaking into a public performance.

Mecatina School, the most remote school in the Littoral School Board, operates the GrEAU project. This started as a classroom science project, but although the teacher is no longer at the school, students have continued the project, which has evolved into a small business. They grow herbs, vegetables, and flowers in hydroponics greenhouses and sell them in a local store, serving the local need for fresh produce, and set up tasting sessions where they demonstrate recipes that use what they have grown.[10]

The Special Needs Activities (SNACS) program,[11] combining cooking classes, a small catering business, and social activities for students with special needs and their caregivers, is a collaboration of Quebec High School, Jeffery Hale Community Partners, the CLC and the MSSS. The student coffee shop enables young teens with learning disabilities or behaviour problems to take part in a job-market training program in a genuine workplace. The students gain hands-on experience and put into practice the concepts learned in class.

CASA has helped fund a novel activity at New Carlisle High School. Observing that some students were unfamiliar with, or even afraid of the water, even though they lived close to the sea, one of the teachers took them to a nearby Écovoile sailing school. The response was so enthusiastic that he decided to build a boat with them, using a "Mirror" sailboat kit. "The Build" has become a popular activity with upper elementary boys and girls who are learning the curriculum in a practical way.[12]  Their teacher, who has basic carpentry skills, is modelling lifelong learning with the students and demonstrating an ability to take risks and learn from mistakes. When it is finished, the students will take a course to learn how to sail their boat and there are already plans to build a second one.

[10] http://www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/Local+Shows/Quebec/Quebec+AM/ID/2668347501/. http://greau.weebly.com/
[11] http://www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/Local+Shows/Quebec/Quebec+AM/ID/2660283964/
[12] http://cwf-fcf.org/assets/pdf/TheGaspeSpec_Damian.pdf

## 2.4   Shared leadership:

**The principal provides strong, purposeful instructional leadership, but leadership is distributed across all levels. There may be more than one style of management and the organization has clear, simple structures and a flatter chain of command. Teachers are involved in decision-making, and a climate of respect is evident among all participants.**

*. . . English-language schools, with the historical need to deal with diversity, have always been more flexible, have dealt with change less rigidly and more quickly, have been more independent of authority, and have encouraged the involvement of parents as volunteers and participants in school life.*[13]

The English school system functions at a grassroots level with local institutions developing initiatives that are then shared and distributed within and across systems. The school board hierarchy is flatter, and at the school level, the principal is less likely to be authoritarian and more likely to lead by consensus. English school principals in Québec who were surveyed by the Canadian Association of Principals requested "more partnerships with local organizations, and less bureaucracy to access and use these supports."[14]

From one school board we heard: "Any initiative undertaken by the Board needs buy-in from everybody, so the focus is at the level of the teacher, sustained by the principal's leadership and by school board personnel." From another: "Within the Board, the hierarchy has been replaced with creative problem solving. There is great collaboration and sharing of information." And from a third (admittedly one of the smaller boards): "Anybody can pick up the phone and call the DG."

English-language schools stress pedagogical leadership among principals and teachers, recognizing that there is expertise within the school. Yet they also stress the need for leadership at the school board level, and for consultants to work as team members with in-school personnel. The school board's financial help was acknowledged, as was its openness to applying different approaches. At the ESSB, "Silos have been broken down by holding cross-department meetings at the board level, combining initiatives developed by the board and by teachers, with support from consultants and directors."

Finally, it became clear that  "Schools and boards try to avoid red tape and work to keep things simple."

[13] Québec, ABEE, *Educating Today's Québec Anglophone* (Montréal: ABEE, MELS, 2010), 12 http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/autres/organismes/CELA_Ecoles-queb-en-ligne_ AN.pdf.

[14] Canadian Association of Principals and the Alberta Teachers' Association, *The future of the principalship in Canada: A National Research Study* (Edmonton: Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014), 54 http://www. teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Research/The%20Future%20of%20the%20Principalship%20in%20Canada.pdf.

# 3.0   Student-focused education

## 3.1   Concern for students' overall well-being

Several school boards stressed the importance of an adult role model for students and described strategies for ensuring that "every child has a significant adult." Interviewees spoke of the closeness between teachers and students, including, but going beyond, classroom interactions. They acknowledged teachers who understand the importance of addressing the affective domain to make a positive difference in students' lives and therefore in their learning. In some schools, teachers greet students as they get off the bus in the morning because "You don't know what they've left behind at home when they got on the bus." Secondary homeroom teachers keep in touch with students throughout the year. In underprivileged regions, children are vulnerable when they enter school. In the Littoral School Board, each child at risk is assigned a "significant adult," and the dropout rate has decreased from 39% in 2005 to 19.2% in 2013.

*It has long been known that a correlation exists between sports excellence (or participation in other types of specialty or extra-curricular programs) and student retention. This implies the need for a wide range of communities within the school and support for extracurricular activities.*[15]

*Teachers are key players in running extracurricular activities. The lack of physical activity in the curriculum is compounded by the decrease in extracurricular activities such as inter- and intramural sports that were often a lure to keep students in school until the end of the day. Board members have experience of the powerful impact of extracurricular activities on student interest and commend the schools and teachers who are dedicated to these activities. Extracurricular activities allow teachers and students to see each other in different spheres and help develop a community around the student.*[16]

Teachers routinely give much time for extracurricular activities, helping to develop closer relationships with students and an improved classroom climate. Examples of extracurricular involvement named by interviewees are too numerous to list. Two that relate most closely to the curriculum are robotics contests that engage students in problem-solving, electronics, carpentry, modelling, and scriptwriting and video production, or "Battle of the Books," that encourages Secondary Cycle One and elementary school children to read in English and in French

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[15] ABEE, *Fostering Student Success,* 12 http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/publications/MELS_MemoireMinistre2011_ANG.pdf.
[16] Ibid, 11

Table 3.  Integration rate of students with handicaps or behavioural problems or learning disabilities into regular classes in the public education system by administrative region and language of instruction.

