BRIEFS SUBMITTED TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, RECREATION AND SPORTS

2012

Advisory Board on English Education

Québec

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ADVISORY BOARD
ON ENGLISH EDUCATION

The Importance of Complementary
Educational Services for School Success

REPORT TO THE MINISTER
OF EDUCATION, RECREATION AND SPORTS

MARCH 2012

The Importance of Complementary
Educational Services for School Success

This brief stems from the Minister's recognition, in her February 2011 visit to the Advisory Board on English Education, of the need to improve the provision of complementary educational services, an issue that continues to be a problem for all English boards, and that is particularly acute in the regions. The brief is based on a consideration of the *Education Act* (R.S.Q., c. I-13.3, s. 447),[1] *I care about school!*[2] and *Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success*,[3] as well as on the input of Board members and guests. It is a response to the following questions:

- What advice can the Board give to help the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) make good on its promise to graduate 80% of all students by 2020?

- What is the contribution of complementary educational services to student success?

- What complementary resources do school boards, particularly English school boards, currently have to allow students to achieve success in school?

- What resources do they need to improve the possibility of success for all students?

Decision-makers, who have focused on the implementation of the reformed curriculum over the past 12 years, have downplayed the role of complementary educational services in student success. The Board sees a clear role for these services and believes that all partners are important to student success. It recognizes that MELS has given school boards more money to hire professionals to provide complementary educational services, but the needs still outweigh the resources available in all areas. The Board takes this opportunity to identify some of the issues.

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[1] *Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary education,* R.Q., c. I-13.3, r. 3.1 (updated to January 1, 2012).

[2] Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *I care about school! All together for student success* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2009).

[3] Québec, Direction de l'adaptation scolaire et des services complémentaires (DASSC), Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002).

1. THE PRESCRIBED SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Section 5 of the *Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary education* guarantees 12 student services, namely:

- services designed to promote student participation in school life
- services designed to educate students about their rights and responsibilities
- sports, cultural and social activities
- support services for the use of the documentary resources of the school library
- academic and career counselling and information
- psychological services
- psychoeducational services
- special education services
- remedial education services
- speech therapy services
- health and social services
- services in spiritual care and guidance and community involvement

Section 4 of the *Basic school regulation* lists the four programs under which these 12 student services should be grouped:

- support services
- assistance services
- student life services
- promotion and prevention services

In providing for four complementary educational services programs, the *Basic school regulation* groups together educational objectives shared by more than one staff member in the school. It breaks with the traditional way of defining complementary educational services programs by area of activity (e.g. student life) or professional field (e.g. psychology). It encourages school boards to build programs in which complementary educational services providers will have to work together in collegiality to meet students' needs. This decompartmentalization is consistent with the desire for a more integrated view of services provided to students and it also takes into account the approach of the Québec Education Program (QEP).[4]

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[4]   DASSC, *Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success*, 14.

2. THE SITUATION IN ENGLISH SCHOOLS

The English community has had considerable success in integrating students with special needs into regular classrooms (indeed, the Board heard examples of eligible students being transferred from the French system to receive this kind of instruction). Yet although the numbers of students with special needs and students who are at risk are increasing, the overall student population —and therefore the funding—is declining. School boards are truly doing more with less.

Number of special needs students in English school boards in Québec

	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Elementary	5631	5791	5887	6277	7395	7055
Secondary	7560	8115	8202	8925	8952	NA

Source: AGIR, January 30, 2012. [Translation]

Change in the number of students in English school boards

	2006-2007	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Elementary	56 137	51 518	50323	49174
Secondary	44 551	43 414	42607	40941
COMBINED	100 688	94 932	92930	90115

Source: MELS – P21sc1 : Tableau 1 : Prévision de l'effectif associé à la commission scolaire (une fiche par commission scolaire anglophone) réseau publique, 18 février 2011. [Translation]

Financial and personnel constraints have led to difficult choices. Further, there is less emphasis on services devoted to promotion and prevention, because school boards are in reactive, rather than proactive mode. Yet, there is a body of research on the importance of school affiliation for staying in school, as well as the need for each student to have an adult to relate to, suggesting the need to stress student life services and promotion and prevention services. Leadership opportunities, such as extracurricular activities, student parliament and representation of secondary-level students on governing boards are powerful factors in promoting school affiliation, although at-risk students are generally underrepresented in these initiatives and need to be encouraged to participate. There exist partnerships with certain sports leagues to provide sporting activities such as football or hockey for students after school. In the regions, the sports league is usually based in a French school.

English schools have a history of parent involvement and parent involvement has been shown to be associated with student success. But in some communities, it is difficult to attract parent volunteers or to ensure parent involvement: single parents, those in disadvantaged areas, those with their own personal problems, or with their own bad school experiences may not have the drive, the interest, or the means to be involved in their child's education. There are also difficult issues that are beyond the abilities of even the most dedicated parents and teachers.

Finally, all school boards are in the position of managing their resources frugally and using professionals to the best advantage. This is a special challenge in the regions, where schools are remote from the professional's office, and the distances between schools are so great. Time spent in travelling is time taken away from contact with students.

3. CHALLENGES FACING SCHOOLS

Sensational tragedies in the press bring to the fore the need for social and psychological support for students. But these are the tip of the iceberg and there are many more students, whose needs are not as newsworthy, but whose lives and school success would be improved by complementary educational services in English. For example, English school boards generally do an excellent job of integrating children with special needs into regular classrooms—often by default in small schools where there is only one classroom at a grade level—but it is imperative that more effort be spent on children who are at risk of failure. The shortage of services in English is especially salient in the regions, but it is also true in the metropolitan areas of the province.

