

**Advisory Board on English Education**  
**Brief to the**  
**Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports**

**SPECIAL EDUCATION:**  
**Issues of Inclusion and Integration in the Classroom**

**November 2006**

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### Introductory note

When the Advisory Board decided to examine the inclusion of special needs students, its members were not aware that this issue would become a major element in the 2005 collective bargaining involving the government, the school boards and the teachers' and professionals' unions. It was not the Advisory Board's intention to be seen as intervening in any manner in the ongoing process of negotiations.

While the Advisory Board met with guests occupying many different functions in the school system, the details of negotiations were never discussed at meetings and none of the guests were, to the knowledge of the Advisory Board, directly involved in the bargaining process.

The Advisory Board's deliberations took place before the adoption of *An Act respecting conditions of employment in the public sector* - Bill 142 (S.Q. 2005, Chapter 43).

**Special education:**  
**issues of inclusion and integration in the classroom**

In what could be described as a symbolic keynote address, Professor Roger Slee, Dean of McGill University's Faculty of Education, spoke to the Advisory Board on English Education about his experience as an education reformer in his native Australia where retention rates were poor and students were disengaging early. At the time, the most reliable predictors of failure in Australia were aboriginality and poverty.

He describes inclusion as a pedagogical attitude for retention: not a question of whether disabled students are sitting in class but whether students in general are engaged in learning.

Inclusion, according to Professor Slee, should be a combination of three components: access (getting the students back into the classroom), engagement, and success. It is not merely getting a number of "bums on seats"; more important is whether or not, while on those seats, students will be subjected to more of the same kind of education that tends to push them out of the classroom in the first place.

The first step towards avoiding successive repetitions of policies that have been proven unsuccessful is to elaborate a definition of "exclusion". What is it about the curriculum, the pedagogy and the organization of schools that raises barriers for many students? Recognition of exclusion begins with the identification of these roadblocks.

The identification of the various barriers to success leads to the development of an idea of inclusive schooling. Teacher education must incorporate this concept; it is now important to educate inclusive teachers.

The division of education into regular and special, both in schools and in education faculties, has been part of the problem, says Slee. Giving future teachers an awareness of issues of disability, culture, race and class requires education students to think about these concepts throughout their entire teacher-training program. It is the schools, not the students that should be labelled as "at risk"; these schools can be dangerous for students.

## **Inclusive schools: practices and challenges**

The question of how Québec's education system deals with students with handicaps, with social maladjustments and with learning disabilities has been a preoccupation since the 1980s, when educators, parents and student associations began to focus on issues of human rights and discrimination. Some English-language schools were already quite open to the inclusion and integration of students with special needs into regular classrooms. Since then, the principle of integration has become widely accepted, and there has been a steady growth in the implementation of various forms of desegregated classrooms, in some instances for all classroom activities, in others for only part.<sup>1</sup>

Putting this principle into practice, however, is becoming more complicated for school boards. The number of students identified as having special needs has risen significantly, while the resources for providing appropriate services have not kept pace. As a result, teachers feel that they are being left on their own to manage classrooms with relatively high percentages of students who have a variety of different special needs.

Even though classroom mainstreaming—having all but the most severely disabled students in the same classroom—has been part of the culture of English-language schooling in Québec for about two decades, many educators in the English-language school boards are now questioning the effectiveness of across-the-board integration. Some now view the “imposition” of inclusion as compounding the problems that teachers already face arising from the curriculum reform—an extensive operation in itself—for which school commissions and teachers feel unprepared and under-resourced.

While school boards traditionally focussed on code 14 students<sup>2</sup>—those with severe disorders (and the Advisory Board was told by its guests that in the French school boards the emphasis is still there)—the English boards have tended to assume a broad definition of their special needs students.

The Advisory Board was consistently told that physically disabled students are usually easier to work with than those with behavioural<sup>3</sup> or learning difficulties; often all that is required to enable physically disabled students is the adaptation of their physical surroundings. Such an operation may be costly and cause some inconvenience during construction, but once in place generally allows disabled students to succeed at the same pace as their peers.

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1. A recent Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) study on the success rates of mainstream and non-mainstream students:

*Classe ordinaire et cheminement particulier de formation temporaire - Analyse du cheminement scolaire des élèves en difficulté d'adaptation ou d'apprentissage à leur arrivée au secondaire* (in French only)  
<[http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/stat/recherche/doc06/EDAA\\_brochure\\_470990.pdf](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/stat/recherche/doc06/EDAA_brochure_470990.pdf)>

2. MELS list of codes: document #19-6505A (2000, under revision), posted at  
<<http://www.csdm.qc.ca/sassc/Script/Scripts/Codes.htm#Liste%20des%20codes>>  
*Students with Handicaps, Social Maladjustments or Learning Difficulties: Definitions*  
<<http://sass.uqac.ca/doc/definitionsa.pdf>>

3. *School and Behaviour: Intervention Strategies at the Secondary-school Level*  
<<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/soutienetacc/pdf/guide93e.pdf>>  
Also: <<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/soutienetacc/comportement.html>>

Students who are both intellectually handicapped and physically disabled present more complex challenges, such as how to find age-appropriate activities for them. Much attention is paid to meeting the students' academic needs,<sup>4</sup> but the satisfaction of their social needs has a significant influence on their academic progress.

Most students with physical or intellectual handicaps have been identified before they come to kindergarten. Others may be identified by the school or medical system after the start of school. If the resulting coding identifies a severe disability, the school receives additional funding for specific support services.

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4. *Conference on the success of students experiencing learning difficulties* (November 2003)

<<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/das/soutienetacc/ouvrirlesportes/pdf/programmeva.pdf>>

Texts presented at this conference (in French only):

<<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/das/soutienetacc/ouvrirlesportes/ateliers.htm>>

A study on academic performance of CEGEP students

<[http://www.cdc.qc.ca/pdf/729426\\_fichten\\_2003\\_PAREA.pdf](http://www.cdc.qc.ca/pdf/729426_fichten_2003_PAREA.pdf)>

## **Disabilities: education law and ministerial policy**

The legal landscape affecting handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities has evolved in recent years.<sup>5</sup> Relevant Québec<sup>6</sup> dispositions are found in the *Education Act*<sup>7</sup> and in its *Basic School Regulation*<sup>8</sup>, in the *Policy on Special Education*<sup>9</sup> and its *Action Plan*<sup>10</sup>, and in the policies that each school board is required to adopt and implement<sup>11</sup>. As well, the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* contains pertinent sections on discrimination<sup>13</sup> and applicable remedies.

Since 1997, section 235 of the *Education Act* reads as follows:

Handicapped students Every school board shall adopt, after consultation with the advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities, a policy concerning the organization of educational services for such students to ensure the harmonious integration of each such student into a regular class or group and into school activities if it has been established on the basis of the evaluation of the student's abilities and needs that such integration would facilitate the student's learning and social integration and would not impose an excessive constraint or significantly undermine the rights of the other students.

Furthermore, the policy shall include:

1) procedures for evaluating handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities; such procedures shall provide for the participation of the parents of the students and of the students themselves, unless they are unable to do so;

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5. For an overview of legal concepts involving disability and inclusion: *Making All the Difference- Inclusion, Exclusion and the American Law* Minow, Martha, Cornell University Press, (Ithaca, 1990) ISBN 0-8014-2446-1

6. For examples of legislation and policies concerning inclusion in other jurisdictions, see the Annex at the end of this report.

