



QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

4795 ST. CATHERINE STREET WEST, MONTREAL, QUE. H3Z 1G8 TELEPHONE: 033-3664

2535 Cavendish Blvd., Suite 212, Montreal, Quebec H4B 2Y5 Tel. (514) 481-5619

A STATEMENT FROM
QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

TO
THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL OF EDUCATION

ON
THE STATE OF THE CONDITION OF TEACHING
IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC

Montreal

April 1984



A MEMBER OF THE CANADIAN HOME AND SCHOOL AND PARENT-TEACHER FEDERATION

"Upon the education of the
people of this country, the
fate of this country depends."

Benjamin Disraeli, 1874

Introduction

Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations (QFHSAs) is a parent group, working as volunteers at the school, provincial and national levels. QFHSAs take particular pride in the fact, that over the last forty years, parents, as volunteers, have seconded the schools' efforts to provide assistance in areas of school life, to upgrade or enhance the school's environment and, thereby, benefit the students. As an adjunct to direct involvement at the school level, through its resolutions addressed, over the years, to various levels involved in the educational process, QFHSAs have pinpointed areas its members felt needed either more funding, changing, support, introduction, etc., as the case may be. These will be referred to specifically later on.

QFHSAs' main goal is the welfare of the child both at home and in the school. As involved parents we cannot but aim our endeavours toward quality education and quality home life. While some people may disesteem such motherhood statements, we are not ashamed of them as it has been QFHSAs' experience that, at the decision-making levels in education - 'the child' who cannot defend his rights, is often forgotten or appears somewhere at the lowest level of an *organigram*.

There are certain areas this Committee of Inquiry has targetted for comment which QFHSA feels can best be answered by those directly involved in the actual pedagogical act. QFHSA will, therefore, attempt to comment, albeit selectively, on those questions upon which we feel we can have parental input to this Committee with regard to teaching in the English Protestant system where the majority of our parent-members are involved.

Climate in the Schools

As parents, our most direct feed-back on climate in the schools is the reaction of our children and the atmosphere we experience when we visit their schools. As a federation our members exchange information and it is from this that we perceive common strengths and weaknesses in the educational system.

At the moment, there is a general concensus that the climate in all schools, but more particularly in high schools and especially in large comprehensive high schools of the English Protestant sector, is most unhappy. How can teaching possibly be unaffected, when teachers must implement régimes pédagogiques without proper training, preparation or even materials? What school can reflect a positive cooperative climate when teachers' contracts are decreed rather than negotiated¹ in good faith by both parties - teacher and employer - where positions are in jeopardy from year to year and where teachers no longer derive any job satisfaction? It would seem to many parents that the heart has gone out of teachers.

¹QFHSA telegram to Premier Lévesque, February 17/83 (Appendix I).

If this climate is taking a heavy toll from the adults in the school system (absenteeism, sick leave, etc.) what must it be doing to the child? A child is a thinking, sensitive human being - we are deluding ourselves if we suppose our children can remain unaffected.

We would suggest to the Council that there is a definite co-relation between the public school climate and the ever-increasing demand for alternate schools or for entry to private schools.

A child's education is here and now - parents are not willing for their child to be a 'guinea pig' nor can they wait around for the system to 'correct itself' - their prime responsibility is the best education they can give to their children - and many, at great personal sacrifice, are turning to alternate schools or to the private sector because of their disillusionment with the public school system.

What of the child who is in the public system - what will his future be? What happens to a child who has had three complete changes of schedules; teachers coming and going as if there was a revolving door in the classroom - all from September to January?² Dare we hope this child will succeed? If this child has difficulties or begins to have them, who has been with him long enough to identify his problems - let alone correct them.

Over and above staffing changes within the school year, there is the problem of staff turnover from year to year. QFHSA would like to submit two letters written by anguished parent groups to their school board.³

²Actual case verbally related to QFHSA.

³Appendix II (Keith School) and Appendix III (Meadowbrook School).

They eloquently state not only the problem of staff turnover, but the underlying fact that parents are actively aware and deeply disturbed about it.