There are greater demands on classroom teachers as schools are being asked to perform functions traditionally associated with parents. This introduces more need for cooperation among all partners in the education of children.

The boundary between instructional services and complementary [educational] services has become much more permeable, and all categories of school personnel must collaborate with parents and partners in the community to develop in all students the competencies they will need to participate in tomorrow's society.[5]

Given this need for a multipronged approach to complementary educational services in promoting student success, the Advisory Board regrets—and is surprised by—the omission of nonteaching professionals from the list of "players" in *I care about school!*[6]

4. SHORTAGE OF RESOURCES

This challenge to the provision of services is felt across the educational spectrum in the youth sector as well as in the adult and vocational sectors. It is more prevalent in some sectors of the English milieu, especially in the regions. This section of the brief will discuss areas where shortages in services are of special concern and where most impact on student success could be attained in the youth sector.

In the adult and vocational sectors, where complementary educational services are even less accessible, the needs are just as great. In addition to having the same learning difficulties as younger students, many adult learners may need support from other types of services such as food banks, Emploi-Québec, marriage counselling, and parenting education. There are few guidance counsellors at adult education centres and little funding for support services. Increasing the complementary educational services available to adult and vocational students would certainly increase the graduation rate in these sectors and have a long-term impact on the next generation of learners.

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[5] DASSC, *Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success*, 22.
[6] Ministère de l'Éducation, *I care about school! All together for student success*, 8-11.

4.1 Academic and career counselling

There is great pressure on school guidance counsellors. Their numbers are decreasing and they need to be up-to-date on the many options available to students. For example, they need to have enough information about vocational training options to be able to present this as an attractive option, especially to boys, who are at greater danger of dropping out of school. To learn about these options, guidance counsellors need professional development. Small rural schools do not have access to career advice services, making it very difficult for students to understand career options, CEGEP entrance requirements, etc. Although approaches such as the Guidance Oriented Approach to Learning (GOAL), Explo, and the Personal Orientation Project (POP) have proved useful, in many school boards career advice is only addressed in secondary school. School boards, which have a limited number of guidance counsellors, have to assign resources judiciously. Although it was intended that teachers should incorporate GOAL into the elementary and secondary curriculum, it is reasonable to assume that school guidance counsellors are expected to take the lead in career counselling. Without adequate counselling resources, career planning remains an avenue of exploration not widely available to many of our students.

Some valuable initiatives, such as career fairs, job shadowing, and private sector involvement are possible in large urban centres, where services can be shared and there is opportunity for exploring careers, jobs, etc. Some examples are "The Pearson Interactive Community Partnership" for elementary students in the Lester B. Pearson School Board, involving the private sector and a school board consultant, or the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board's Career Exploration Centre. This centre is open to the province for teachers to bring students to explore 16 different careers, but realistically it cannot hope to serve the needs of the whole province.

4.2 Psychological services

At the school level, counsellors are also called upon to provide psychological services, a role that occupies more and more of their time. Although the student population across the province is declining—together with per capita resources—the number of students with special needs is increasing.

There is a shortage of English services and resources for both screening and prevention. Teachers are frustrated when their professional experience tells them that a student is in need of support but the problems are not addressed until a crisis occurs. The teachers' collective agreement states that the teacher has to ask the principal to convene a team meeting, and wait for a decision on whether to prepare an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Although MELS does not require that a student be formally classified as "special needs," the identification and decision process can take a year. Most boards have a protocol that must be followed should a student require such services. But although the bureaucratic structures have been created for good reasons, they are not helpful in practice. Simply developing an IEP, however quickly it can be done, is not the solution; there must be follow-up and implementation if the student is to benefit from the process. It would be more useful if the teacher could flag a problem to a school resource team that meets often and decides whether to assess or what strategies to apply. In this model, which gives credit to the teacher's professional competence, the psychologist may consult, suggest strategies, or visit. In contrast, the prevalent medical model consists of testing, deciding what is wrong, and fixing it. The medical model makes teachers dependent on professionals to be the problem solvers and gives them the unjustified fear that they will do harm.

Another issue in the English sector is that the psychologist is often a unilingual francophone. Testing may be in French, invalidating the process; and it may be hard for anglophone teachers to interpret the report.

4.3 Remedial education services

Several participants in the Board's discussions stressed the importance of early action in remediating learning problems and the importance of early reading skills. There is research to suggest that with respect to reading skills, "the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer" over time. It is this "poor" group who are at highest risk of school failure, but with prevention and intervention programs, these students can overcome their reading challenges or, at the very least, develop skills and strategies to cope with these difficulties. It would appear that an investment of resources at the beginning of a child's educational career is cost-effective over the duration of that career. Much of the assessment can occur before the child enters kindergarten. Early identification of needs and early injection of literacy support (such as providing parents with literacy development support) are important initiatives that would have a direct impact on student success. Closing the gap, and doing so as early as possible, is key. One promising strategy is the *Programme d'aide à la lecture et à l'écriture* (PAÉLÉ) available in French-language adult education centres.

Psychological and psychoeducational services, special education services, remedial education services, and speech therapy services can all play an integral part in providing support for at-risk and struggling readers. This may involve working one-on-one or in small groups with the resource teacher or reading specialist (if available), participating in an after-school homework program or a peer tutoring program, undergoing a formal psychoeducational assessment by a psychologist, or a speech-and-language-based assessment by a speech-language pathologist, among other things.