7. R.S.Q., chapter I-13.3

8. c. I-13.3, r.3.1, Schedule 2

9. <<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/orientations/pdf/polite00.pdf>>

10. <<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/orientations/pdf/planade00.pdf>>

11. Examples:

<<http://www.etsb.qc.ca/en/CommissionersComittees/Commissioners/policies011.shtm>> (ETSB),

<[http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/policies/SpecialNeedsPolicy\\_3.5.pdf](http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/policies/SpecialNeedsPolicy_3.5.pdf)> (LBPSB),

<<http://www.csnewfrontiers.qc.ca/anglais/101/pdf/SpecialNeeds/Guide.pdf>> (NFSB)

<<http://www.rsb.qc.ca/CounComm/PoliciesByLaws/PoliciesPDF/SPEC.ED%20ADOPTED.pdf>> (RSB)

<<http://www.swlauriersb.qc.ca/english/edservices/MANUAL%20-MARCH%202006.pdf>> (SWLSB)

12. R.S.Q., chapter C-12

13. Human Rights Commission handbook on accommodation

<<http://www.aqeta.qc.ca/english/document/class/01.htm>>



2) methods for integrating those students into regular classes or groups and into regular school activities as well as the support services required for their integration and, if need be, the weighting required to determine the maximum number of students per class or group;

3) terms and conditions for grouping those students in specialized schools, classes or groups;

4) methods for preparing and evaluating the individualized education plans intended for such students.

The language of s. 235 suggests that the government intends the regular classroom to be the norm for all students, regardless of disability or special needs, and that both teaching methods and the curriculum should be adapted for the handicapped or otherwise-challenged student.

The excessive constraint provision in the law has added a nuance to the obligation to integrate all students, although there is a heavy burden of proof; the use of language such as excessive and significant reinforces this burden.

## **Adapting Our Schools to the Needs of All Students:**

POLICY ON SPECIAL EDUCATION, 1999 (extracts)

### **The Basic Orientation of the Special Education Policy**

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

### **Lines of Action**

- Recognizing the importance of prevention and early intervention, and making a commitment to devote additional effort to this area
- Making the adaptation of educational services a priority for all those working with students with special needs
- Placing the organization of educational services at the service of students with special needs by basing it on the individual evaluation of their abilities and needs, by ensuring that these services are provided in the most natural environment for the students, as close as possible to their place of residence, and by favouring the students' integration into regular classes
- Creating a true educational community, starting with the child and the parents and continuing with outside partners and community organizations working with young people, in order to provide more consistent intervention and better-coordinated services
- Devoting particular attention to students at risk, especially those with learning disabilities or behavioural difficulties, and determining methods of intervention that better meet their needs and abilities
- Developing methods for evaluating students' educational success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications, assessing the quality of services and reporting results

**Conclusion:** The new special education policy demonstrates that the Ministère de l'Éducation is ready to take all necessary measures to help students with special needs. The Ministère has embarked on this path knowing that it can depend on the total commitment of the education system and its partners. (p. 31)

By law, the individual school board has the jurisdiction to set a policy, to implement its various provisions and to decide how much weight to give to various ministerial orientations and guidelines relating to special needs:<sup>14</sup> each school board must develop its own education plan and service models for its special needs students and establish a Special Needs Advisory Committee.<sup>15</sup>

The Ministère has always been more inclined to encourage than to control; it maintains that it has little power to enforce the application of its policies in individual cases and that it is neither its habit nor its custom to intervene in the internal affairs of relatively autonomous school boards.

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<sup>14</sup> For example, the Lester B. Pearson School Board aims for 100% integration in its youth sector; the English-Montreal School Board does not, choosing instead a variety of outreach schools in the high school sector with small class ratios and teaching strategies adapted to unmotivated students or those with learning difficulties.

<sup>15</sup> *Education Act*, ss. 185-187.1 *Advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities*

In this amorphous context of law enforcement, it is sometimes up to an individual parent to undertake procedures so that the school board's policy and practices can be held up to legal scrutiny. (See decisions on *Commission scolaire des Phares*).

## **Commission scolaire des Phares**

### Decision of the Human Rights Tribunal<sup>16</sup>

The Human Rights Tribunal held in November 2004 that section 235 requires, as a general rule, the integration of the students in a class or a regular group when the evaluation of their capacities and their needs demonstrates that this integration is likely to facilitate their learning and their social integration.

In this case, a student with Down Syndrome had been placed in a regular class, was isolated, and did not do the same work as the other students; the teacher received no training on the student's handicap nor on inclusive pedagogy. The material was not adapted as a function of the student's disability.

The Tribunal held that the School Board had not taken into consideration the student's handicap in the course of evaluating and classifying him, nor did it adjust the educational program, and thus contravened the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

### Decision of the Court of Appeal<sup>17</sup>

On appeal, in January 2006, the Québec Court of Appeal held that the Human Rights Tribunal erred when it interpreted sections 234 and 235 as constituting an imperative rule. The law, while favouring integration, does not create a legal presumption that this is in the best interests of the child, requiring evidence (a burden of proof) to the contrary. The purpose of evaluating students is not to determine how they should be integrated into a regular class, but rather to decide whether such integration is in their best interests.

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16. <<http://www.canlii.org/qc/jug/qctdp/2004/2004qctdp10071.html>> (in French only)

17. <<http://www.jugements.qc.ca/php/decision.php?liste=16735685&doc=535F59505D071A00>> (in French only)

## **Universal design: an ally of inclusion**

The concepts of "disability", "special needs", "learning difficulties" etc. are based in part on a cultural notion that there is a normal way of learning and a normal speed of learning and that those students whose functioning varies are different and require special help or adaptation of teaching styles or learning materials.

Some of the Advisory Board's guests emphatically stated that in many instances the issue was not that the student has trouble learning, but that the student has trouble with a learning situation that was not designed with his or her needs in mind: it was designed with a narrow perception of how students learn.

Several speakers strongly suggested that educators adopt an approach known as universal design: all products and environments should be as usable as possible by as many people as possible, regardless of age, ability, or situation.

The term "universal design" originated in the field of architecture two decades ago, and represented a radical change in the way that buildings were designed. In the old days, buildings had been designed without considering the needs of individuals with disabilities. This method of design resulted in costly after-the-fact adaptations, repairs, and modifications as barriers became obvious, restrictive, and eventually illegal. With the arrival of universal design, architects learned to build in alternative means of access, right from the start, so that buildings were more useable and accessible for people with disabilities. In reality, these features—like curb cuts, ramps, and automatic doors—now benefit a much wider population, from cyclists to parents with strollers.

Likewise, Universal Design for Learning applies the same concept to learning. By designing learning environments from the outset to meet the challenge of individual differences, including the challenges of students with disabilities, we make better learning environments for everyone.<sup>18</sup>

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Universal design is a value, not a set of dimensional requirements. It challenges designers to think beyond code compliance and special features for specific users towards more inclusive solutions that incorporate the needs of diverse users without segregation or separate accommodation. Designing special solutions for different segments of the population is a costly and cumbersome way to design places and products . . . Universal design is not a euphemism for accessibility. . . . It is an idea that re-establishes a critical and fundamental goal of good design: meeting the needs of as many users as possible<sup>19</sup>

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Just as after-the-fact architectural accommodations are often awkward and expensive, after-the-fact curriculum adaptations can be time consuming to design and difficult to implement in classrooms of diverse learners. A more efficient way to provide student access is to consider the range of user abilities at the design stage of the curriculum and incorporate accommodations at that point. This "built-in" access for a wide range of users, those with and without disabilities, is the underlying principle in universal design.

In terms of curriculum, universal design implies a design of instructional materials and activities that allows learning goals to be attainable by individuals with wide differences in

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18. David Rose, *Center for Applied Special Technology, CAST*  
<<http://www.cast.org/about/news/press/2006-08-02.html>>

19. <<http://www.uoregon.edu/~sij/udep/unides.htm>>

their abilities to see, hear, speak, move, read, write, understand English, attend, organize, engage, and remember. Such a flexible, yet challenging, curriculum gives teachers the ability to provide each student access to the subject area without having to adapt the curriculum repeatedly to meet special needs.<sup>20</sup>

A universally designed curriculum is well suited to an inclusive classroom by minimising the need for special adaptation by the teacher; while one size will not fit all, a flexible size will be far more inclusive than the alternative.