| 2013-2014 | | |
|---|---|---|
| | French (%) | English (%) |
| Abitibi-Témiscamingue | 75.3 | 94.2 |
| Bas-Saint-Laurent | 77.6 | 95.5 |
| Capitale-Nationale | 71.7 | 92.7 |
| Centre-du-Québec | 77.4 | 100.0 |
| Chaudière-Appalaches | 70.5 | 76.2 |
| Côte-Nord | 68.9 | 97.5 |
| Estrie | 72.5 | 82.9 |
| Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine | 79.4 | 87.2 |
| Lanaudière | 69.6 | 93.8 |
| Laurentides | 67.6 | 92.4 |
| Laval | 65.6 | 83.3 |
| Mauricie | 69.9 | 100.0 |
| Montérégie | 65.6 | 89.7 |
| Montréal | 63.8 | 88.8 |
| Nord-du-Québec | 88.0 | 95.9 |
| Outaouais | 75.8 | 89.4 |
| Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean | 70.8 | 100.0 |
| Total for the public education system | 68.9 | 88.8 |

## 3.2   Inclusion

English-language school boards have long included students with special needs in the mainstream classroom. As the Advisory Board wrote in 2011:

*On the one hand, there are deeply held philosophical reasons for integration, but on the other hand, in small schools, it is a necessity to have all children in the same class. Unfortunately, this is often done without adequate support.[17]*

It should be noted that these same students appear in the retention tables and examination results for each of the English school boards. Some students qualify through the WOTP and the English school boards are justifiably proud of their Complementary Services.

One clue to the reason for the students' success may be the philosophy of differentiation that is prevalent in English schools.

*Strategies for children with special needs must be based on the needs of each child. While a provincial policy is useful in broad terms, it will encourage a tendency to consider all children with special needs as an entity. One size does not fit all, and there must be room for accommodation of individual differences as well as for local variation. Differentiated instruction must be encouraged and teachers provided with appropriately adapted materials.[18]*

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[17] ABEE, *Fostering Student Success,* 3 http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/publications/MELS_MemoireMinistre2011_ANG.pdf.
[18] ABEE letter to Line Beauchamp.

## 3.3   Differentiation

The key question asked by teachers and administrators is: How do we create classrooms where all students experience success? The answer is to identify students' learning needs, then differentiate the instruction to meet these individual needs. This philosophy is often played out pragmatically as teachers of multi-level classes and with workloads of several subjects must diversify their teaching. Instruction is commonly based on a developmental approach, understanding students and how they develop, choosing appropriate pathways, or developing special programs to meet the needs of every child, and advising parents on all options.

In the WQSB, students are supported in a variety of ways: at the school level, students set targets that are monitored and checked after 6-8 weeks; they meet with a key adult for 20 minutes each week; programs are developed locally, such as a sports and leisure program for Secondary IV and V and a welding program, both of which are intended to increase student engagement and retention; students entering vocational training are interviewed to ensure they have chosen the appropriate program. All these initiatives are supported at the school board level with extra resources if they are needed.

The EMSB is an example of a school board that runs additional tutorials after school and on Saturdays. These are expensive, but the results are worthwhile. In some areas, parents pay part of the cost, or a principal may use a discretionary fund, or teachers may do it voluntarily "because they genuinely care." The responsibility is placed on the student to attend.

In the CQSB, St. Patrick's School has a program called PROFILES that offers every student the opportunity to follow particular interests and develop camaraderie with peers by choosing among a series of electives, such as hockey, football, art, dance, and languages. St. Vincent Elementary School uses the communication approach SACCADE for children on the autism spectrum, with support from the Jeffery Hale Foundation.

### Building on interest to increase motivation

The EMSB's Outreach schools realized that their students were not interested in the provincial history program. Teachers decided to start the year with a local neighbourhood history project based on a survey of what they were interested in (e.g. Little Italy in the east end of Montréal, the Lachine Canal in the southwest, neighbourhood history in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and Little Burgundy) and incorporating some of the content and skills needed for the program. Increased student interest led to increased motivation that was sustained all year. Grades improved in most of these Outreach schools, and anecdotally, there was greater interest in history.

At the EMSB, the success rate on the history examination has improved from 2012 to 2014 by 10% whether the students wrote the examination in English or in French. The overall success rate in some schools increased by 30% to 60%. Much of the credit for this is given to the process of "Response to Intervention," (RTI) where test results are examined, and additional support, matched to the needs of the student, is put into place.

## Giving direction to the drifter

Normally, students must have achieved the required academic levels in English, French and Mathematics before being allowed to enter a vocational trade program. The Kahnawà:ke Economic Development Commission, Tewatohnhi'saktha, or TEWA, identified 25 students between 16 and 42 years old who did not meet these criteria, were receiving social assistance, and who had little confidence in their future. Recognizing that these students fitted the archetype of risk-takers, explorers, and adventurers who have problems with authority, the NFSB developed a special schedule consisting of academics in the morning and courses in carpentry, welding, plumbing or electricity in the afternoons, for a total of 250 hours of trade coursework. After a delay in receiving ministerial approval, the program graduated 15 out of 20 students (75%) in its first year of existence. Only three students remained undecided about their future plans and each of the participants who chose to enter a full-time trade certification program made their choice based on their experience in this project, increasing the chance of their ultimate success.

Strong adult education programs are helping to enable success for some students and vocational training provides alternatives for students who need a different avenue than CEGEP. In an effort to ensure that students have chosen the appropriate vocational program, the WQSB is an example of a school board that has advisors who meet with potential students before they enter a given program and check with them periodically as they work their way through the program.

## 3.4   Student rights and responsibilities:

**Students in effective schools have high self-esteem. Students are given positions of responsibility and, where possible, control of their work. They are involved in school life and their contribution to learning and other aspects of the school is valued.**

To give students a sense of belonging, and to increase the possibility that they will find a niche they can identify with, the RSB has implemented a number of initiatives. There are a middle school program for a selected group of students and a small group of teachers in one school, an IB program starting in the middle years in two schools, and an arts focus and a sports excellence program in another school.

Most school boards run leadership programs for their Secondary IV and V students and participate in annual cross-Canada leadership conferences. Senior students may be included as observers with speaking rights on their boards of commissioners, giving them lessons in democracy that are relevant to them along with positions of responsibility.

It appears that students in English-language schools express pride in their schools and their association with the school. This may be the result of involvement in extra-curricular activities and the feeling of closeness this engenders towards the school and the adults in it, or it might satisfy their need to identify with their own minority language community. In contrast, French-language students appear to have less need of school involvement, since they can find activities in their own language in the community. It is certainly true that engagement with school is a predictor of student retention and success.