For older students, homework assistance is provided through MELS funding, with a salary scale based on the status of the tutor. LEARN SOS has Monday-to-Thursday online tutorials in most subject areas, available only to the anglophone youth sector and supported by funds from the Canada-Québec *entente*. It is a popular service staffed by qualified teachers who are trained and paid an hourly rate. There are also volunteer programs, such as the one offered by St. Columba House, and some volunteer after-school programs run by individual schools. These depend on the good will and the quality of the volunteers. The success of all these programs suggests that they should be better promoted to increase their use across the province.

4.4 Speech therapy services

There is general agreement that these are inadequately provided across the English school boards, with an even more acute problem in the regions. The relationship among speech and language development and academic learning in the early years makes this service critical and it is also necessary for older children. But there are not enough of these professionals working in the public sector so that education is often competing with health and social services to hire speech therapists. Parents able to hire a private speech and language pathologist (where they exist) must take their child out of school for appointments. School board administrators have made these shortages known to the government and universities, but the gap between available professionals and student needs continues to grow. Most school boards are not able to provide basic levels of service beyond the early elementary years, even though students require support well into secondary school.

The lack of speech therapists in Québec suggests that models in other provinces, where alternative professionals may implement interventions recommended by speech therapists, should be

investigated. It would be more efficient and effective to shift the focus from using speech and language professionals to diagnose problems to having them consult with and support the teacher. The Board also notes a recent initiative in the Baie des Chaleurs area, where five partner groups have merged resources to hire a speech therapist. Given their estimate that 10% of the children they serve will need support, it would seem that one therapist is a minimum requirement.

4.5 Documentary resources

It has long been acknowledged that easy and timely access to documentary resources, either by the student or the teacher, is a critical component of quality education and of student success. However, it has been brought to the attention of the Board that there is a great deal of discrepancy among the quality of libraries in English schools.

Since the introduction of the Action Plan for Reading program, school libraries have personnel and resources is often more difficult for smaller and more distant boards with large territories. For example, the librarian consultant may only be seen in the school once a year. Whatever the case, it is often left up to the teacher's initiative or volunteers - who are the mainstay of most English school libraries, particularly at the elementary level - to ensure the smooth functioning of the school library, such as the purchase and replacement of books. It would not be an exaggeration to say that without these dedicated volunteers and teachers willing to go the extra mile many school libraries would cease to function.

It is also not clear to the Board if action plan funds were always used for the libraries and the hiring of qualified library personnel, so the ABEE would like information on how these funds are to be used included on web site for the Action Plan on Reading in English. Further, the Board considers that MELS needs to examine the impact on student success of inequitable access by schools to documentary resources and qualified library staff, and promote innovative solutions, such as those that new technologies can offer us.

4.6 Health and social services

There is a need for cooperation and collaboration with CSSS facilities. There is a MELS/MSSS agreement to provide services to schools, but it is an inflexible and inconsistent model. It is clear that its full effects are not being felt at the school level in the English sector. There is often no way to get services delivered in school and parents must go to the local CLSC to request services. While this is an inconvenience, the problem is compounded when parents find personnel who are unable to communicate in English. Although the community health access plan for anglophones in each CSSS guarantees that some services, such as consent forms, be offered in English, this is often not the case in outlying regions of the province. The regional groups that are part of the Quebec Community Groups Network are usually very involved in the health and social services dossier and can assist schools and students in accessing services in English. The English sector's network of Community Learning Centres (CLCs) may provide venues for offering nutrition, dental hygiene, and other basic health care services, since parents are often more willing to go to a program housed in an English-language school than to a CLSC, where there may be a language barrier.

4.7 Services in spiritual care and guidance and community involvement

Each school board's spiritual and community animators respond to the needs expressed by the school community. Although the job description is general, and allows for a flexible approach to local needs, animators may provide services to students and teachers in developing community-based projects, humanitarian initiatives, student parliament, after-school activities, nutrition initiatives, special assemblies, etc. Their time is limited and, in many schools, they are not as visible as they should be. It has been suggested that, in some circumstances, their services might be better used in providing guidance support.

4.8 Summary of resource challenges

All Partnership Agreements between MELS and school boards have the same general goals, but different local situations call for different strategies. MELS' requirements for how funds should be spent do not always meet students' needs at the local level and the degree of accountability adds to the bureaucratic workload. Every school should be able to provide every student with the necessary tools to ensure success. Yet, because of the diverse needs of students, demographic issues, and limited resources to achieve the complementary services mandate, the ability of schools to deliver the full complement of services is challenged. English school boards are well aware of this and, allowed enough flexibility, they often develop innovative solutions. The organization of services varies across boards, depending on their particular circumstances, but the general frameworks are similar and student achievement is the ultimate goal.

5. A PEDAGOGICAL MODEL OF COMPLEMENTARY SERVICES

In the spirit of "decompartmentalization" discussed in the complementary educational services document referred to above, as well as the document's assertion that there should be more permeability between pedagogical and complementary services, the Board advocates a shift in focus to a pedagogical model for the provision of services to students. The promotion of school teams lends itself to a pedagogical focus rather than the prevailing medical model. Within a pedagogical model, we are not working with the attitude that students have deficits that need to be diagnosed and remedied, but rather with the idea that, by diversifying teaching and support strategies, educators and professionals will play to the strengths of every child and support his or her development. One example of such support would be facilitating the implementation of the IEP. We need professionals to be in classrooms alongside teachers, but our current structures hamper this. The focus should be less on making a diagnosis or assigning a student a code, than on gathering the tools and resources needed to help that individual student succeed, and evaluating the tools and resources put in place to make sure they are working in practice and not only on paper. Less assessment means that the professional is freed up to do other things. It also allows other people to be part of the solutions for success.