While QFHSA has no resolutions as yet on the integration of students with difficulties, we have had some reaction, especially from outlying areas on this subject. Smaller communities do not have the facilities to implement integration, nor do their schools. Integration of students demands a low pupil/teacher ratio; specialized training and specialized assistance, none of which is available in the present context. Communities outside large urban areas are having greater difficulties implementing the policy directing this type of integration. QFHSA feels it may be wise to implement this policy only when adequate support systems are in place.

Certainly, in all these cases, the system is failing the child and his parents.

Relations of Teachers with Parents

On a one-to-one basis, relations between a teacher and a parent are very much based on what each party may bring to an interview (their own school experience, their level of education, the country they were educated in, language barrier, and so on). Moreover, there is an art to parent-teacher interviews - what questions to ask, how to ask them, how to be constructively critical, etc. - to achieve any rapport whatsoever, the assurance of confidentiality is, of course, primary. To ensure satisfactory interviews for both parties "in-service training for teachers

in conducting effective conferences"⁴ with parents is necessary. It would be most useful if literature/seminars be made available to parents who may wish to acquire or up-grade their skills on this subject.

Too often the parent-teacher interview can degenerate into somewhat of a confrontation, 'what is expected of the parent and the pupil' without any constructive suggestions of what can be done co-operatively by the parents, the teacher and the student.

As our schools become more pluralistic, it would be most advantageous if teachers were made aware of the various educational systems the world over (whichever systems may apply to the background of their pupils) and also the role of the teacher and the educational system, as well as parents, may play in a particular community. With this background in comparative systems, the teacher could anticipate some of the problems, allay some of the fears, and help the parents as well as the pupils to smoothly adapt to their new country.

On this subject, having impartial interpreters present where need be (instead of some member of the family - usually the oldest child) would go a long way toward constructive parent/teacher interviews in pluralistic schools.

QFHSa would like to commend the Council of the valuable work it has done over the years on the subject of intercultural education, and we have especially noted the Council's sensitivity to the problems of education in a pluralist society.

⁴QFHSa Brief to the Royal Commission on Education of the Province of Quebec, 1962, p.54.

Multi-directional Information

Again, each sector must, of course, speak for itself on this subject. From the parents' point of view, it is very subjective; however, eliminating pedagogical 'language' and euphemisms from communications with parents would be most helpful. QFHSA has passed resolutions on report cards though, to ensure impartial judgement of students. (1972 and 1973)

Those persons in the educational field might be quite surprised by how the average man in the street interprets educational terms. There is an appropriate time for using 'in-service' language; however, when addressing the general public - clarity or explanatory notes would be most useful.

On another level, this is the information society, we are all sometimes overwhelmed by the paper flow - in this instance quantity does not necessarily translate into quality. Guide-lines for modes of communication can be easily outlined to parents at the beginning of the school year. Mainly, a welcoming attitude on the part of the school staff will encourage parents to communicate whenever the need to do so arises.

We cannot stress enough the importance of the staff representative at parent meetings. A staff representative acts as a bridge between the teachers' point of view and the parents' point of view. The presence and active participation of a staff representative at meetings ensures the building of a rapport between parents and the school staff and achieves parent support for both teacher and school endeavours.

Evaluation of Teachers

Because education is a common experience, one almost everyone can relate to, it is interesting to note that people, in passing, may refer to the school they attended, but are never indifferent to the teachers who taught them. Collectively, we remember the 'good' teachers and the 'bad' teachers. It may have been in a one or two-room country school or in a large urban school - but the 'good teacher' knew each pupil; knew how to spur each one on to greater achievement; knew when to be firm and when to relax the schedule to introduce a new learning experience, but above all cared for each and every student, and, usually, every student felt this and reciprocated.⁵

Which brings us in maturity to question why 'bad teachers' continued and continue to remain in the system? Teaching is a profession, but it is really much more than that - it is a vocation - and, as in other professions/vocations there must be a 'calling' - to be effective the individual must experience a high level of challenge and satisfaction in the exercise of his profession/vocation. If there is no challenge-satisfaction-enjoyment, one would strongly suggest that the individual be spurred to seriously examine his choice and reorient to a more suitable and satisfactory position.

People who seek professional help (medical, legal, etc.) do have a choice of whom they consult - if they are not satisfied, they are free to seek out another professional who will serve them better.

⁵QFHSB Brief to the Royal Commission on Education of the Province of Quebec, 1962, "What we Expect from our Teachers", p.14.