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<[http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/NewsIssues/TeachingLearningCenter/Curriculum\\_Access\\_and\\_Universal\\_Design\\_for\\_Learning.htm](http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/NewsIssues/TeachingLearningCenter/Curriculum_Access_and_Universal_Design_for_Learning.htm)>

see also: <[http://trace.wisc.edu/docs/30\\_some/30\\_some.htm](http://trace.wisc.edu/docs/30_some/30_some.htm)>

<<http://www.wested.org/nerrc/universaldesign.htm>>

<<http://www.adaptenv.org/universal/strategies.php>>

## **Identification, coding, IEPs & funding**

When coding of students with learning difficulties, learning disabilities or handicaps began, it was directly tied to funding. The government later tried to drop most of the coding, but teachers insisted that coding provided information essential to determining workload and class size.

Although coding is a burdensome procedure, many teachers see it as an essential requirement within the current administrative structure for ensuring that they receive accessible and realistic support.

On the one hand, it is widely agreed that, in the absence of evidence substantiated by the hard data that coding provides, adequate resources have not been and will not be forthcoming. On the other hand, coding is a time-consuming and expensive process that does not guarantee that the individual child will necessarily receive improved services.

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP)<sup>21</sup> is a plan of learning for the individual at-risk student based on the assessment of his or her disability. As well, it is intended to help members of a school staff learn about an at-risk student and to make it easier for them to help with his or her problem and to follow the student's progress.

An IEP does not generate any additional funding in and of itself.

The preparation of an IEP is the responsibility of the school principal<sup>22</sup>. However, without the critical support of the teachers, an IEP may be of little value because the teacher in the classroom is the professional most involved in implementing the plan. The Advisory Board was told that in many schools, teachers refuse to take part in the process, though it is unclear whether this has been due to lack of information<sup>23</sup>, a perceived lack of training, a consequence of difficult labour relations or a feeling that an IEP is not worth the effort if little attention is paid to it in the school.

It is also unclear what training is available for those who prepare IEPs or how the responsibility is shared with Complementary Educational Services<sup>24</sup> at the board level or with parents. There seem to be questions about the accessibility of community services and support.

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21. *Education Act*, s. 96.14, "...an individualized education plan adapted to the needs of the student. The plan must be consistent with the school board's policy concerning the organization of services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities and in keeping with the ability and needs of the student as evaluated by the school board before the student's placement and enrollment at the school."

See also ss. 187, 235(4)

22. *Education Act*, s. 96.14 "... the principal, with the assistance of the student's parents, of the staff providing services to the student, and of the student himself, unless the student is unable to do so, shall establish an individualized education plan adapted to the needs of the student..."

23. *Individualized Education Plans: Helping Students Achieve Success - Reference Framework for the Establishment of Individualized Education Plans*

<<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/soutienetacc/pdf/19-7053A.pdf>>

24. <<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/csc/pdf/19-7029a.pdf>>

<<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/csc/general/complementaires/complementaires.html>>

The import, purpose, and effectiveness of IEPs is put into question. There is no data on any outcomes on a student's progress, good or bad, resulting from an IEP. Some of the Advisory Board's guests suggested changing the IEP to reflect a different, more productive way of looking at special needs, by adapting a positive rather than a negative perspective. This could be expressed in a positive performance profile (PPP) outlining the strengths of each special needs student. In the student's file, a teacher's knowledge about what the student can accomplish can be transmitted to the teacher at the next level.

It is clear to members of the Advisory Board that there is a pressing need to clarify various questions concerning the IEP: the process should be no more complicated than is absolutely necessary, and those who are responsible for its preparation, its implementation and its monitoring should be clearly identified. Teachers need to know the expected extent of their involvement in the development and implementation of IEPs. They must carry some of the responsibility inherent in the IEP planning and implementation process

For a school administration, there is a major conceptual difference between providing support for the teacher and providing support for the student. Staffing ratios for the assignment of teachers are funded in accordance with specific norms articulated in the collective agreements. Thus, there is an enforceable obligation to support the teacher, and there may be grievances. However norms do not exist for non-teaching professionals or technical support staff. Thus, no specific funding is generated for non-teaching personnel.

Mobilizing resources for funding support for students can be more problematic. The same rules do not apply to all categories of students for whom IEPs are prepared. Budgetary rules concerning inclusion are ambiguous and should be clarified. There are specific sums for students with certain codes (12, 14 & 52, hearing impaired) and a lump sum covering the "at-risk" group, deemed by the government to be a percentage of the student body. The guests consulted by the Advisory Board feel that budgetary rules should take into consideration the real costs associated with implementing inclusion, rather than simply allocating a predetermined sum to boards. In other words, funding and the delivery of services should be linked; even small boards should be certain that the cost of basic support services will be provided.

The concept of "at-risk" is still in the process of being understood and appropriated by many in the education system. The government's original intention was deliberately non-specific in order to be used for preventive activities, without the prerequisite of clinical coding. In the absence of coding or clinical diagnosis, who are the at-risk students? The Minister establishes<sup>25</sup> a list of indicators<sup>26</sup> for school board strategic plans and school success plans involve the identification of at-risk students; but that is easier said than done, there being no parameters. It could be a question of learning delays or of labelling a student whose primary at-risk factor relates to problems outside the school. There is little data about the repercussions of any activities the school has undertaken to deal with at-risk students. The Advisory Board was told that some schools are still coding students with learning disabilities, even though these particular codes no longer trigger additional funding.

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25. *Education Act* s. 459.1

26. <[http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/stat/Autres\\_doc/Definition\\_indic\\_nat\\_2003.xls](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/stat/Autres_doc/Definition_indic_nat_2003.xls)>



## **Implementation in the English-speaking sector**

This is the seventh year since the linguistic reorganization of school boards.<sup>27</sup> The ministerial special needs policy<sup>28</sup> was issued in 1999, and English school boards have been adopting their own policies since about 2003.

In the event that a school board had not yet adopted its own board-wide special needs policy, some individual schools started to develop their own approaches to integration even if they had had little previous experience with special needs students.

The vocabulary being used by the Boards to describe their implementation of the legislation and the ministerial policies varies, and is understood and implemented in very differently ways across the system. In some school boards, their policy of inclusion means that all children without exception are in regular classes all day: for meals, during gym and art classes, etc. For other boards, integration involves students being together for part of the time and separate for the rest of the time. Such terms are often used interchangeably to describe very different situations, but the users of both these terms emphasized to the Advisory Board that, regardless of nuances, all of these practices are considerably different from - and more inclusive than - the "segregated" or "contained" classes and schools.

Currently, all the English school boards in Québec are engaged in putting some form of desegregation into practice. Where, in the larger boards, there are significant numbers of students with special needs, more options are possible. It is easier for boards in the Montreal area to establish links to medical and social services;<sup>29</sup> these are more difficult to access in remote rural areas. While the larger English school boards have adopted explicit policies of inclusion or integration, smaller boards have been, in practice, including all manner of students for years because they lack the resources to follow any other course.

It is not difficult to understand that in those school boards that apply the government's special needs policy quite rigorously, there may be a certain degree of frustration with the administrative consequences. Implementing inclusion can have a substantial impact on a board's operating budget: for example, all teachers, not just a few, are teaching special needs students and thus require support with classroom management and differentiated teaching. At present the ministerial budgetary rules do not appear to take this into consideration. Some of the Advisory Board's guests have suggested that fully inclusive boards should not be subject to the same budgetary rules as those that do not spend their allocations on thorough desegregation or, alternately, that boards should receive special bonuses for implementing inclusion.

The smaller English sector has applied policies of inclusion more extensively than the French-speaking sector.<sup>30</sup> In 2003-2004, the rate of inclusion in the youth sector was 80% in all the public school boards while it was over 90% in the English sector. Six of the nine English boards

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27. S.Q. 1997, c. 47 *An Act to amend the Education Act, the Act respecting school elections and other legislative provisions*

28. <<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/orientations/politique.html>>

29. MELS-MESS agreement: <<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/lancement/ententemeq-msss/index.htm>>

30. For discussion on current issues in French sector (in French only):  
<<http://www.infobourg.com/sections/actualite/actualite.php?id=10444>>

declared inclusion rates of 95% or higher, three of which were at 100%, while seven of 60 French boards had rates of 95% or higher, with two reaching 100%. While the two lowest rates among the English boards were over 70%, nine French boards had rates below 70%.