It will take time to shift from a medical model to an integrated pedagogical, ecological model, but it is a model that the Board feels will have greater impact on student achievement than the present implementation of complementary educational services.

6. SUMMARY

Three of the themes in *Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success* are the need for integrated partnerships within the school team and between the school and other community services; a focus on a pedagogical, student-centred approach to complementary services; and the opportunity for developing models of organization that meet local needs.

To avoid fragmentation, the governing board should see that the school provides a range of integrated services that meet students' real needs. Integrated services are services that are part of a coherent, coordinated, harmonious system with shared objectives that everyone works collaboratively to attain. Such services should be comprehensive, flexible and adaptable. Teachers and other education personnel should plan them in collaboration with the students and their parents from the outset. For increased effectiveness, time should be set aside for collaboration in order to establish priorities and avoid duplication of services.[7]

Teachers express frustration at not being heard when they ask for services to help children. They note delays between reporting behaviour and learning problems and the provision of service, and also the difficulty in accessing the services of professionals who are overloaded. They ask that more time be spent identifying and remediating problems at the Kindergarten and Elementary Cycle One levels so that the problems do not persist and become magnified. They ask for time to meet and work together with administrators and professionals from within and outside the school.

The Board was led to wonder how many of the prescribed programs and services are observable at the school level. It appears that MELS and school boards are spending time and money on things that are not moving down to the school or classroom level where they are needed, or that measures are too specifically developed and reported on, preventing a board or school from developing an initiative that could truly meet a need. As long as we are caught up in the paperwork related to accountability, our focus is on bureaucratic requirements, rather than on using our manpower to improve the situation for parents, teachers, and, ultimately, students.

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[7] DASSC, *Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success*, 23.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Advisory Board believes that complementary educational services are important tools to improve success for all students, but that they must be supported more thoroughly in all regions in the English sector, but especially outside the metropolitan areas. In particular, the Board makes the following recommendations:

- Complementary educational services should be based on a pedagogical rather than a medical model.

- There should be more emphasis, both financial and temporal, on prevention rather than on remediation.

- Greater resources are needed to prevent tragic incidents, but also to support students who are at risk.

- Intervention should begin as early as possible, when it is most beneficial.

- Parents should be encouraged to participate in all aspects of the professionals' involvement with their children.

- The status of the MELS-MSSS agreement needs to be re-examined for the English sector.

- School boards, schools, and centres should be allowed flexibility to provide services that meet particular local needs.

- Examine the impact on student success of inequitable access by schools to documentary resources and qualified library staff, and promote innovative solutions, such as those that new technologies can offer us.

Appendix

Invited Guest:

Julie Hobbs, School Administrators Support Team (SAST), Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, Secteur des services à la communauté anglophone, des affaires autochtones et du Plan Nord

Advisory Board on English Education

The following members of the Advisory Board participated in the preparation of this report:

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

The Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports names the members to the Advisory Board. The term of office is normally three years. Candidates are nominated by the various English education associations and organizations that represent, among others, teachers, parents, school administrators and school board commissioners, as well as individuals involved in postsecondary education.

Nominations can be received at any time.

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ADVISORY BOARD
ON ENGLISH EDUCATION

Establishing Boundaries
for Safe Schools

REPORT TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION,
RECREATION AND SPORTS

MARCH 2012

Establishing Boundaries for Safe Schools

1. INTRODUCTION

In its letter to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports of January 31, 2012, the Advisory Board on English Education (ABEE) outlined five principles that it feels are important in considering the issue of violence in schools:

- Bullying is part of the bigger social issue of discrimination.
- Legislation and zero tolerance policies are not definitive answers.
- All members of the school community—staff, students, custodians, secretaries—need to be involved in developing and enacting policies to address unacceptable behaviour.
- Parents need to be as involved as schools in addressing unacceptable behaviour.
- Education and support of all partners are key.

This memorandum will elaborate on these principles and propose some strategies for improving safety in schools. It will conclude with nine recommendations addressing strategies for creating safe schools that are relevant to the school community as well as to the Minister. ABEE's response to Bill 56,[8] already sent to the Committee on Culture and Education's hearings on the Bill, is presented in Appendix 2. Please note that throughout this document, reference to "schools and principals" should also be understood to include "adult education centres and directors."

We begin by stating the premise that to be effective in ending violence in schools any initiatives must go beyond acts of law. Being proactive is more important to developing a sustained, safe culture within the schools than attempting to solve problems with spontaneous actions. A safe school environment takes several years to develop fully. An unsafe school is characterized by a lack of respect among its members and less opportunity for learning for all. Both bullies and victims are less likely to participate in learning. There is an impact on mental health for victims and bystanders that has led to suicide in extreme cases. In other cases, victims may themselves become bullies. The impact on teachers' ability to teach leads to feelings of helplessness among the staff.

2. SAFE SCHOOLS

In safe schools, the rights and obligations prescribed by law are respected:
- acceptance of diversity

- emotional and physical safety

- basic communal rules

- clarity and communication of the said rules

- relevance of rules

2.1 Definition of a safe school

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[8] Bill 56: *An Act to prevent and deal with bullying and violence in schools*
http://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-56-39-2.html.

A healthy, positive school climate promotes the emotional well-being and growth of every student, while providing a safe, secure environment that does not condone violence in any form. At the same time, however, the school provides firm and consistent rules and guidelines for appropriate student behaviour.
(http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/drugfree/sa200.htm.)