Unfortunately, children and parents do not have that choice when it comes to public education - students and parents must accept the teachers assigned - therefore, in the interest of quality education, it would be well that various forms of individual assessment be done at entry level to a faculty of education and on an on-going periodic basis throughout the individual teacher's career, accompanied by the support/reorientation/assessment structures which this, of course, implies.

Teacher Training

Much has been done to up-grade Teacher Training and, over the years, many possibilities for specialization have been offered to teachers to enable them to pursue their profession in their particular fields of interest.

Over the years, many of QFHSA's resolutions have been addressed to the institution of in-service training or degree courses in such subjects as personality development (1963 and 1971), environmental education (1971), improvement of the teaching of the English language in English schools (1974), funds for sufficient specialists to teach French in English schools (1977), training and retraining in applied linguistics and in modern techniques of second language teaching (1970), decreasing pupil/teacher ratio in teaching of French (1973), several resolutions with regard to special education, learning disabilities and the gifted and talented (1957-1972), health education (1977), teaching of safety (1983), development of curriculum for the English-speaking community by qualified educators and parents within the English-speaking community (1983).

For your information, QFHSA's resolutions emanate from the 'grass-roots' membership - they express the hopes and perceived needs of parents in the English-speaking Protestant sector in matters of education. We can, therefore assure you that a majority of QFHSA parents across the province feel a genuine need, when they put forward resolutions.

It would be very difficult to imagine teacher-training without practice teaching, or, for that matter, teaching without some form of initial probation. Most professional bodies require such progressive steps prior to the granting of full professional recognition. Once this certification period is over, most professional bodies have some form of 'watchdog' committee to oversee not only the interests of the profession, but also the maintainance and upgrading of the quality of professionalism.

On-going evaluation is the keystone to the maintenance of quality educators. A teacher who receives good evaluations will certainly feel pride and enthusiasm to pursue teaching. A teacher who needs assistance will be grateful for the identification of qualities and deficiencies and the help provided to improve himself. And the frustrations both teachers and parents experience over an incompetent teacher in their midst would be alleviated, if such incompetence were confirmed and such a teacher be directed to seek counselling, retraining or the pursuit on an alternate career. It is undoubtedly the responsibility of the school administration to evaluate teachers, and the responsibility of school boards to evaluate administrators. Today, there is a wide choice of mechanisms for fair and just evaluations and no one need fear personal bias.

Young Teachers-Older Teachers

Young teachers are needed in every school - they provide the spark, the enthusiasm, the energy and the optimism which rejuvenates the entire school staff; while older teachers are required to provide balance, experience, knowledge, guidance and continuity. Parents feel most comfortable when they observe a blending of the two in their child's school. A very thoughtful article by Sylvia Gold, Director of Professional Development Services, Canadian Teacher Federation, addressed this very problem.⁶

Communications - Secondary to Post-secondary Education

QFHSA members repeatedly ask for workshops on bridging the gap between secondary school and post-secondary education. There would appear to be not only a serious lack of information, but also a breakdown in communicating requirements for specific careers.

Support Services

Another topic that has not been addressed and which affects the condition of teachers in the school, is the removal of support services from the school. Cut-backs in Social Affairs allied to cut-backs in education will seriously affect the valuable team effort that parents feel is necessary between the teacher, the school nurse, social workers and other support professionals, for a healthy, vibrant school community.

⁶The Sentinel, February 1984, "Which is plus side - under 35 or over?", p.7.

Teacher Contract Negotiations

"Quality education cannot be bargained for or negotiated in a framework of confrontation. There must be something inherently wrong in the school system when the two parties in this dispute - the government/ employer and the teacher/employee - cannot agree on what is best for quality education. QFHSAs believe that quality education can be achieved only in a climate of social peace and stability. The environment - the school - must be a happy one in which to learn."⁷

The burden of responsibility for resolving the issue of teacher/ employer negotiations rests with both parties. The present decree has not produced a happy environment in which our children can learn.

Conclusion

Three major projects within five years - a new curriculum, teacher/ government negotiations and the proposed school reform plan - Bill 40 - have created a system of education which is top heavy with power struggles, administrative nightmares and an overwhelming feeling of insecurity, by both teachers and parents, about the educational future of the children who are our most important 'vested' interest.