## 3.5   Effective classroom management:

**Classroom atmosphere is orderly and firm, and discipline is clear and appropriate. Students are given positive reinforcement and feedback.**

Several school boards have adopted classroom management systems based on self-regulation, rather than relying solely on punitive methods. They use approaches such as the ALERT[19] program that has special tools for children, including "fidget chains," special pencils, and strategies such as allowing time to ride stationary bicycles, and pulling children out of a group for a short period and placing them in a calm location. All these methods divert children from disruptive behavior that interferes with their—and others'—learning and teach students life-long skills in self-regulation. Some school boards use the "Tribes Learning Communities" strategies to build a classroom community in adult education and vocational training centres as well as in elementary and secondary schools.

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[19] M. S. Williams et S. Shellenberger, *How Does Your Engine Run? A Leader's Guide to the Alert Program for Self-Regulation* (Albuquerque, NM: Therapy Works, 1996).

# 4.0   Managing change

## 4.1   Innovation:

**Effective schools can identify and solve problems and manage change and development. They are willing to experiment and to take risks.**

English school boards generally demonstrate a progressive culture of creativity, resourcefulness and networking, sometimes born out of necessity: English schools have had to adapt, catch up and change under duress, but they have been proved to be generally successful and the development of local initiatives to meet the needs of the local situation is encouraged and supported.

The willingness to experiment is supported by the wide availability of resources, whether educational literature or exemplary educators from the *anglophonie*, and most of the pedagogical initiatives employed by the English-language school boards and schools are research-based. Researchers who have recently influenced the work conducted at many of the English-language school boards include:

- Rick and Rebecca Dufour (professional learning communities) http://www.allthingsplc.info/

- John Hattie (meta-analysis of educational effects) http://visible-learning.org/john-hattie/

- Robert Marzano (providing effective feedback to students) http://www.marzanoresearch.com/robert-j-marzano

- Regalena Melrose (self-regulation and success) http://www.drmelrose.com

- Anthony Muhammad (school culture, parent & community involvement) http://newfrontier21.com

- Gordon Neufeld (attachment-based developmental approach) http://neufeldinstitute.com

- Ruben Puentedura (SAMR model for technological levels of use) http://www.hippasus.com/rrpweblog/archives/2014/06/29/LearningTechnologySAMRModel.pdf

- Douglas Reeves (standards-based assessment) http://www.schoolimprovement.com

- Judy Willis (using neuroscience to inform educational practice) http://www.radteach.com

All school boards have taken advantage of the writings of these and other authors to inform their philosophies and their subsequent practice. Some have used money from grants to visit other schools where the theories are being enacted, or even visit the authors themselves, and LCEEQ has been instrumental in inviting key researchers to its conferences. For example, in February 2015, nearly 1000 teachers, administrators, and consultants attended LCEEQ's annual conference, where John Hattie was the keynote speaker.

Sometimes the school board's ingenuity is applied to raising funds to maintain or supplement what it already has in place. Although respondents told us that they regret the time spent on entrepreneurship rather than pedagogy, budget contractions in recent years have led school board administrators to develop a variety of initiatives to bring in extra funding. Teachers are encouraged to apply for Killingbeck,[20] PDIG, or Success grants to answer particular needs in their schools and to experiment with innovative methods that address the needs of their students or reinforce the strengths of these students. It is not coincidental that grants available to teachers to improve student achievement are called PDIG, short for Professional Development and Innovation Grants (emphasis added). A school board that had no funding to support a physical education consultant has partnered with *Québec en forme* to bring the necessary expertise to its students. Most English school boards have attracted international students to their youth or vocational programs that produce benefits far beyond the financial boost to the school board.

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[20] Recipients of Killingbeck grants are required to produce a descriptive video that others can access. See, for example, https://lceeq.ca/en/project-summaries/school-success-rural-schools.

## International initiatives

In the summer of 2003, the LBPSB allocated start-up funds for an international program to bring foreign students to Québec. This has grown to be self-financed and to employ more than 40 people and produce a source of revenue that has benefitted the school board as a whole. The province also benefits financially from the students who live here, their families who visit, the 90% who stay in the province, many in higher education, and those who later immigrate. Other school boards have also attracted students from other countries, such as China, Korea, Japan and India.

These financial benefits are clear, but there are other benefits. International programs now include teacher exchanges, short-term and long-term programs, ESL and FSL courses, vocational training, partnerships with CEGEPs, teacher education programs in partnership with the British Council, and a pre-K trilingual program in English and French with Mandarin, Italian or Spanish, licensed by the Ministère de la Famille and financed by parents. Through these initiatives, local children and teachers are exposed to cultures from countries such as China, India or Korea and foreign students learn about life in Canada, so that both sets of students are exposed to globalization at a young age.

## 4.2   Flexibility

The English minority in Québec has always been solution-oriented, rather than being simply problem identifiers. These characteristics allow for the flexibility needed by the smaller, more remote school boards to meet the needs of their clientele. There are great differences among the communities that make up the English school boards, given the considerable distances and historical backgrounds among them, but even in larger, metropolitan school boards, each constituent community has its own discrete features. The English language school boards have recognized this and one of the Advisory Board's guests noted some years ago that: "we are culturally less hidebound by the rulebook."

# 5.0   Collecting and using information

## 5.1   Monitoring student progress:

**Student progress is monitored and school performance is evaluated routinely. Student achievement test data are used as the seed for enquiry and reflection by staff to improve performance.**

"We are really starting to see how data can be used to improve our results. Accountability has made everyone responsible. We look at data as providing a way to improve. How can we change our methods?" "Otherwise it's just a shot in the dark."

Most of the school boards' representatives told us enthusiastically about their use of data to make decisions about teaching. They have embraced the development of MESAs, rather than seeing them as an imposition, and were using them to refine their strategic plans and to develop results-based management. Yet, as one respondent stressed, "It's not always about the data and the curriculum, it's about the child."

School boards use a variety of data sources to give as much information as possible about the student. The school boards have invested in these processes, and teachers have applied for grants, to develop school data teams. Communication between teachers at different grade levels is achieved in multi-level marking centres, where teachers of different grades mark the same examination and see how their pedagogy aligns with that of teachers of the grades before and after theirs.

Lumix allows a fine-grained analysis of test data to identify the objectives that the student may find difficult. The data allow for reflection on practice, and for the alignment of all the systems involved. Unfortunately, some school boards cannot afford Lumix.