In a safe school, students and staff feel safe from physical, emotional and psychological harm in class, elsewhere in the school, on the school grounds, in school buses and at all school events and activities. A safe school is free of all forms of discrimination. It is welcoming of differences, inclusive, nonthreatening, reassuring, and respectful. All members of the school community feel they belong to the community. It is a safe environment in which students can learn, grow and develop. Clear expectations regarding acceptable behaviour are established and enforced, and consequences of unacceptable behaviour are specified and enacted consistently. In a safe school, students relate respectfully and comfortably with other students and also with the adults they encounter.

2.2 Establishing a safe environment
There are many organizations and existing programs that promote a safe school environment and we include only a partial list of those that have been implemented in English schools in Appendix 1. Most of these programs demonstrate common features. They:

- are based in educative practices

- are appropriate to the developmental level of the children

- result in less bullying and absenteeism

- increase empathy for others

- improve classroom and school climate

- lead to increased learning in the classroom

Given the plethora of existing programs, schools need the flexibility to adopt programs from elsewhere in the world in order to intervene proactively. But even without structured programs, individual schools can be encouraged to develop and implement programs that meet the local community's needs. Any activity, whether sporting, artistic or social that promotes affiliation is valuable to improve the school culture, given young people's need to belong to a group. Younger students can be matched with an older student, especially in secondary school, or students can be assigned to a particular teacher or other member of staff with whom they can develop a friendly, respectful, relationship. Gay-straight alliances are encouraged in some schools as a way of sensitizing students to homophobia and improving acceptance of differences in sexual orientation. Student councils can be encouraged to mount anti-bullying campaigns. All these actions are beneficial to the whole school by engaging students in improving the school climate. They are also beneficial in improving the self-worth of individual students.

2.3 Improving school climate

Safe schools are the responsibility of a community partnership among government ministries, administrators, teachers, trustees, support staff, students, parents, police and community partners. (www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/ssareview/report0626.pdf.)

The *Education Act* describes the roles and obligations of governing boards, principals, teachers, school boards, schools, etc. The student ombudsman, governing board, and teachers do not have the powers under the *Education Act* to carry out the demands of Bill 56. For example, governing boards should not discuss individual students.

For all groups concerned, information and education are key components of any plan for moving forward. Money provided to boards by under the Action Plan on Violence[9] was used variously, depending on local needs. There is no new money to support schools directly with their new obligations defined in Bill 56. Money spent on advertising will raise awareness in the public, but will not directly help the school to meet its obligations.

Changing the environment of the school involves all members of the school community, supported by partnerships with outside agents. In the Québec context, the list of participants includes principals, school staff (bus drivers, janitorial staff, teachers, guidance counsellors, peer mediators, daycare educators, secretaries, school administrators, spiritual animators, behaviour counsellors), students, governing board, parents, school board, student ombudsman, community services (police, public security, health and social services, hospitals, etc.), community partners (municipalities, YMCA, and MELS, including the recreation and sports component of its mandate). All these agents need professional development activities to increase their awareness and coping strategies and to establish common goals for the promotion of a safe school culture.

There is a need for more counsellors, psychologists and other professionals who can function in English at the local and regional levels. The support currently provided by the regional offices to English school boards for complementary services to support the Action Plan on Violence is, in most instances, neither adequate nor appropriate, as resource persons are often unilingual francophones and have little knowledge of the particular challenges of English schools. Yet there exist bodies that provide help to English boards in a variety of ways that could be enhanced to support schools. As an example, the School Administrators' Support Team (SAST) already provides support to principals for the integration of students with special needs. The principals are the key people in establishing a safe environment in the school. They set the tone of the school, work with the staff and the governing board to set and adopt common values and are responsible for imposing consequences fairly and consistently. Adding a member to the SAST team, charged with identifying and promoting anti-discrimination activities and supporting the principals and schools in implementing them would be a valuable and cost-effective strategy, because when anti-discrimination activities are not supported or do not exist, bullying is a common result.

3. BULLYING

Bullying may be defined as a form of intentional, repeated aggression used to exercise power. It may be physical, verbal or social, often involving groups and bystanders. It is a dynamic of unhealthy interaction and goes beyond isolated incidents of fighting and misbehaviour. The roots of bullying may be racism, homophobia or non-acceptance of disabilities or other differences. These attitudes are observed in schools, although they commonly originate in the home.

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[9] Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, Violence in the schools: Let's work on it together! Action Plan to prevent and deal with violence in schools 2008-2011.
http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/publications/index.asp?page-fiche&id-1132.

The typical bully may have a high level of frustration, low self-esteem, poor coping strategies, a weak vocabulary for describing feelings; may be in a stressful situation, part of a power differential, under pressure to conform to the group norm, a previous victim of abuse or aggression, without affiliation. It has been observed that **any** student can potentially engage in bullying behaviour depending on the circumstances.

3.1 Addressing bullying

Even with efforts to promote a healthy environment in schools, there must be a universal policy, such as a code of conduct, which must be co-constructed by all participants, including students, parents, and school support staff. The code should be well-defined, well-communicated, appropriate for local contexts and practicable.

Beyond this, individual students may need more focused actions. For these students, there must be a policy involving a continuum of preventive strategies and individualized programs. As a general rule, these should focus on addressing the underlying causes and issues rather than automatically imposing punishments. They should begin with low level intervention, based on close observation of the perpetrator, the victim, and the bystanders. All participants should be asked what they saw and what they were thinking while the incident was taking place. When necessary, stronger action can be taken, but any punishment must be considered and appropriate, not mindlessly applied.