## **The policy of inclusion is not working as effectively as it should**

Whatever the circumstances, there is widespread consensus among the guests consulted by the Advisory Board that the application of the policy of inclusion in the English-language sector is not working as effectively as it should, even though some boards are allocating a very substantial proportion of their budgets to it.

The Advisory Board was repeatedly told that the human and material resources required to create the kind of classroom that could integrate and include students with many different difficulties and disabilities are either not available to the school boards or not allocated within the school boards in the manner that the Advisory Board's guests would like to see.

### **i) Issues perceived by teachers**

The first and most important stumbling block is that many **teachers feel unprepared** for dealing with the range and number of students with behavioural problems, learning disabilities and difficulties and physical handicaps who are now included in their classrooms.

The second hindrance, in many cases, is the **lack of adequate support** for teachers and students involved with inclusion, often as a result of insufficient resources being made available to the boards.

The Advisory Board's guests were unanimous in pointing out that it is not the presence of physically handicapped students—whose integration depends less on themselves than on the appropriate technical and physical facilities—that exasperates and discourages teachers. What teachers are not prepared for, and are now having to cope with in growing numbers, are students classified as at risk:<sup>31</sup> those with social maladjustments, behaviour disorders, minor learning difficulties, or learning disabilities that require sustained attention.

Most of today's new teachers do not come to the classroom with an intimate knowledge and understanding of disorders such as aphasia, autism, Down or Asperger syndrome, or other disabilities. If, in addition to students with these conditions, the teacher has a certain number of students with difficulties such as dyslexia, and with increasingly disruptive behaviour, the job of teaching becomes highly unpredictable and potentially unsatisfying.

The guests consulted by the Advisory Board agreed that students with behavioural difficulties present the greatest challenge for the teacher.<sup>32</sup> Teachers themselves say they are now more aware than before about what *not* to do. Grouping together students with behavioural difficulties has been found to be counter-indicated. Releasing them from a certain amount of class time, away from an integrated class, is sometimes necessary but not necessarily positive for their own development.

Schools are well aware that many student behaviours are intimately connected to difficulties in the student's family and home situation, but that in many cases, it is difficult for the school to

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31. An extensive bibliography on the concept of "at-risk" and relevant pedagogy (in French only)  
<<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/rechercheetdev/pdf/rap-eleve-risque.pdf>>

32. *School and behaviour - Workshop in intervention strategies at the secondary-school level*  
<<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/soutienetacc/pdf/session93e.pdf>>

enlist the parents' collaboration in working with the students. Schools understand that they are responsible for working with these students, regardless of their family situation, unlike some hospitals, which will no longer agree to work with students whose families are disengaged. The school feels it has little choice in the matter because there is nowhere else for the disturbed child or adolescent to go.

As awareness of the issue of students with behavioural difficulties in the classroom is increasing, research is being undertaken. At present, 19 English-language schools are involved in a research project examining how best to support this category of student and to build up the schools' capacity to understand the phenomenon. The aim is to be able to adapt a classroom to include 10% "at-risk" and 3% handicapped students, which is proportional to the incidence in the general population. For teachers to learn how to adapt, it is evident that in-service apprenticeship and mentoring will be required.

## **ii) Early intervention**

Today, concerns about the acquisition of basic literacy skills transcend the elementary grades. Whereas secondary school teachers were once uninterested in inclusion and in students with special needs, these teachers are now developing a greater awareness as it becomes evident that there is no guarantee that all students will be functionally literate by the time they reach high school.

The Advisory Board's guests spoke of their impressions that in the past, there used to be greater emphasis on early intervention with children in difficulty, even as early as kindergarten. In some school boards, resources were made available so that every kindergarten child in the system could be screened and any necessary intervention identified. It was an expensive policy, even at the time.

In retrospect, this practice seems to have had significant success. Diligence at this early stage virtually eliminated reading problems for young students. Today, in contrast, many children are not reading even at the end of Cycle One, which means they are moving through the school system with a serious handicap.

Early intervention prevents the accumulation of failures by students who, by the very fact they cannot read, become "at risk". In the absence of systematic dedicated funding, teachers try to do their own screening; they need help in this regard.

In addition to early intervention, the ongoing identification of students beyond kindergarten has proved to be less than satisfactory, in the opinion of the Advisory Board's guests. The limited availability of psychologists, psychometricians, etc. results in students having to wait months, if not years, to have their disabilities or difficulties evaluated and diagnosed. Many simply remain undiagnosed, exacerbating their risk of failure in school.

## **iii) The budgetary rules and the "at risk" student**

Ministerial financial rules for special needs education have changed pursuant to the Special Needs Policy and Action Plan. At present, on the one hand, there is a per-student grant to fund support services for students with physical handicaps and identifiable disabilities based on certain disability codes; on the other hand a lump sum based on a percentage of the student population covers a new category referred to as "at risk".

This dichotomy represents a new recognition of learning and behavioural difficulties as being distinct from traditionally recognized handicaps, and is a relatively recent ministerial initiative, compatible with the overall orientation of special needs education policy, which stipulates that there are different ways of achieving success for different students.

The “at risk” notion was introduced into ministerial policies as a preventative measure. Realizing that a certain proportion of a school’s population is likely to have some special needs—the Advisory Board was told 80% of the students who have trouble at school have some form of learning or behavioural problem—a budgetary category to deal with “at-risk” students allows for services and intervention to be provided at the earliest possible moment, even before a detailed evaluation of the student’s difficulty has taken place. Rather than requiring coding—often a time-consuming clinical procedure—as a prerequisite for services, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) can be developed as a means of helping students to surmount their difficulties before they get too pronounced. Many of the issues that the “at risk” concept intends to deal with are related to the learning environment of the school in question, the relations between staff and students, school regulations and classroom management techniques.

However, rather than being perceived as a wide-ranging search for the best ways of providing early intervention in answering individual student needs, the concept of funding “at-risk” students seems to have backfired, according to many guests with whom the Advisory Board spoke. “At-risk” is now being characterized in many quarters as a precise definition or a definable category—similar to the codes for handicapped students—that should be addressed in teachers’ collective agreements when workloads are being debated. The individualized approach aimed for in the original policy has been lost, in part due to the sheer number of students involved in this undefined category.

Some boards consider that over a quarter of their students satisfy the criteria for “at-risk”, regardless of how the Ministère calculates the funding of services for these students. This situation has convinced the Ministère to undertake a program evaluation of its special needs policy, with inclusion as only one aspect among many to be examined.

Educational administrators are aware that it is unlikely that there will be massive injections of new resources into the system in the foreseeable future to deal with the requirements of special needs students. The goal today is to improve service through a better distribution of the available funds. In some cases, there will be a shift away from using professionals to work directly with students, towards creating a multiplier effect by training teachers to be more capable in dealing with the needs and problems associated with special needs students. Pilot projects are directed at improving teachers’ attitudes and skills by having teams within a school work through issues together. The team approach is considered an effective way of enabling those teachers who bear the greatest responsibility for dealing with the troubled or disabled students to feel validated and empowered in dealing with the challenge.

The financial challenges are omnipresent, and it is sometimes difficult to persuade some principals that giving extra resources to students who are different is part of their school’s mission. Some administrators still have the sense that these students should be elsewhere, and are reluctant to channel scarce resources in their direction.

#### **iv) Issues in teacher training: initial and continuing**

Everyone whom the Advisory Board consulted agreed that the greatest share of the burden of integration falls upon classroom teachers, who receive insufficient support to be able to carry out

what they have been trained to do: to teach. Since those teachers with the most experience are often the ones who received the least initial training in special education, there is an ironic challenge, since in today's classroom, all teachers must be equipped to work with a classroom of students with mixed abilities.

University faculties and departments of education are already paying attention to training their students on issues of special needs students and, as inclusion becomes more widespread, it is evident that all teachers will become teachers of special needs students.