Ministry end-of-cycle tests allow planning for teaching students in subsequent years. Examinations are subjected to an item analysis and used as formative data to help teachers modify their practice. The report is sorted by teacher, school, topic, question, etc., so teachers receive fine-grained information. These hard data provide evidence to start a discussion with teachers when they meet with consultants and each other in follow-up meetings.

The Evidence-Based Practice Project (EBP) provides professional development, tools, and other resources to school boards, administrators and consultants to support PLCs and data teams in schools. Assessment data are used reflectively and decisions are evidence-based and focused on improving student success through the examination of data ("Data are used as a flashlight.") and research-based practice.

Response to Intervention is a data-based process based on an iterative method of testing, teacher reflection, remediation, and retesting for individual students in need.

Surveys such as "Tell them from me" give valuable data in the affective domain regarding attitudinal and social information and healthy living.

Students often encounter difficulties during transitions between levels in the school system. Transition meetings are held between elementary and secondary schools, and school boards have instituted marking centres for examinations. For example, Grade 6 examinations are marked by Grade 5 and Secondary I teachers to give them a sense of the Grade 6 program and its students. At a different level, the transition between the youth and adult sectors is monitored, several school boards having hired a transition counsellor who counsels the students and often visits their homes to meet and support their families. Several respondents mentioned the SARCA agent who calls all students known to have dropped out of school before graduation and continues to monitor them.

## 5.2 Early intervention:

**Potential secondary school dropouts are identifiable in early elementary school and the need for early intervention has long been recognized as an important factor in preventing students from dropping out of secondary school.[21]**

Kindergarten children are screened in the presence of their parents and immediately receive remediation if they exhibit indicators of potential problems.

Schools use a variety of strategies to address problems experienced by elementary school students that might affect their performance in secondary school. The EMSB has established resources and workshops to address content (themes) and skills (document interpretation, literacy) as early as Grade 3 to help increase success in secondary school history. In all the school boards, potential dropouts are identified as early as possible in secondary school by guidance counsellors, and measures are put in place to support them.

The WQSB used the MEESR measure 30109 to support special services for Aboriginal students, who constitute 70% of the student population of some of their schools. This may be used for professional development, extra teacher time for monitoring students or the development of indigenous pedagogy.

The problem of students leaving after Secondary III was addressed in the ESSB by finding a budget for a full-time resource coordinator, working with parents to develop IEPs, co-operating with community resources such as Family Ties and CASA, and transitioning students to appropriate adult education programs. Some students attend school for French, English and mathematics courses, combined with carpentry and other skills in the adult education centre. This was supplemented by exposing Grade 3 and 4 students to job fairs to start cultivating interest and demonstrating a purpose to attending school.

SARCA tracks early school leavers, partly through social media and partly when "the man from SARCA knocks at their door."

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[21] K. L. Alexander, D. R. Entwistle, and C. Horsey, "From First Grade Forward: Early Foundations of High School Dropout," *Sociology of Education* 70 (1997): 87-107.
R. Balfanz and L. Herzog, "Keeping Middle Grades Students on Track to Graduation: Initial Analysis and Implications," presentation given at the second Regional Middle Grades Symposium, Philadelphia, PA, March 2005.

# 6.0   Partnerships with outside agents

## 6.1   Parental involvement

### "Education is a core value in our system."

According to Lezotte,[22] effective schools go beyond purely academic matters when it comes to bridging home and school. In the most effective relationship between home and school, parents and other community agencies work together to address problems that are not uniquely school-based, says Lezotte. Drug use, bullying, and gang activity "are all serious problems where the school can contribute to the solution, but the school can't solve them alone." In an ideal situation, the community as a whole works as a team to tackle these issues and create a better environment for learning, and a better society.[23]

Strong parental involvement is a characteristic of English schools and the parent-school partnership goes beyond mandated structures. On a large scale, the QFHSA and EPCA represent parents at a provincial level and are closely involved in the operation of individual schools. At the school level, parents are welcomed into the school and support the school's mission by volunteering their services in a variety of ways, so that they are partners in and supporters of their children's education. In one school board, parents stage a Comedy Night to raise money for particular projects, such as a games room that helped address bullying, and a computer music laboratory. In another, there is one parent volunteer for every four students. The QFHSA produces three newsletters a year highlighting the activities of the parent groups in its member schools, and organizes two conferences each year that include workshops for parents.

Opportunities are taken to make connections between school and home, for example, by inviting parents to school functions and suppers, or using technology such as Edmodo. The common report card has been criticized by several school boards and has been supplemented by student portfolios and parent meetings so that parents are more involved in their children's learning.

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[22] *http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_What_Makes_School/*
[23] Ibid

## 6.2   Community involvement:

**Society's values greatly influence how students engage with their own education. Effective schools are rooted in the community, and have positive relationships with the community.**

Given the isolation of many of the English school boards, it is important for them to establish good relationships with other agencies in the surrounding community, for expediency and to benefit from shared resources. The word "partnership" was common in interviews, whether with other school boards, both English and French, the universities, with reference to *Chantier 7,*[24] or with CSSSs and other community groups. The NFSB spoke for some of the other school boards when they said: "It's hard to compartmentalize what we're doing any more. The ethos of partnership permeates the school board's activities." Education is seen as a collective responsibility, and at least one school board identified itself as "a community-based board."

Emphasis has been placed on attending regional committees that include French-language school boards so that the English voice is heard. For example, in the ESSB, the speech therapist is shared with the local French school board and with the local Aboriginal schools. There has been an improved response from the CSSS and busing is shared with the French-language school board. A French-language consultant works with students and parents of the school board, and also helps on the nearby reserves with Aboriginal students.

There is a strong network of cooperation among English-language school boards, helped by organizations such as ACES, PROCEDE, LCEEQ, and DEEN and its subject-specific sub-committees. The Directors' General established SYNERGY as a sub-committee to bring together the directors of educational services and of information technologies of the English school boards to provide leadership and vision in educational technology. The committee shares innovative educational practices in ICT to improve student success. The sharing of expertise is further enhanced by other groups, such as the EBP, ASSET, ALDI, and the Centres of Excellence, mandated to offer relevant, timely and targeted professional development and support for teachers and administrators. LEARN, too, plays a major role by providing a wide array of resources and support.