Most English schools are finding ways to raise awareness of bullying. These are usually creative solutions rather than costly ones. Any money dedicated to these efforts is more profitably spent on professional development for teachers and others in the school community.

3.2 Zero Tolerance policies

Although bullying should not be tolerated, there is evidence that Zero Tolerance policies do not work. Recent research on maturation and brain development proposes a reason for this. The dominant functioning part of the brain in young children is the limbic system, which controls instinctive and spontaneous, sometimes violent, response.

More considered, logical actions that we might call "thoughtful" responses, are controlled by the prefrontal cortex, which starts to develop at about five years of age, but is not fully developed until about age 25. Aggression to the child, such as abuse or punishment (including such acts as expulsion from school) stimulates the limbic system causing it to become overactive. This actually delays development of the prefrontal cortex, so that the child's aggressive response is exaggerated, not curbed. This research indicates that severe punishment might be a contributor to bullying incidents or to continuing the cycle of bullying. Imposing consequences, rather than setting standards and boundaries, is counter-productive if the child's developmental level is not taken into account.

3.3 Cyber-bullying
The responsibility for controlling cyber-bullying is placed on the school, but the problem does not necessarily originate or manifest itself there. Cyber-bullying generally takes place out of school. Yet, under Canadian laws, if the victim and the bully meet in the school, then the school and school board, as institutions, have a responsibility to intervene in the situation (see "Define the Line," www.definetheline.ca).

Adults have been defined as "digital immigrants," students as "digital natives," because of their facility and rapid appropriation of technology. Yet because of their immaturity, students do not recognize the line between teasing and bullying, nor when they have crossed this line. Children need instruction on the responsible use of social media, including help to distinguish between what is to be kept private and what is public. Students must be involved in developing solutions and the wise use of social media should be included in the process. Digital literacy is recognized as a component of literacy education in teacher education programs in the province: it should be a component of the curriculum in secondary schools. The Lester-B.-Pearson School Board's Digital Citizenship program is an example of teaching students about the responsible use of social media (see http://dcp.lbpsb.qc.ca/).

We have passed the time when students needed instruction in how to use technology to a time when they need to learn how to use technology responsibly. MELS could help this work by developing a guide on the actions that fall within the legal responsibility of the schools and how they can provide support and guidance for parents, using resources such as Éducaloi.[10] It could also identify and distribute curricular materials to support teachers and these could appropriately become part of the Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) program or of learning and evaluation situations (LESs) in other programs.

3.4 Measuring changes in bullying behaviour

It is hard to imagine a quantitative tool that could identify an improvement in the atmosphere of a school. The school environment is just one component that contributes to improved student success or decreased absenteeism and misbehaviour. There are no absolutes in defining behaviour. Ways of identifying and addressing poor behaviour, depending on the tolerance of teachers and principals, affect the numbers of infractions that are reported.

The student self-reporting survey "Tell them from me,"[11] which is widely used in English schools and has a section specifically dealing with bullying, allows school boards to include their own questions, and is available in French on request. It seems that the widespread use of this tool in the English schools has spurred them on to addressing the problem. To avoid the possibility that students may deliberately give sensational answers, a triangulation of the results, by asking staff and parents their perceptions as to whether or not the school is safe, would increase the reliability of the data.

4. COMMENTARY ON BILL 56

The Advisory Board submitted a commentary to the parliamentary hearings on Bill 56. This commentary is presented in Appendix 2.

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[10] http://www.educaloi.qc.ca/en/.
[11] http://www.thelearningbar.com/.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIES TO CREATE SAFE SCHOOLS

The Board's discussions moved beyond addressing bullying after the fact and sought to identify proactive ways of developing safe schools.

To that end, we submit the following recommendations:

1. that all schools develop and implement not only an anti-bullying policy, but also a proactive program of interventions agreed upon and supported by the entire school community
2. that all schools develop and implement programs such as those envisioned under path nine of *I care about school*[12] and *Jeunes actifs au secondaire*[13] that increase opportunities for affiliation among students of various interests and in all areas of school life, notably sports, the arts, and community involvement
3. that MELS develop a curriculum-based anti-bullying program that could be delivered through the Ethics and Religious Culture program, among others
4. that additional provincial funding be provided to allow schools to implement their own proactive programs, and to provide professional development for their staffs
5. that additional provincial funding be provided to improve the complementary educational services (guidance counsellors, nurses, psychologists, etc.) available to the English school boards in order to deal proactively with this issue, and that this money be recuperated from the regional offices
6. that zero tolerance school policies be avoided
7. that spiritual animators be tasked with a larger role in assisting the implementation of the anti-bullying programs in schools
8. that resources be provided to support principals in dealing with the issue of safe schools
9. that responsible use of technology be incorporated into the school curriculum

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[12] Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, *I care about school: All together for student success* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2009), http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/reussitescolaire/index_en.asp.

[13] http://www.urls-montreal.qc.ca/info.php?noPage=364&noActualite=183.

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- Eva de Gosztonyi, coordinator, Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management
- Andrea Paquette, executive director, Tolerance Foundation
- Nadia Santagata, student animator, Tolerance Foundation
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- Ellie Wilkinson, education consultant, Restorative Practices in Education.

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The following members of the Advisory Board on English Education (ABEE) participated in the preparation of this report:
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With the assistance of Juliette Larouche, *administrative support*

The mandate of the Advisory Board on English Education is to advise the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports on all matters affecting the educational services in English elementary and secondary schools. The Minister may also ask the Board for advice on a specific topic.