As an example, the Advisory Board was told that at Bishop's University, education students have special needs content both in their courses and in their practicum (practice teaching in the classroom). Courses, for both elementary and secondary certification include managing "behavioural disorders" (obligatory),<sup>33</sup> "psychology of reading and reading disabilities" (obligatory), "individual differences (which includes the writing of IEPs) and educational psychology. In the practicum, students are frequently placed in classrooms that are inclusive and many are placed with a resource teacher.<sup>34</sup> McGill's Faculty of Education is currently offering a Certificate in Inclusive Education<sup>35</sup> through its Continuing Education program, aimed at teachers, assistants and aides, professionals and administrators in the school system but also open to parents and community members involved in schools.

There is considerable debate on whether issues related to students with special needs should be taught in specific, dedicated courses or integrated throughout the curriculum. It is widely agreed that all teachers need to understand the psychology of children with difficulties. It therefore

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33. *EDU 275a Managing Behaviour Disorders in the Classroom 3-3-0: An examination of the developmental issues of behaviour disorders and related educational phenomena: definitions, assessments, causes, psychological and behavioural characteristics, and educational interventions and transitions*

34. In the new collective agreement for teachers (in French only):

<[http://www.cpn.gouv.qc.ca/cpnca\\_fr/Files/138/Couv\\_et\\_chap\\_01-04.pdf](http://www.cpn.gouv.qc.ca/cpnca_fr/Files/138/Couv_et_chap_01-04.pdf)>

1-1.26 Enseignante ou enseignant ressource

Une enseignante ou un enseignant qui, en plus de ses fonctions d'enseignante ou d'enseignant au niveau d'une école ou d'un groupe d'écoles, s'acquitte de fonctions d'enseignante ou d'enseignant ressource proprement dites prévues à la clause 8-11.04.

8-11.04 Quant à la fonction d'enseignante ou d'enseignant ressource proprement dite, l'enseignante ou l'enseignant doit s'acquitter des fonctions et responsabilités suivantes :

Auprès des élèves ayant des besoins particuliers

- assume un rôle d'aide auprès d'élèves ayant des besoins particuliers notamment ceux ayant des difficultés relatives au comportement;

- assume des tâches d'encadrement; dans ce cadre, elle ou il soutient l'élève ayant des besoins particuliers dans sa démarche en vue de trouver des solutions à ses problèmes;

Au niveau des enseignantes et enseignants de l'école, l'enseignante ou l'enseignant ressource

- travaille en concertation avec l'enseignante ou l'enseignant dont des élèves ont des besoins particuliers;

- accompagne les enseignantes et enseignants en début de carrière ou ayant besoin de support dans l'exercice de leurs attributions, par exemple au niveau de la gestion de classe, de la création de matériel adapté, de l'adaptation des méthodes d'enseignement, de la prévention et de l'intervention précoce...

The Advisory Board's resource teacher guests described their work: They support the teachers of special needs students; they modify programs for these students; they find materials; they provide ideas for teachers who are working within the regular program while dealing with special needs students; they work with parents who are frustrated; they take substantial responsibility for drafting many dozens of IEPs, they administer the testing for students with difficulties, etc.

35. <<http://www.mcgill.ca/conted-edu/programs/inclusive/>>

follows that a certain amount of child psychology should be woven into every area of pedagogy and subject matter. University professors must also be knowledgeable about this necessary teaching skill, even though many, perhaps even most of them, have had little such classroom experience themselves involving students with special needs.<sup>36</sup>

Student teachers are often in shock when they come back from their first experiences as practice teachers in the classroom.<sup>37</sup> They have learned about the curriculum but not necessarily about developing relationships with different kinds of students. Learning to manage large and diverse groups is a first step towards being able to accomplish the complicated task of teaching.

The connection between issues of behaviour management and the design of stimulating and interesting learning activities is being explored in connection with special needs students, although this connection is pertinent to any teaching activity. Stimulation encourages engagement, as risk taking is difficult for many students. When a situation seems threatening or even mildly scary, some students will retreat into a protection mode. In such cases, the students' feelings of fragility and stress are not overcome merely by an interesting topic or mode of delivery. The student needs predictability and calming.

Education faculties should be emphasizing that exercising creativity in the classroom does not mean abandoning structures. Teachers first have to build their classrooms on structure and routine, and then blend in creative pedagogy.

Many of the Advisory Board's guests shared the impression that today's students are less mature than those of recent generations. This lack of social skills manifested by so many students is often attributed to isolation at home, especially in students from single-parent homes. Workshops for teachers are aimed at equipping them to intervene in this cycle in a variety of ways. Teachers must understand the psychology of the children for any strategy to work. The presence of structure and predictability in a classroom can often help those students who have little structure in their out-of-school lives.

Many students have neither an innate ability nor a desire to work in groups; they have to learn how this is done. Many teachers could also use some help in this area; both students and teachers need encouragement and advice on best practices.<sup>38</sup>

Most teachers could benefit from substantial help from those of their colleagues who have experience with special needs students.<sup>39</sup> Many teachers have always focused on the subject content they teach and may be wary or even afraid of special needs students whose learning skills appear to be ill defined. Teachers have even been known to refuse classes with special needs students, particularly if those students have a bad reputation in the school. It is important

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36. A recent Québec book on inclusive pedagogy (in French only):

<[http://www.puq.quebec.ca/produits/D1272/Fiche\\_Pedagogie\\_de\\_linclusion\\_scolaire.pdf](http://www.puq.quebec.ca/produits/D1272/Fiche_Pedagogie_de_linclusion_scolaire.pdf)>

37. Students can start their practicum in either first or second year.

38. Ontario's program for spreading information about best practices:

<<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/resource/award.html>>

39. Web pages where teachers in special ed can share experiences and resources (in French only):

<[https://www.clicfrançais.com/reseau/liste\\_ress\\_theme.asp?id=11](https://www.clicfrançais.com/reseau/liste_ress_theme.asp?id=11)>

<<http://www.csmb.qc.ca/servcomp/Reseau/reseau.htm>>

to provide appropriate support for those teachers who suffer more from feelings of insecurity and inadequacy than from professional ineptitude.

The traditional one-day in-service workshops, which are easy to organize, provide only marginal benefit. More durable and pertinent in-service approaches are being developed.

A suggested strategy is:

- first, overcome the teachers' defensive roadblocks by helping recalcitrant teachers to become more knowledgeable and accepting of special needs students
- second, work on differentiation techniques: the challenge of differentiated teaching may seem much more daunting in subjects like mathematics than in a subject like English language skills where it is easier to modify a course and teaching techniques
- third, develop better and more effective on-going in-service programs—including practicums—instead of the ineffective one-day session

In a context of inclusion, which is still seen by many to be “bums on seats”, some teachers maintain that they have no time to differentiate and that, “anyway, kids don't like me and it won't help in any case”. In many classes, these teachers are right because, by the end of elementary or the beginning of high school, many students experiencing difficulties have given up any hope of ever mastering academic skills; they are in school only because their parents (or the law) keep them there.

In the in-service training to support these insecure teachers, the focus should be as much on a humanitarian approach to teaching as on the pedagogical content or on a clinical understanding of disabilities. Ironically, while many new teachers may not be particularly well trained in special education, many of them do have a more humanitarian, open-minded approach than their predecessors.

In-service support for inclusion thus has a double-pronged objective: one attitudinal, the other pedagogical, both aimed at strengthening the resilience and skills of the teaching profession.<sup>40</sup>

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40. The MELS has prepared new reference documents for resource teachers. (In French only)  
<[http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/soutienetacc/pdf/Enseignant\\_ressource.pdf](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/soutienetacc/pdf/Enseignant_ressource.pdf)>and  
<[http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/soutienetacc/pdf/prevention\\_et\\_intervention.pdf](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/soutienetacc/pdf/prevention_et_intervention.pdf)>



## **Support for teachers in the English schools: The Centres of Excellence**

While each school board and school has responsibilities for implementing policies and organizing their own services concerning special education needs<sup>41</sup>, the English-language school boards, in collaboration with the Ministère have created an important sector-wide structure<sup>42</sup> to support their schools and their staff in the area of special education: five Centres of Excellence<sup>43</sup> that have been mandated to undertake research and to provide professional development for staff in the English-language school boards, as well as to participate in Ministère-sponsored projects when asked.