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[24] "This program aims to support universities in the design, deployment and evaluation of training projects carried out in partnership with schools. A two- or three-year allocation may be made to a maximum amount of $100, 000 per project." [Translation] http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/professionnels/formation-continue/programme-de-soutien-a-la-formation-continue-du-personnel-scolaire/.

## 6.3   Community input

The Gaspé's Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA) <http://www.casa-gaspe.com/casa-gaspe.html> works with local schools to give students a sense of belonging to the region and to encourage perseverance in school and retention in the local community. It provides representation and networking opportunities, and searches for funding for educational initiatives and support. This is an ongoing struggle as funding sources disappear and because of the constant effort to obtain equitable funding when provincial grants are shared among English and French organizations.

To help address the high attrition rate among WOTP students, CASA partnered with the Eastern Shores School Board, Emploi-Québec, Commission Jeunesse, the former Conférence régionale des élus, school principals and teachers. When the initiative started, fewer than 10 local employers accepted WOTP students for placements, and these placements often did not match the students' interests or needs. CASA approached local employers with the opportunity to offer an extended internship, a workplace visit, mentoring, or a visit to speak to students in the school, according to their abilities to contribute. There are now 74 local employers involved and the dropout rate among WOTP students has fallen from 11 students in 2013-2014 to zero in 2014-2015.

CASA is one of the partners with McGill University in administering bursaries to health and social services students who will return to the Gaspé on graduation. Future plans include an action plan for 0- to 5-year-olds, knowing that early intervention is a key factor in student perseverance and success.

One of the requirements for partnerships to develop is a sense of trust among all the constituents. This culture does not occur spontaneously, but when it is present, it is clear that everyone benefits.

One of the products—and creators—of this trust is the Community Learning Centre (CLC).[25] CLCs are a unique construct of the English sector, with great variation in the model depending on the needs of the local community. About half of CLCs are in NANS schools, 12% of the population of CLC schools is Aboriginal, and two CLCs are in Adult Education Centres. There is evidence from a recent study of CLCs[26] of a correlation between the presence of a CLC and both increased enrollment and a change in school culture.

CLCs are a location where the community is invested in the education of students. The school is open to the community and, in the absence of other organizations, is the hub of the community.

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[25] The Advisory Board has previously written about CLCs and described two examples. See Québec, ABEE, *One Size Does Not Fit All: Distinct Solutions for Distinct Needs* (Montréal: ABEE, MELS, 2013), 25-26 http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/autres/organismes/CELA_onesize_A.pdf.

[26] H. Maynard, *The Quest for sustainability and best practices. Summary results of the evaluation of the Community Learning Centers initiative in Québec.* (Presentation to ABEE, March 27, 2015)

## Huntingdon CLC

NFSB schools have always been community schools, but the CLCs have given them credibility with other partners and are embedded in the mission of the schools and centres. Seniors teach children to read, secondary students volunteer with homework help. Huntingdon is the most impoverished area in the province, with no new industry or training initiative since a mill closure in 2003. The most pressing question for the area was "How can we fight poverty?" The school board, CSSS, re-adaptation centre, and pre-school group combined in the CLC to set up conditions that would develop an autonomous community. These included classes in cooking, gardening, educational upgrading, physical education, classes for adults with special needs and spaghetti suppers. Community evenings provide a form of trade show for local organizations to promote what they do and involve local French schools.

The CLCs rely on their partnerships with the community, on the openness and support of the principal and school board administration, and especially on the closeness of the teachers to their students. There is little emphasis on top down structures and in the words of a coordinator, "We do what needs to be done."

The existence of CLCs, depending as they do on funding from the EQC and the host school board is tenuous and fragile. The components of sustainability are stability of funding, reciprocal partnerships with community organizations and community involvement, teacher engagement and parent involvement.

## New Carlisle CLC

The New Carlisle CLC is housed in a school of 163 pre-K – Secondary V students and is geared towards giving elementary school students the opportunity for enrichment activities, based on their surveyed interests. These have included Tae Kwon Do, cooking, Hip Hop, art, development of fine motor skills through activities such as Lego and juggling, winter survival camp, summer camp, singing, drama, soccer, basketball and gardening. Next year, the focus will shift to activities closer to supporting the curriculum.

The benefits of the CLC go beyond the support given to the elementary students. High school students are hired to animate the programs on a part volunteer, part paid basis. Seniors in the community can buy frozen dinners cooked, assembled, and packed by the students. There is a gymnasium, equipped with treadmills, weight machines, and other exercise equipment that was bought with funds raised by CASA and available to the students and community seven days a week with trained supervision available. Courses on such things as managing homework, child raising and making a will are available to parents via video-conferencing, and parents are more likely to come to the school. Parents who were more used to telephone calls from the school about disciplinary issues now hear positive messages, or requests from their children for permission to stay after school for an activity. Student engagement and involvement in school have increased, retention in school has increased, and poor behavior and bullying have decreased.

# 7.0   Effectively deployed resources

English school boards are more fiscally efficient than French school boards, as described in the Board's 2013 brief:

*The Indicateurs de gestion (management indicators) show that both English and French school boards were more fiscally responsible than health and municipal authorities. Even so, English school boards spent less on school board personnel than French school boards and in spite of extra costs, such as immersion programs, the cost of educating a student in an English school board is economical. As one example, the Indicateurs de gestion for 2008-2009, showed that the cost per student in the Central Québec School Board (CQSB) was $7 758, compared with an average of $8 005 per student for the 14 French boards that operate in the same territory as the CQSB and which could be assumed to have comparable operating expenses, and that the CQSB expenditure was at the median value for all 15 boards.*[27]

English school boards have found creative ways of using their budgets to be able to provide dual programming in immersion schools and support for students with special needs who are integrated into the regular classroom. A recent letter from the president of the LCEEQ to the Minister eloquently describes this situation.[28] Within the scope of the budgetary rules, they reallocate budgets internally to be able to provide such student support as transition consultants, an expense that helps with student retention, but which is not identified in staffing norms.