We trust that this Committee of Inquiry of the Superior Council of Education will advise the government of our concerns.

⁷QFHSAs Brief to Parliamentary Committee on Education, March 1983, pp. 4 and 5.



NEWS RELEASE

COMMUNIQUÉ

QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

4795 ST. CATHERINE STREET, W., MONTREAL, QUE. H3Z 1S8 TELEPHONE: 933-3664

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 17, 1983

The following is the text of a telegram sent to Premier René Lévesque on Wednesday, February 16, 1983. Copies were also sent to Mr. Claude Ryan, Dr. Camille Laurin, Mr. Gérard D. Lévesque and Mrs. Joan Dougherty.

On behalf of the members of Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations we wish to make the following statement:

- 1) We deplore the fact that the government of Quebec broke a legitimately negotiated contract with its teachers before it had expired.
- 2) We are against a decreed settlement. This does not encourage peace and stability in the school.
- 3) We are concerned about an increase in teaching time without a parallel increase in student time (per week). This creates a situation where educational services are reduced and students have less access to individual attention by teachers. As well we are concerned that support services in the schools will also be cut back.
- 4) We urge the government to negotiate a fair settlement with the teachers. We would support mediation or binding arbitration in order that our teachers return to the classroom.

Sincerely

Owen Buckingham
President

For further information: (514) 933-3664





NEWS RELEASE COMMUNIQUÉ

QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

2535 CAVENDISH BLVD., SUITE 212, MONTREAL, QUEBEC H4B 2Y5 TELEPHONE: (514) 481-5619

Publication immédiate

le 17 février 1983

Voici le texte d'un télégramme que la Fédération des associations foyer-école de Québec a envoyé au Premier Ministre, M. René Lévesque, mercredi le 16 février 1983.

Nous avons aussi fait parvenir des copies à Dr. Camille Laurin, M. Gérard D. Lévesque, M. Claude Ryan et Mme. Joan Dougherty.

Monsieur le Premier Ministre,

- 1) Nous déplorons le fait que le gouvernement du Québec ait résilié un contrat négocié légalement avant que celui-ci ait pris fin.
- 2) Nous sommes contre l'imposition d'un règlement par décret ce qui n'encourage d'aucune façon la paix et la stabilité dans l'école.
- 3) Nous sommes très inquiets de constater une augmentation des heures d'enseignement sans une augmentation parallèle des heures de présence de l'élève à l'école (par semaine). Cet état de choses conduit à une réduction des services pédagogiques où les élèves auront moins d'accès à l'attention individualisé des enseignants. De plus, il y aura un retranchement des services personnels aux élèves.
- 4) Nous exigeons que le gouvernement négocie une entente équitable avec les enseignants. Nous croyons à la voie légale de la médiation et de l'arbitrage afin que nos enseignants puissent revenir en classe.

Pour de plus amples renseignements
veuillez téléphoner (514) 933-3664.

JUN 29 1983

**COMMISSION DES ÉCOLES PROTESTANTES
DU GRAND MONTRÉAL****THE PROTESTANT SCHOOL BOARD
OF GREATER MONTREAL**

June 20, 1983

Mr. M. R. Fox
Director General
The Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal
6000 Fielding
Montreal, Que.

Dear Mr. Fox:

In view of the sweeping manpower changes which Keith School is about to undergo for the second time in as many years, I have been instructed by the members of the Home and School Association to register in the strongest possible terms their dissatisfaction with the staffing policies devised through negotiations between the P.S.B.G.M. and the Teachers' Union.

Put very simply, you are destroying the fabric of our school. There is no way - no matter how professional or dedicated teachers are - that they can come into a new environment, adapt to local practices and conditions and become a member of the school community during the course of a single academic year. Under such conditions teachers cannot be expected to effectively integrate themselves into the life of the school. Neither can they be expected to get to know the students and provide them with the additional guidance, direction and understanding which transforms the process of instruction into teaching. As such, there is a lack of continuity which is as upsetting to the students as it is for the teachers.