### **1. Inclusive Learning Resource Network (I-LRN)<sup>44</sup>,**

This centre, (formerly known as the **Learning Difficulties Resource Centre**) was the first Centre to be established. It deals with the issues of the “grey-zone kids” for whom there is no special funding and relatively few resources. These at-risk students constitute the majority of students with special needs. This includes both children with learning difficulties and learning disabilities; e.g. dyslexia, ADHD. This centre’s headquarters is the Riverside School Board on the South Shore.

The Inclusive Learning Resource Network does not offer direct service to students or their families but works with the staff, of school boards and schools. Operating on the premise that one-shot workshops are not effective, its preferred strategy is to try to establish networks within schools and boards to provide various series of workshops, classroom demonstrations and modeling strategy sessions right in the schools. A major challenge is the sheer number of students with differing special needs. Other issues concern dual-track programs like French immersion.<sup>45</sup> The Centre fosters the development of concrete classroom tools and information sharing. Since parents can now find information on the Internet that produces both relevant and misguided concerns, staff members at the centre find they must keep up to date with available information as well as provide teachers with hands-on material.

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41. *Education Act*, ss. 88 (Governing Board), 96.15 (principal), 185 (Special Needs Advisory Committee), 224 (School Board)

42. *The MELS Methods for Organizing and Managing Regional Support and Expertise Services in Special Education*

<[http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/orientations/pdf/servicesregionaux\\_eng.pdf](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/orientations/pdf/servicesregionaux_eng.pdf)>

43. <<http://www.qesnrecit.qc.ca/insight/coe.php>>

<[http://www.qesnrecit.qc.ca/intech/centres\\_of\\_excellence.php](http://www.qesnrecit.qc.ca/intech/centres_of_excellence.php)>

44. <<http://www.shapesofmind.ca/>>

45. In immersion programs, students will take some or even all subjects in French, as well as French as a second language for varying periods of time. Questions are raised in some cases about whether such programs are appropriate for students with disabilities who may already have significant difficulty achieving a basic level of skills in a single language.

## **2. Centre of Excellence for the Physically, Intellectually and Multi-Challenged<sup>46</sup>**

This centre is in its third year and operates out of the Eastern Townships School Board. It addresses the needs of students who are moderately intellectually handicapped or have severe disabilities, as well as with students with physical disabilities.

The Centre of Excellence for the Physically and Intellectually Challenged encourages individual scheduling for these students, aimed at fostering both the integration of students with their age-peers (part-time) and with others of their skill level (part-time). The Centre publicizes best practices throughout the schools and boards.

## **3. Centre of Excellence for Speech and Language Development**

This centre deals with speech and language disorders. It is based at the English Montreal School Board and its coordinator is a speech pathologist.

The Speech and Language Development Centre takes phone calls from teachers and parents concerned with how to help students in the classroom setting. These students require early intervention. Some will have lifelong problems and need tools from the outset if they are to develop viable learning skills. Resources in this area are hard to come by. Québec universities are not producing enough graduates to staff available positions. Speech therapists are almost impossible to find, hire and retain. Networking is therefore of crucial importance, particularly since students with speech and language disorders may have other disabilities as well.

## **4. Centre of Excellence on Autism Spectrum Disorders<sup>47</sup>**

The services provided by this centre, based at the Lester B. Pearson School Board, involve training and consultation to help teachers work with the broad range of students who have some form of autism spectrum disorders; some students are very bright, others have global delay needs. The Centre includes a coordinator, liaison staff and a multi-disciplinary team of six professionals.

An important aspect of the work carried out at the Centre of Excellence on Autism Spectrum Disorders is the demystification of autism. In the past, students diagnosed as autistic were placed in special classes. Now most are integrated into community schools. Unlike students with other disabilities, these students experience disorders—not just delay—in their development.

Behaviour difficulties faced by autistic students are often not matters of obedience or compliance: accommodation<sup>48</sup>—for example, modified class size, structure, setup—might eliminate some behaviours where a student is disturbed or agitated by certain elements in the environment. The number of autistic children is growing; this may be due in part to the fact that, as a disorder, autism is being recognized and identified early. Behaviour that was often classified as ‘eccentric’ is now being examined more closely and may lead to a clinical

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46. <[http://www.etsb.qc.ca/en/centre\\_of\\_excellence/default.htm](http://www.etsb.qc.ca/en/centre_of_excellence/default.htm)>

47. <<http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/%7Easdn/>>

48. *Classroom Accommodations for Teachers of Students with Learning Difficulties*  
<<http://www.aqeta.qc.ca/english/document/class/01.htm>>

diagnosis. There is no known cause of autism spectrum disorders, and although there appears to be a link with some environmental factors these are not yet understood.

## 5. Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management

This centre is housed at the Riverside School Board. It offers a 4-hour workshop on the basic understanding of children with behavioural difficulties. Most students in regular classrooms need a considerable amount of structure and organization. The teacher has to understand that getting an immature student to work to please the teacher might be more effective than getting him or her to work for the love of learning.

All centres of excellence have a mandate to help schools and school boards develop in-house expertise among the professionals.<sup>49</sup> As well, these centres help boards to understand the most effective ways to use para-professional staff (integration aides, child care workers, etc.) and how to avoid such mistakes as inducing feelings of helplessness in the students. All the centres concentrate on providing helpful expertise about how to make the school and the classroom a place where students in difficulty will want to come, and in which they will want to invest.

The major challenge for the Centres of Excellence is how to transfer the expertise and the results of research and experimentation into the individual classroom. As the Advisory Boards' guests explained, the issues are complex: many teachers may be weak in teaching strategies and management skills, which must be improved, but many also lack the training as well as the desire to master the new approaches that must be implemented. Teachers also interact with parents, many of whom have weak skills for dealing with their own children, but who have increasing expectations about what the school should be able to achieve in regard to their children's social adjustment and learning.

Staff members of the Centres of Excellence are also concerned with the evolution of the number of students with special needs. A significant number of students requiring special attention in the same classroom can overwhelm a teacher. How does a teacher deal with two, three or five different students with difficulties/disabilities in the same classroom?

The Advisory Board's guests expressed their frustration, not with the ministerial policies, but with the available implementation strategies, which quickly become inappropriate once the proportion of special needs students to other students rises to a certain level.

The existence of IEP programs is not in itself a guarantee of improvement. Furthermore, there is no standard criteria or system of evaluation for the IEPs. A school can have a high proportion of students with IEPs, which could include at-risk, autistic, multi-handicapped, physically disabled students, etc. As well, the parents of many of these children don't want them to face the additional pressures of learning in a second language in French-immersion programs. The result is that students with the heaviest difficulties, including codes 12 and 14, now constitute a considerable proportion of the population of the non-immersion programs in some English-language schools.

Can a class be called inclusive if there are a high proportion of special needs students in it? (A guest referred to a recent article describing schools in Denmark in which classes had a maximum of 23 students of whom no more than three were coded.)

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49. For example: <<http://www.shapesofmind.ca/pdf/Planning%20for%20Inclusion.pdf>>

Representatives of the staff of the Centres of Excellence believe that the school system will have to rethink the types of services it provides. Should schools work on supporting and training the teacher, rearrange the distribution of special needs students, adapt<sup>50</sup> or modify the curriculum, or concentrate on supporting each special needs student individually?

The staff members of the Centres of Excellence feel that the perception of inclusion as a panacea needs to be nuanced; extolling teachers to repeat the mantra "differentiate and all will be well" can be misleading.

Inclusion is never uniformly effective. Schools should be inclusive, but not necessarily every individual classroom. Experience shows that, even with the most diligent teachers, some students will "rot on the vine" unless they receive some form of specialized targeted instruction.

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50. *Adapted Education Program for Students With a Profound Intellectual Impairment*  
<<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/orientations/pdf/19-7059a.pdf>> and  
<<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dgfj/das/orientations/programmes.html>>

## **Resources in the community**

While the Advisory Board's guests are under the impression that French school boards are doing a good job of making working connections in their communities, the interaction between schools, CLSCs and other social and health services is a real challenge for the English-speaking community. It is difficult, sometimes even impossible, to structure meetings between the networks given the considerable area they cover, let alone establish protocols for the delivery of services to the student with special needs. An English school board's territory may encompass that of a dozen CLSCs<sup>51</sup> and not all CLSCs offer extensive services in English.