In view of ongoing budgetary cutbacks, school boards are looking for alternative sources of funding to support their missions, such as accommodating international students described earlier, in section 4.1. All English school boards take advantage of a unique and extensive support network provided by groups such as ALDI, CARE, and the Centres of Excellence, where money has been invested to provide the greatest benefit to the largest number of schools and students. While these groups serve all school boards, they are of particular benefit to small, remote boards where there is not the same access to human resources, and large boards can share projects with their colleagues in the regions. There are initiatives within the Ministère de l'Éducation, de l'Enseignement et de la Recherche: the CQSB cited the benefit it has received from the DSCA's Success Project, where MEESR monies are used to try to improve the success rates on those MEESR examinations where students in English schools do more poorly than those in French schools. Fifteen of 17 schools in the ESSB are classified as NANS schools, where NANS funding is used specifically to meet student needs.

Recognizing that the incorporation of ICT into the classroom has a positive impact on student engagement, and correspondingly on achievement,[29] school boards and schools have been resourceful in finding money to support initiatives in the introduction of technology from internal budgets, foundations, and fund-raising activities in schools. Over the past 10-15 years, school boards have stressed the pedagogical use of technology, some boards moving towards 1-1 technology with tablets, laptops, and "Bring-your-own-device" initiatives. They have invested in WiFi, and installed interactive whiteboards at their own cost before being required to. Pedagogy has always been the driver, and student success the goal. In one school, the adoption of Chromebooks has been associated with reduced absenteeism, an increase in students' writing, and improved student self-esteem. In-school technology has been instrumental in promoting student engagement. It is supported by RÉCIT, although it is difficult for remote school boards to have access to a RÉCIT consultant in a timely way.

Many of the initiatives developed by the English-language schools and school boards would be impossible without funding through the Canada-Québec Agreement. Often described pejoratively as "top-up funding," these funds serve to compensate the English system for the extra cost of producing materials in English and the cost of parallel professional development, and compare with the amounts given to minority-language education in the other provinces. One of the key partners in the development of materials and the support for schools, students, and teachers is LEARN, whose mission closely reflects the culture that permeates the English school system.

[27] ABEE, *One Size Does Not Fit All,* 28 http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/autres/organismes/CELA_onesize_A.pdf.
[28]   C. Finn, Letter to M. Blais, June 17, 2015.
[29] ABEE, *Québec Schools On Line.* http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/references/publications/results/detail/article/one-size-does-not-fit-all-distinct-solutions-for-distinct-needs-1/

# 8.0   Staff development

## 8.1   The school is a learning organization:

**Professional development is systematic, adapted to collective and individual needs, and often school based. Teachers engage in collective self-review around curriculum and pedagogy.**

The school boards told us consistently: "Professional development is the norm," "There is a culture of professional development in the board," "The induction of new teachers and professional development are given great importance," "The impact of professional development is enormous." All school boards invest heavily in professional development because they recognize its value in effecting change in the classroom.

The delivery and type of professional development varies across school boards. They all include workshops on specific topics to groups of teachers, but in general, they are targeted to teachers' needs, involve dialogue, networks, professional learning communities, and the development of teacher leaders. This builds capacity and is more effective than traditional one-shot workshops given to a group of teachers at the same time. Some involve teacher exchanges within and between schools, workshops given by successful teachers to their colleagues, *accompagnement* by senior colleagues or consultants. Technology is used extensively, especially in the regions, because of the expense of bringing teachers together at a central location. Professional development in the Cree School Board is based on best practices and includes culturally relevant issues.

## 8.2   Targeted professional development

Some elementary school teachers in the EMSB were finding the problem-solving component of the mathematics program difficult to implement, preferring to teach the more familiar procedural and computational content. Students found problem solving difficult, starting with difficulty in reading for meaning—many inner city students speak three languages.

The mathematics consultant teamed with the literacy consultant to develop an Early Numeracy Initiative (ENI) as a pilot project with Cycle Three teachers in three inner city schools. It comprises ongoing and targeted professional development, in workshops and weekly visits, results-based interventions, continued implementation of the QEP, support at all levels, and fostering teacher buy-in. The EMSB is supporting the ENI and is financing the release of teachers to attend workshops. However, the support of the board is more than financial; there is crucial philosophical support as well.

Some teachers are adopting new approaches in their classrooms, though there still remain "resisters". Teachers are becoming more reflective about their practice, asking: What can I do to better to impact student achievement? What new strategies can I try? Since teachers listen to other teachers, the consultant is trying to encourage teacher mentors, especially from the inner city schools. "If you prove you can be successful in an inner city school, there is no excuse for other schools." Change takes time and patience, and he estimates that the ENI will take four years to implement fully.

## Professional Learning Communities

A professional learning community (PLC) meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and student performance as a form of professional development. PLCs may be based within a school around a particular topic or subject area, or across several schools within a school board, or, if physical PLCs are impossible, because of the distances between schools in rural boards, they may be virtual PLCs in cross-school data teams. PLCs are key innovations that provide a structure to make administrative and pedagogical decisions based on evidence and evaluation results.

One EMSB school established a PLC of history teachers. They did a fine-grained analysis of the final examination in history for 2013 and identified a topic that had proved difficult for the students. This became a focus for the next year and results for the topic were significantly improved in June 2014. There is anecdotal data that teachers in schools with PLCs work collaboratively, are not isolated, help each other, plan together, and share resources.

The leadership of principals was identified as key in professional development. Principals are best placed to identify the needs of their staff and to encourage them to take part in professional development activities. These activities primarily concern teachers, but may also include support staff and bus drivers, all of whom have contact and influence with students and contribute to the school community.

# 9.0   Suggestions for transfer

One of the questions interviewees were asked was: What advice would you give to another school or school board wishing to replicate your experience? There was no intention to suggest that the experiences described were unique to the interviewees' school boards, nor that their suggestions were not already in place elsewhere, but there seemed to be enough wisdom based in experience to be worth sharing. In the words of one Board member, "If parents are willing to send their children on a bus from Amqui to Metis Beach every day, the school must be doing something right."

Some of the suggestions, listed in the same sequence as the sections of this brief, were:

- Come together as a team of school board administrators, consultants, teachers, school administrators, teachers, and students to help each other and foster community. From this, establish a clear mission and a common policy, accepted at all levels of the board, based on a limited number of objectives and drawn from research and the professional literature.

- School culture does not change quickly, a fact recognized by many of our interviewees. "It takes 5-10 years to change a culture."

- Don't try to do everything at once. Choose one focus at a time, drawn from the mission, such as elementary mathematics, early reading skills, or differentiation, and work on it.