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

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Appendix 1: Programs That Promote Safe Schools

In most cases, the descriptions below are summaries of information on the organizations' Web sites.

The MELS Ethics and Religious Culture program

The **Ethics and Religious Culture program** will allow the student to:
- acquire or consolidate, if applicable, an understanding of how all individuals are equal in terms of right and dignity
- learn to reflect on issues
- explore, depending on his/her age, different ways in which Québec's religious heritage is present in his/her immediate or broader environment
- learn about elements of other religious traditions present in Québec
- grow and develop in a society in which different values and beliefs coexist

The student will learn to:
- carefully reflect on aspects of certain social realities and subjects such as justice, happiness, laws and rules
- ask himself or herself questions such as: What value should guide people in their relationships in society? What are the characteristics of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour? How can these behaviours be recognized?

It will therefore become easier for your child to organize his/her ideas and express them with respect and conviction.

(Taken from: https://www7.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DC/ECR/index_en.php.)

Character Education Programs address the teaching of prosocial behaviour based on ethical values. These programs are usually cross-curricular and contain learning activities that address the development of tolerance, manners, and anti-bullying behaviours. There are a variety of programs with the common characteristic of being based on pillars, values or principles. The **Six Pillars Program** is focused on the following pillars: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, caring, fairness and citizenship.

The Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management is based in the Riverside School Board and provides support to all nine English language school boards and schools and the Littoral School Board through continuous professional development of administrators, teachers and educators, dissemination of research findings and development activities in behaviour management.

Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) is an initiative of the UNICEF Canada Global Classroom. The English-Montréal School Board's Westmount Park Elementary School has become the first primary institution in Québec to become part of this initiative, inspired by the Child Friendly Schools model, established by UNICEF worldwide, which aims at improving the quality of education both under ordinary conditions and in emergency situations. This initiative, which is provided to the school at no official cost, uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to promote a school culture that is inclusive, participatory, and respectful of children and adults. The RRS model is currently offered to elementary schools in Canada. In concrete terms, this approach helps to facilitate classroom learning, reduce bullying and truancy, encourage compassion, improve the atmosphere in the classroom and the school and raise awareness of global issues among children and adults.

http://globalclassroom.unicef.ca/en/transforming_schools/rrs.htm

Mary Gordon's Roots of Empathy (ROE) is an award-winning Canadian program that has been shown to have a dramatic effect in reducing levels of aggression among school children by raising social/emotional awareness and increasing empathy. ROE is an evidence-based, bilingual, universal, classroom-based program for students from kindergarten to grade 8 which focuses on building capacity of the next generation for caring and compassionate citizenship and parenting. The heart of the program is the monthly family visit with a neighbourhood baby (2-4 months old in October) and the child's parent(s). The emotional bond that develops with the "classroom" baby over the school year increases students' emotional literacy, resulting in increased prosocial behaviour and decreased aggression and bullying.
http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/roe/index.html

The Tolerance Foundation's mission is to prevent, inform and raise awareness about the dangers inherent in all forms of intolerance, prejudice, exclusion, racism and discrimination. To achieve this objective, the Tolerance Foundation relies on unique educational solutions: a travelling exhibit called the Tolerance Caravan, participative theatre, and the Action Week Against Racism. The Caravan meets with more than 27 000 secondary students each year. Renowned as a first-rate educational organization in Canada and Québec, the Tolerance Foundation has been awarded numerous national and international prizes.
http://www.fondationtolerance.com/index_en.php

Peaceful Schools International works with 340 schools around the world to help them become more peaceful places by organizing events and projects that promote peace education. Schools use a collaborative approach to decision-making and develop a climate of cooperation, support and understanding. For example, students, parents and teachers are all involved in developing a school's discipline policy. Teaching methods stress participation, cooperation, problem-solving and respect for differences.
Students are encouraged to be open-minded and accepting of others who may look different, have different customs or hold beliefs that do not correspond with their own. Opportunities for professional development on creating a positive school climate are available to all staff. This may include training in areas such as crisis response, dealing with bullying, peer mediation, anti-racism or anti-sexism programs, or cooperative learning strategies.
www.peacefulschoolsinternational.org.

The International Institute for Restorative Practices advocates an approach to discipline that makes offenders, victims, and school staff part of the process. Offenders come to understand the true consequences of their actions, and all parties, including the victims, then have a say in identifying ways offenders can repair the harm that has been done to their relationships with

others. Restorative Practice does not replace other consequences, such as suspension. Rather, it strives to ensure offenders truly take responsibility for the hurt they have caused others and take steps to make it right. Restorative Practice encourages the use of restorative approaches to manage conflict and tensions by focusing upon repairing harm and strengthening relationships. Restorative Practice teaches empathy, promotes understanding and responsibility and empowers victims.
www.iirp.org.

Leave out Violence (LOVE) is an award-winning youth violence prevention organization.
LOVE was founded on the belief that youth challenged by violence can be agents of change, capable of transforming their own lives, investing themselves in their communities, and making the world a safer place.

Using LOVE's educational programs in photography, video, broadcasting and journalism combined with leadership training, youth analyze and document the causes and impact of violence and propose reality-based solutions.