The extent of cooperation with other institutions in the community can differ significantly depending on the particular difficulty or disability in question. Services in the area of speech and language are provided by hospitals for children up to age 5, but no further. Since Centres of Excellence have no mandate to provide connections to health and social service networks, schools are responsible for seeking outside clinical help in the community. Some English schools will use their own staff on a part-time basis to seek out external resources, whereas in French schools, the Advisory Board was told, such staff members are generally full-timers.

French schools also seem to have better access to in-house speech therapists. The English school system has difficulty recruiting them. For instance, McGill University has about 20 masters level students in its School of Human Communications Disorders. Many of these students come from away, learn little French while in Montréal and then leave. It is hard for university students to find their placements (practicums) in local schools. The English school boards are studying ways to supervise more of these students in placements but as yet, there is no system in place.

Planning for the future needs of professional and para-professional support staff in the schools is crucial if the implementation of any inclusion policy is to be feasible. Universities, colleges, the provincial government and the school boards should intensify their efforts in this regard by identifying the gaps between supply and demand and instituting changes in consequence, beginning with a re-examination and redefinition of needs, training levels required and a possible adaptation of government regulations. For example, speech therapy technicians with a 3-year college-level diploma are qualified to carry out a considerable number of the functions needed to help students in the schools, which are currently the preserve of university graduates with masters' degrees. As well, the English boards should become more familiar with the *orthopédagogues* and *psychoéducatrices* trained in the French universities, perhaps hiring them to work in English schools.

In many regions, English-speaking families who have problems dealing with their children with special needs, particularly behavioural problems, may not find any local resources to help them. If parents are not happy with what the school is offering, alternatives may not be available. In many areas there are no English-language group homes or special schools; the local schools are left to assume responsibility for community support of a non-clinical nature.

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51. For example, the two English Boards on the Island of Montreal have shared the same territory as 28 CLSCs. Under the new re-organization of health and social services, 95 *Centres de santé et de services sociaux* across Québec share the same territory as nine English school boards.  
<<http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/en/reseau/lsn.php>>

## **Adult and vocational sectors**

The articles of the Education Act dealing with special needs (sections 234 and 235) apply only to students in the youth sector<sup>52</sup>, not to a school boards' vocational training or adult education students (which constitute between 2% and 19%<sup>53</sup> of the enrolment of the English school boards).

Students in the youth sector (up to a maximum age of 18, or 21 for certain handicapped students) are entitled to programs and services relating to special needs. Many students, however, transfer—and are often encouraged by school board staff to transfer—to the adult sector as early as age 16 for a variety of pedagogical and personal reasons. This group of 16- to 18-year-olds makes up a substantial proportion<sup>54</sup> of the clientele of many adult education centres. Similarly, some high students who have not been performing well academically, possibly because of poor skills due to learning disabilities or behavioural problems, are channelled into vocational training.

Under current legislation, the right to services stops for these young adults, even though the need for services does not. In addition, a significant number of older students who are returning to adult education may have originally dropped out of youth sector schools as a result of learning disabilities<sup>55</sup> or behavioural difficulties. These adult students, fully within the school boards' mandate, are pursuing the same Secondary School Diploma as their counterparts in the youth sector, yet one group with special needs is entitled to resources while the other is not. The students in the adult and vocational sectors appear to be in the same position as youth sector students were 30 years ago.

Ironically, those adult students with disabilities who graduate and are admitted to CEGEP can find a substantial degree of accommodation and special services at that level, not present at the secondary-level adult education centres.<sup>56</sup>

Because the vast majority of the guests with whom the Advisory Board met this year work with students enrolled in the youth sector, there will be no detailed recommendations at this time about the extension of special education services to the adult sector. **The Board, however, would like to recommend that the Minister examine the issue of special needs and learning disabilities among adult and vocational students in order to ensure a**

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52. Education Act: “**221.** This subdivision does not apply to vocational training or adult education services.”

53. <[http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/stat/ind\\_gestion\\_scol\\_06/documents/Annexe\\_1A\\_0405.pdf](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/stat/ind_gestion_scol_06/documents/Annexe_1A_0405.pdf)>

54. In 2001-2002, 16- to 19-year-olds made up 29.1% of the adult students in the English Boards. See: “*Profile of Basic Education in Québec - Statistics on English School Boards*” 41-3032-18, Table 4. The Advisory Board has been told that this proportion continues to increase.

55. *A Practical Guide for Teaching Adults with Learning Difficulties*  
<[http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dfga/disciplines/alphabetisation/autres\\_productions/pdf/41-3018a.pdf](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dfga/disciplines/alphabetisation/autres_productions/pdf/41-3018a.pdf)>

56. Students With Disabilities At Dawson College: Success And Outcomes  
Final Report Presented to PAREA. Spring, 2003  
Shirley Jorgensen, M.B.A., Catherine S. Fichten, Ph.D., Alice Havel, Ph.D., Daniel Lamb, B.A., Crystal James, Maria Barile, M.S.W., Adaptech Research Network - Dawson College, Montréal  
<[http://adaptech.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/pubs/PAREA\\_2k3.pdf](http://adaptech.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/pubs/PAREA_2k3.pdf)>

**continuum of services.** The legislation, Basic school regulation, special needs policy, budget rules and collective agreements should also be examined in this context.

## Conclusions and recommendations

### **What does it mean for a school to be inclusive?**

An inclusive school is one that does not exclude anyone, except in cases of disability causing severe dysfunction. Inclusion, as practised at this time in the English school system, does not necessarily mean that all students are included in regular classrooms all of the time. However, this may be the case in small rural schools, mainly because there might not be sufficient resources or students in sparsely populated regions to provide specialized expertise outside the regular classroom. Students with certain pedagogical or behavioural special needs can often benefit from concentrated attention paid to their specific difficulties for some part of the school day.

Successful inclusion, whatever form it takes, must be based on solid intellectual principles aimed at promoting the human rights of all students, on the political will to implement the policy in all its aspects, and on a process of implementation integrating three fundamental factors:

- i) prepared teachers
- ii) adequate funding
- iii) appropriate professional support

Without these elements solidly in place, inclusion will continue to be controversial, if not problematic.

### **Concerning initial teacher training**

Universities have begun to pay more attention to the issues involved in preparing teachers for the growing number of special needs students in their classrooms. Recent education graduates should therefore be familiar with the range of difficulties and disabilities they will be meeting. But knowing what to expect does not give teachers the tools they require to teach even the easiest cases of disabilities and difficulties in their classrooms.

Teachers must learn to manage a multifaceted classroom. And they have to master the concept of differentiated learning: teaching the same subject matter in different ways that will reach students with widely varying degrees of learning abilities. This approach to teaching, on the universal design principle, operates on the premise that both the planning and delivery of instruction, as well as the evaluation of learning, can include attributes that respond to the diversity in learners without compromising academic standards. These aspects of teacher training should be introduced early in a student teacher's education.

### **The Advisory Board on English Education recommends:**

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| <b>1</b> | <b>That the Ministère encourage universities to incorporate the concepts of differentiated learning and universal design applicable to the curriculum in teacher education courses</b> |
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### **Concerning teachers' professional development**

### **The Advisory Board on English Education recommends:**



**2 That the Ministère require the provision of ongoing professional development on the various aspects of inclusive education for teachers who are already in the work force**

Teachers faced with the new curriculum as well as inclusion would benefit from such prescribed approaches to the new regime and the networking that would result from the exchange of ideas with peers. The focus of in-service programs must target and be appropriate to the needs of the majority of teachers if inclusion is to become the norm rather than a special education add-on.

### **Concerning the implementation of inclusion**

Based on the observation that enacted regulations get implemented while a mere policy may be ignored, norms should be enacted to regulate inclusion. The budgetary rules concerning inclusion should be made clear and take into account the particularities of implementing inclusion, rather than simply handing out lump sums to all boards.