- Be aware of the local situation. Each school board has its own context, and schools within a board can have their own needs.

- Use data to determine where the needs are, then use the results to further the cause. In talking about student performance on tests, teachers are exposing themselves. It is vital that administrators or consultants build trust that data are for information, not to judge teacher performance. Asking teachers to meet and discuss student improvement cannot be an add-on outside school hours.

- At-risk students need constant monitoring and support inside and outside the classroom.

- Systematic early intervention is key to preventing students from dropping out. Additionally, at the secondary school level, they need to be guided towards options that meet their individual differences.

- Show a benefit of the change to teachers and students, "If they don't feel success, we're in trouble." There will always be resistance to changing any ingrained culture. Teachers need to believe in the change, so persuade teachers that an initiative is worthy of consideration and build capacity through collaboration.

- Give structural support and build in time, because teachers' work is intensified by new initiatives.

- Provide adequate and appropriate professional development. Include teachers as agents of change: "We call them professionals and then don't allow them to control their work." Bring local as well as external expertise to the task and share good practice.

- Develop professional learning communities that involve all staff and lead to developing new practices. The best PLCs have shared leadership, roles and working rules defined within the group.

- Use the skills and talents of parent volunteers in the school and value their contribution.

- Take advantage of the local community resources and demonstrate the benefit of cooperation to them.

# 10.0 Summary

It will have been clear from this brief and from our earlier submissions that our definition of "success" includes, but goes beyond, attainment of passing grades in provincial examinations. As we wrote in 2010:

*The Board quickly agreed that numerical data, although relatively easy to obtain, are a narrow measure of success and may even pervert the broader goals of education. The MELS policy on student success also implies a move towards result-based management. The Board questioned whether educators are spending too much time on assessment for the sake of collecting data, whether data collection is taking too much time away from teaching and learning, and whether this leads to good assessment. Too many evaluations result in less time for teaching and learning. The Board emphasizes the importance of assessment "for" learning taking precedence over assessment "of" learning in improving teaching and learning in the classroom.*[30]

*Success for the school system means that it provides children with access to the education they need in order to develop as individuals and to participate actively in Québec society or elsewhere.*[31]

While long-term successes such as these are harder to demonstrate and often impossible to measure, we believe it is important to avoid the trap of measuring what is easy to measure, rather than striving to measure what is important to measure. We believe that the intangibles, identified in the research and observed in our schools, are key to the development of functioning citizens. It may also be that they contribute to student attainment of the measurable successes. One research study summarized the intangibles as: "Learning, the love of learning; personal development and self-esteem; life skills; problem solving and learning how to learn; the development of independent thinkers and well-rounded, confident individuals, all rank as highly or more highly in the outcomes of effective schooling as success in a narrow range of academic disciplines."[32]

The attributes of successful schools identified in research (school culture, shared leadership, whole child approach in the classroom and beyond, inclusion, differentiation, relationships between teachers and students, parent and community involvement, flexibility, innovation, and resourcefulness) pervade all sections of this brief.

A common theme in all our interviews—and the source of this brief's title—was the focus on students as individuals. One respondent said—and most of them implied—"It's all about the students."

[30] ABEE, *Fostering Student Success,* 4 http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/publications/MELS_MemoireMinistre2011_ANG.pdf.
[31] Ibid, *3.*
[32] D. Reynolds, "School Effectiveness: The International Dimension," in *The International Handbook of School Effectiveness Research,* ed. C. Teddlie and D. Reynolds (London: Routledge Falmer, 2000), 22.

# *Glossary and Links*

- **AANDC** Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100010002/1100100010021

- **ABEE** Advisory Board on English Education http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/organismes-relevant-du-ministre/abee/

- **ACES** Administrators of Complementary Educational Services https://lceeq.ca/en/committee-list?level=All

- **ADGESBQ** Association of Directors General of English School Boards of Québec https://lceeq.ca/en/committee-list?level=All

- **ALDI** Advanced Learning in Differentiation and Inclusion. Develops expertise in differentiation and inclusion for school-based resource teams. http://blogs.learnquebec.ca/wordpress-mu/aldi/project-description/

- **ASSET** Assisting School Systems in Educational Transformation. Supports school boards and schools in achieving their goals for student success.

- **CARE** Committee for Assessment, Reporting and Evaluation https://lceeq.ca/en/committee-list?level=All

- **CASA** Committee for Anglophone Social Action. "CASA. . . is a non-profit community organization dedicated to serving the English-speaking population of the Gaspé Coast by representing the community's interests and designing and delivering programs that respond to its needs." http://www.casa-gaspe.com

- **CEGEP** Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (General and Vocational College)

- **CLC** Community Learning Centre. "CLCs are partnerships that provide a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of learners, their families, and the wider community. Their aim is to support the holistic development of citizens and communities." http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/content/clc

- **CQSB** Central Québec School Board http://www.cqsb.qc.ca

- **CSSS** Centres de santé et de services sociaux (Health and social services centres)

- **DEEN** Directors of English Education Network https://lceeq.ca/en/committee-list?level=All

- **DSCA** Direction des services à la communauté anglophone

- **DSID** Direction des statistiques et de l'information décisionnelle

- **EBP** Evidence-based Practice. The Evidence-based Practice Project is designed to support all Anglophone schools and school boards of the public sector in Québec. Its purpose is to build capacity by sharing and transferring exemplary practices through professional development, training and the development of resources.

- **Edmodo** Edmodo is an educational website for teachers that uses a social networking platform to manage their communications between their students and colleagues, and the parents. It facilitates, among other things, the sharing of content and ideas and access to homework and grades. https://www.edmodo.com

- **EMSB** English Montréal School Board http://www.emsb.qc.ca/

- **EPCA** English Parents' Committee Association https://www.facebook.com/EPCAQuebec

- **ESSB** Eastern Shores School Board https://www.essb.qc.ca

- **GRICS** Société de gestion du réseau informatiques des commissions scolaires http://grics.ca

- **KM** Knowledge Management. "Knowledge management (KM) is the process of capturing, developing, sharing, and effectively using organizational knowledge. It refers to a multi-disciplined approach to achieving organisational objectives by making the best use of knowledge." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge_management

- **LBPSB** Lester B. Pearson School Board http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca

- **LCEEQ** Leadership Committee for English Education in Québec. A collaborative professional learning community established for the purpose of promoting educational leadership in response to the needs of the English educational community https://lceeq.ca/en