LOVE youth use the media tools they create and the life skills they learn to promote nonviolence youth-to-youth across cultural, political, racial, religious, socioeconomic and geographical boundaries.

http://leaveoutviolence.org/

Pacific Path (*Vers la pacifique*) developed three curricula to launch a K-12 school-wide adventure along the pacific path: for preschool, elementary and secondary schools. The overall objective of the Pacific Path program is to prevent violence by promoting pacific behaviours. To be implemented over two years, the program has two successive phases: conflict resolution and peer mediation. *Conflict resolution* teaches students how to resolve interpersonal conflicts peacefully in interactive class sessions. During the second phase**,** *peer mediation*, students learn to adopt mediation as a way to resolve conflict. Improvements have been shown in prosocial behaviours after two years.

http://www.ucalgary.ca/resolve/violenceprevention/English/reviewprog/bullyprogs.htm#prog2

Appendix 2: Commentary on Bill 56

(This is the English version of the brief that was sent to the Québec National Assembly's Committee on Culture and Education parliamentary hearings on Bill 56. It is included here for completeness since this brief elaborates on some of the issues raised in the commentary.)

The Advisory Board on English Education welcomes the opportunity to comment on the content of Bill 56, *An Act to prevent and deal with bullying and violence in schools*. The Board supports the Minister's intention to guarantee that schools are safe places where teachers can teach and students can learn in a sustaining environment, and welcomes the use of the word "prevent" in the Bill's title. It has concerns relevant to the second focus of the Bill and its proposed ways to "deal with" bullying.

The first general observation is that laws already exist to address bullying. Bullying is a criminal act under sections 264 and 265 of the *Criminal Code* if it involves harassment, assault, threat of assault, or libel with intent to injure. Schools in Québec already have a legal obligation to incorporate a sustained program to develop a positive learning environment under the Action Plan on Violence. Québec's *Youth Protection Act* requires people to intervene in cases of violence towards minors. Closer attention to the implementation of these laws would address much of the intent of Bill 56.

The second general observation is that stemming the causes of bullying is not addressed by the Bill. It is a dynamic of an unhealthy interaction. This distinguishes bullying from isolated incidents of fighting and misbehaviour. Frequently, bullying is a symptom of racism, homophobia, the non-acceptance of disabilities or of other differences. Curing the symptom does not necessarily cure the disease, and the Bill makes no mention of the larger issues of which bullying is symptomatic.

Thirdly, a quick survey by Board members showed that all the English-language school boards already have well-developed policies in place to address bullying, and that there are also many initiatives to prevent bullying, as well as to punish it. In this sense, the financial penalties threatened by the Bill seem unnecessary.

The Advisory Board's specific concerns about Bill 56 include the following:

- Bill 56 is punitive rather than proactive in tone. Short-term retributive practices may appear to be efficient, but although their effects are seen quickly, they are not as effective as long-term strategies that result in a safe school environment. The Board will outline some long-term strategies that have been shown to be effective in a brief to the Minister.

- There is no content that might be described as "educational." All partners in the educational process need opportunities to learn about the signs, effects, and treatment of bullying. Neither is there any mention of community responsibility that could profitably be incorporated from the recreation and sports sections of the Ministry's mandate. Given young people's intense need for affiliation with a group, organizations dedicated to recreation and sports could be encouraged to become part of the community's input and support families and schools, and the Ministry is well placed to make this happen.

- The Bill places overwhelming bureaucratic demands on administrators. Principals will be in a very difficult position trying to live up to the expectations set out in the Bill and the subsequent expectations that some parents will have. There are already anecdotal reports of principals receiving telephone calls from parents demanding action within 48 hours, the time span specified on the Web site. With its proposed route for complaint, the Bill plays into the hands of truculent, sometimes threatening, and uncooperative parents, who

do not want to admit—or believe—that their child is a bully. It also reduces the power of the individual school to set expectations for behaviour.

- There is no provision for the protection of staff members, or a proposed route for staff complaints when they are bullied by other adults. A safe school is safe for all members of its community.

- There is no mention of adult education and vocational training. There have been cases of adult-adult bullying in adult education centres and there are also centres that have the title "Peaceful Schools."

- There is no mention of complementary educational services, yet the support from these services is in the front line for dealing with troubled children who may be bullies or the victims of bullying.

- The Bill changes the job description of the student ombudsman a nd gives the student ombudsman—who should be the last resort—a role too early in the appeal process. The *Education Act* describes the roles and obligations of governing boards, principals, teachers, school boards, schools, etc. The student ombudsman and teachers do not have powers under the collective agreement to carry out the demands of Bill 56. Boards already have clear steps in place to deal with parental concerns, yet the law bypasses the process. The Board believes that directors general will not be able to handle the load of dealing with complaints that they will inevitably receive or with the demands for reporting on the school board's responses to the complaints.

- The role for governing boards is poorly defined in the Bill, but at first sight, it appears to be inappropriate. Under no circumstances should the governing board be discussing individual students in cases of misbehaviour.

- There is emphasis on zero tolerance, including suspensions and expulsion, rather than on defining and maintaining boundaries. There is evidence that Zero Tolerance policies do not work. Recent research on maturation and brain development proposes a reason for this and indicates that severe punishment might be a contributor to bullying incidents or to continuing the cycle of bullying. Since one pillar of the school's mission is socialization, actions designed to socialize students should be based on research.

- There is an expectation that the school can "fix" cyber-bullying. Under Canadian laws, if the victim and the cyber-bully meet in the school, the school and school board, as institutions, already have a responsibility to intervene in the situation. But the problem does not necessarily originate or manifest itself in the schools. Parents have a responsibility to monitor their children's involvement in social media and it would be worthwhile to provide resources to help them do so.

- The Bill focuses on top down action, rather than on policies serving local needs and the need for all participants in the educational process—including parents—to help children develop social skills and make them more respectful and empathetic towards others. In short, the Board consensus is that a new law is not needed, but rather a living document that can effect locally appropriate change to produce safe school environments.