**The Advisory Board on English Education recommends:**

**3 That the government establish standards and norms applicable to all school boards, regardless of size, governing the implementation of inclusion in all public schools and regulate them through the Basic school regulation for elementary and secondary schools in the public sector**

### **Concerning early intervention**

**The Advisory Board on English Education recommends:**

**4 That the government make early intervention at the kindergarten level a requirement of special education policy and regulations and that its costs be funded directly through annual budgetary allocations**

### **Concerning funding of inclusion**

What does inclusion cost? Do the school boards that are seriously and systematically implementing a policy of inclusion incur more expenses than are provided for under general budget rules? Are they at a financial disadvantage in comparison to those boards that take a less rigorous approach to integration?

If inclusion/integration is to be the standard policy of the Québec school system, funding will have to be commensurate with the effort invested. If boards are spending more than the government is making available to them, and if it appears that any board that implements the policy rigorously finds itself at a financial disadvantage, inclusion is unlikely to be wholeheartedly embraced across the province.

The Advisory Board on English Education recommends:

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| <b>5</b> | <b>That the government and the school boards arrive at a definition of inclusion that is based on the principle that it is not a separate service and therefore its costs are part of the overall cost of providing education in each school board</b> |
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The Advisory Board on English Education recommends:

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| <b>6</b> | <b>That the Ministère in conjunction with the school boards examine the cumulative administrative costs of inclusion (time spent by principals, classroom teachers, those who prepare IEPs, resource teachers, specialists, etc.), including times when these educators are working with the entire student population, which includes special needs students. Consequently, financing rules should be linked to the real cost of providing required services.</b> |
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As the costs incurred by these special education functions may vary from board to board, there should be some generally accepted yardstick of objective assessment of the services offered. Are the differences between boards solely or only partially a matter of funding?

### **Concerning support services**

The Advisory Board on English Education recommends:

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| <b>7</b> | <b>That school boards be required to provide each individual school with the support services required to function inclusively.</b> |
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If support services and all decisions affecting them are centralized at the school board head office, they will not necessarily result in classroom teachers having the support required to ensure quality education for all students.

### **Concerning the evaluation of student learning and of the IEPs**

The Advisory Board on English Education recommends:

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| <b>8</b> | <b>That school boards be required to regularly evaluate the learning of special needs students based on the criteria elaborated in the Individual Education Plans of these students, in order to ensure accountability and provide feedback to the parents, the student the school principal, while allowing the Ministère to monitor the application of the Special Education Policy.</b> |
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## **Annex: Some examples of legislation and policies concerning inclusion in other jurisdictions:**

### **United Kingdom:**

The law: <<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2001/20010010.htm>>

Especially: <<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2001/10010--b.htm#1>>

Inclusive schools policy:

<<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.displayfile&id=3737&type=pdf>>

Implementation guide: <<http://www.abilities.fsnet.co.uk/edusendisact.htm>>

Current debate: <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4323955.stm>>

Bibliography: <<http://donpugh.dyndns.org/Psych%20Interests/INCLUSION/LINKS.htm>>

**Birmingham** inclusion strategy <http://www.bgfl.org/services/action/strategy.htm>

Action plan: <<http://www.bgfl.org/services/action/files/strat4.pdf>>

**London**: <[http://www.isec2000.org.uk/abstracts/papers\\_n/nind\\_1.htm](http://www.isec2000.org.uk/abstracts/papers_n/nind_1.htm)>

**E-9 countries**: (accounting for more than 50 per cent of the world's population): *Total inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools*

<<http://www2.unesco.org/wef/en-docs/findings/9countries.pdf>>

### **India:**

<[http://www.isec2000.org.uk/abstracts/papers\\_i/iyanar\\_1.htm](http://www.isec2000.org.uk/abstracts/papers_i/iyanar_1.htm)>

### **United States:**

Current discussion: <<http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/lre.index.htm>>

Disability awareness for teachers: <<http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/bibliog/bib13.pdf>>

### **Denmark:**

<[http://www.european-agency.org/nat\\_ovs/denmark/4.html](http://www.european-agency.org/nat_ovs/denmark/4.html)> and /5, /6, /7

### **World Bank:**

Policy on inclusion:

<[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079993288/InclusiveEdu\\_efa\\_strategy\\_for\\_children.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079993288/InclusiveEdu_efa_strategy_for_children.pdf)>

Information leaflet: <<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/Education-Notes/EdNotesDisability.pdf>>

## Advisory Board on English Education

### Guests 2004-2005

Elaine Baylis-Creary	Centre of Excellence for the Physically, Intellectually and Multi-Challenged (ETSB)
Gloria Cherney	Summit School
Barbara Cohen	Resource teacher, McCaig Elementary School (SWLSB)
Thérèse Colin	Comité régional des associations pour la déficience intellectuelle
Judy Deer	Learning Disabilities Association of Québec, and Special Needs Advisory Committee (NFSB)
Philippe Robert de Massy	Lawyer
Marie-Eve Dufour	Miriam Home and Services
Eva de Gosztonyi	Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management (RSB)
Judy Freedman	Principal, Twin Oaks School (SWLSB)
Alice Havel	Disabilities Centre, Dawson College
Don Houston	Principal, Outreach Schools (EMSB)
Carol Jazzar	Centre of Excellence for Speech and Language Development (EMSB)
Diane L'abbé	Director of Complementary Educational Services (CQSB)
Lew Lewis	Director of Complementary Educational Services (EMSB)
Barbara Little	Resource teacher, Philemon Wright High School (WQSB)
Pierre Lucier	Deputy Minister of Education
Jeanene Mahon	Resource teacher, Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School (WQSB)
Carol Marriott	Principal, Centennial Regional High School (RSB)
Diane McLean-Heywood	Director of Complementary Educational Services (LBPSB)
Sylvia Patella	Resource teacher, Jules-Verne Elementary School (SWLSB)
Kerri Payette	Resource teacher, Lakeside Academy, (LBPSB)
Liette Picard	Directrice de l'adaptation scolaire (MELS)
Liliana Ponce De Leon	Montreal Association for the Intellectually Handicapped
Sandy Rosner	Miriam Home and Services
Lynn Senecal	Learning Difficulties Resource Centre
Diane Shank	Secteur des Services à la communauté anglophone (MELS)
Roger Slee	Dean, Faculty of Education, McGill University
Lynn Stewart	Resource teacher, Riverview Elementary School (LBPSB)
Sophia Trakas	Resource teacher, Mauricie English Elementary School (CQSB)
Lynn Travers	Secteur des Services à la communauté anglophone (MELS)
Karen Zey	Centre of Excellence on Autism Spectrum Disorders (LBPSB)

## **List of recommendations**

### **The Advisory Board on English Education recommends:**

- 1** That the Ministère encourage universities to incorporate the concepts of differentiated learning and universal design applicable to the curriculum in teacher education courses.
- 2** That the Ministère require the provision of ongoing professional development on the various aspects of inclusive education for teachers who are already in the work force.
- 3** That the government establish standards and norms applicable to all school boards, regardless of size, governing the implementation of inclusion in all public schools and regulate them through the Basic school regulation for elementary and secondary schools in the public sector.
- 4** That the government make early intervention at the kindergarten level a requirement of special education policy and regulations and that its costs be funded directly through annual budgetary allocations.
- 5** That the government and the school boards arrive at a definition of inclusion which is based on the principle that it is not a separate service and therefore its costs are part of the overall cost of providing education in each school board.
- 6** That the Ministère in conjunction with the school boards examine the cumulative administrative costs of inclusion (time spent by principals, classroom teachers, those who prepare IEPs, resource teachers, specialists, etc.), including times when these educators are working with the entire student population, which includes special needs students. Consequently, financing rules should be linked to the real cost of providing required services.
- 7** That school boards be required to provide each individual school with the support services required to function inclusively.
- 8** That school boards be required to regularly evaluate the learning of special needs students based on the criteria elaborated in the Individual Education Plans of these students, in order to ensure accountability and provide feedback to the parents, the student the school principal, while allowing the Ministère to monitor the application of the Special Education Policy.