- **LEARN** Leading English Education and Resource Network. LEARN "is a non-profit organization that primarily serves the public and private Anglophone, and Aboriginal, Youth and Adult Education sectors of Québec. We bring together the expertise and efforts of educators, students, parents and partners in our community to cultivate success for all learners." LEARN creates and provides access to quality learning resources; develops and supports innovative online and blended learning approaches; models and encourages the pedagogical use of information and communication technologies; initiates and supports opportunities for professional growth; fosters collaboration and sharing; communicates information in and about our community." http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/about/

- **LUMIX** "Lumix is a data warehouse that that aggregates and combines selected data drawn from operational systems. This function allows users to perform drill-down analyses and to generate relevant statistics concerning major performance indicators for a school board, an individual school or a center." http://grics.ca/en/feuillets/en_lumix.pdf

- **MESA** Management and Educational Success Agreement. Commitments made by the school board and the school/centre in order to achieve their mission of successfully instructing, qualifying and socializing students.

- **NANS** New Approaches, New Solutions http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/content/mels/success/

- **NFSB** New Frontiers School Board http://nfsb.qc.ca

- **PDIG** Professional Development and Innovation Grant http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/content/professional_development/pdig/

- **PLC** Professional Learning Community. "A professional learning community, or PLC, is a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students. The term is also applied to schools or teaching faculties that use small-group collaboration as a form of professional development." http://edglossary.org/professional-learning-community/

- **PROCEDE** Provincial Organization of Continuing Education Directors English https://lceeq.ca/en/committee-list?level=All

- **QFHSA** Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations. A federation of local Home and School Associations driven by one objective: to provide a caring and enriched educational experience for students. Members of Home and School Associations come from all sectors of society: working parents, stay-at-home parents, grandparents, education professionals, and other ordinary citizens with an interest in maintaining a high level of education in this province. Home and School Associations promote the involvement of parents, students, educators and families. http://www.qfhsa.org

- **RÉCIT** Réseau de personnes-ressources au développement des compétences par l'intégration des technologies de l'information et de la communication http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/content/recit

- **RSB** Riverside School Board http://www.rsb.qc.ca

- **RTI** Response to Intervention "Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning." http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what/whatisrti

- **SACCADE** Structure et Apprentissage Conceptuel Continu Adapté au Développement Évolutif http://www.saccade.ca/pdf/modele_saccade_low.pdf

- **SARCA** Services d'accueil, de référence, de conseil et d'accompagnement (Information on academic and career guidance for adult learners) http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/organismes-communautaires/organismes-communautaires/services-daccueil-de-reference-de-conseil-et-daccompagnement-sarca/

- **SIRT** School Improvement Resource Team. An initiative of the Association of Directors General of English School Boards of Québec, SIRT encompasses ALDI (Advanced Learning in Differentiation and Inclusion http://blogs.learnquebec.ca/wordpress-mu/aldi/project-description/) and ASSET (Assisting School Systems in Educational Transformation) and promotes and supervises innovative projects. Examples include Universal Design for Learning, ArtsSmarts Pilot Research Projects, and school board projects. ASSET and ALDI's respective mandates are to support school boards and schools in achieving their goals for success and to develop a knowledge base and expertise in differentiation and inclusion practices for resource teachers and school-based resource teams.

- **SNNAP** Special Needs Network of Anglophone Professionals https://lceeq.ca/en/committee-list/aces-sub-committee-–-special-needs-network-anglophone-professionals-snnap

- **SWLSB** Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board https://www.swlauriersb.qc.ca

- **TÉVA** Transition École Vie Active Transition From School To Independent Living

- **TIPSA** Provincial Interlevel Table for the English Sector (Table interordres provinciale du secteur anglophone) http://www.tipsa.org/our-mandate

- **TRIBES** "Tribes Learning Communities is a research-based process that creates a culture that maximizes learning and human development. Beyond lesson plans, bully proofing, conflict management, discipline and academic achievement, Tribes TLC offers collaborative skills, community agreements, meaningful participation, strategies for integrating curriculum, and professional development in elementary, middle and high school, leadership, afterschool youth development programs and administration." http://www.tribes.com

- **WOTP** The Work-Oriented Training Path enables young people with learning difficulties to pursue their studies through adapted instruction in different contexts, and to obtain certification through qualifying training, which prepares them for the job market. http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/work-oriented-training-path/

- **WQSB** Western Québec School Board http://cswq.wqsb.qc.ca

# *Interviewees for this brief*

- Gil Abisdris, Education Consultant, English Montréal School Board
- Ruth Ahern, Assistant Director General and Director of Secondary and Adult Learning, Western Québec School Board
- Tino Bordonaro, Education Consultant, English Montréal School Board
- Michael Chechile, Director of Educational Services, Lester B. Pearson School Board
- Deborah Foltin, Director of Educational Services, Littoral School Board
- Melanie Hayes-Dow, Data Consultant, Eastern Shores School Board
- Gail Kelso, Assistant Director, Complementary Educational Services, Eastern Townships School Board
- Paul Kettner, Literacy Consultant, English Montréal School Board
- Chad Leblanc, Education Consultant, English Montréal School Board
- Kandy Mackey, Assistant Director General and Director of Pedagogical Services, Eastern Townships School Board
- Carol Mastantuono, Director, International Studies, Lester B. Pearson School Board
- Bonnie Mitchell, Director of Continuing Education, New Frontiers School Board
- Kimberly Quinn, Director of School Operations, Cree School Board
- Lisa Rae, Assistant Director of Educational Services, Riverside School Board
- Mark Sutherland, Director of Instructional Services, Adult and Vocational Education, Central Québec School Board
- Stephanie Vucko, Director General, Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board

# *Individuals consulted for this brief*

- Anthony Beer, Teacher, New Carlisle High School
- Cathy Brown, Executive Director, CASA
- Tammy Chatterton, Director, New Carlisle and New Richmond CLCs
- Ivana Colatriano, Coordinator for English Schools, A Montreal School for All
- Julie Hobbs, Team Leader, ASSET
- Paule Langevin, Director, CLC Initiative
- Hugh Maynard, President, Qu'anglo Communications and Consulting
- Members of LCEEQ
- Carol Marriott, ASSET
- Andrea Prupas, ALDI

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