In the case of Keith School, continuity is not only desirable but essential. The student population is comprised of children of widely differing social, economic, racial and ethnic backgrounds. Apart from its diversity, it has also been recently augmented by students being fed in from Lachine Rapids School. Consequently, teachers who know the student body and have assisted the "new" children in making their transition from one school to another are required.

cont'd.

The school operates on the "open" concept and again, teachers who have adapted to this type of teaching environment are a necessity. Lastly, Keith School is privileged to have handicapped students from the Mackay Center on its enrolment and teachers who are familiar with these children and have learned to cope with their unique disabilities are mandatory if this process of integration is to be a success.

When viewed in the light of the above, it is painfully obvious why staff turnovers must be reduced. If not, Keith will cease to be a school with all that the term implies and degenerate into a learning institution of questionable merit. In view of Keith's past record as a school which has brilliantly served its community, this must not be allowed to happen.

Surely, there has to be a better, fairer and more equitable method of determining what teachers will serve at a given school in a given year.

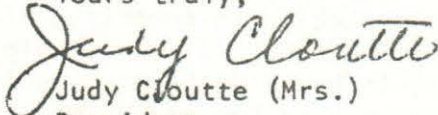
Surely, the P.S.B.G.M. can do a little more in assigning and reassigning teachers than by simply referring to its master lists and printouts and operating by the book.

Surely, given the Board's and the Teachers' Union resources and collective brainpower, steps can be taken which will be to the benefit of individual schools, teachers and student populations rather than an exercise in paper shuffling with expediency as its object. Never lose sight of the fact that you are dealing with human beings - not pieces of paper - and that how you treat the teachers and their students now should and must be determined by concern for their mutual benefit and well-being rather than bureaucratic convenience.

You may not agree with either the tone or the content of this letter; that is your privilege. However, you cannot fail to agree with the fact that we have shown that we are vitally concerned over the ongoing operation of Keith School as it is currently constituted and that, under present circumstances we have serious reservations about its future.

On behalf of our concerned parents, I remain,

Yours truly,



Judy Cloutte (Mrs.)

President

Keith Home and School Association

cc: Dr. L. Patterson
Mr. R.T.B. Fairbairn
Mr. R. F. Haynes, Principal
Mr. Allan H. Butler

cc: Mrs. A. Schlutz
Staff of Keith School
President, M.T.A.
Marion Daigle, President
Q.F.H.S.A.

For the Board of Directors

OCT 26 1982

MEADOWBROOK SCHOOL COMMITTEE740 - 52nd AVENUE.
LACHINE, QUE. H8T 2X6September 30th 1982.Mr. Marcel Fox,
Director General
PSBGM

Dear Mr. Fox,

Our school, like many others in the PSBGM system, was hard hit, last June, by the placing of teachers on surplus and excess. Our school committee discussed the problem at length, and wishes to inform you of its views before the negotiations with the Teachers' union begin this fall. The motion that we passed runs:

" as the present system of determining surplus teachers appears to consider only a teacher's seniority as a qualification,

and as this system can lead to serious disruption of teaching programs and to deterioration of teaching overall,

(be it resolved) that the system be changed to ensure quality and program continuity in the teaching of our children."

I hope that considerations like these will be uppermost in your mind when you come to participate in the negotiations.

Yours,

Richard Harris

(DR. R. HARRIS, Chairman, Mdhe Sch. Cttee).

1-100

Which is plus side - under 35 or over?

by
Sylvia
Gold



The title of this piece is deliberately ambiguous. Which is the "plus" side — under age 35 or over? Is the spectre of the aging of a profession laden with intimations of senility and laxity? Or is the maturity, breadth of experience and knowledge that comes with each succeeding birthday a celebration of aging we have yet to enjoy?

On the other hand, perhaps the plus side of 35 is the under-side, a time of vitality, adventure in novelty (where we lack experience, all is novelty), a stretching of boundaries, and intensity in living.

The teaching profession has reason to consider the "35 year" question. We are an aging profession, according to the statisticians who measure these things. In Canada in the 1981-82 school year, the ages of teachers in Canada broke down as follows:

81,076 (approximately 42 per cent) teachers were under 35 years of age

111,451 (approximately 58 per cent) were 35 years of age or older.

Source: Statistics provided to CTF by Statistics Canada, 1982. These statistics do not include Québec.

The cause of our collective aging, beyond the obvious physiological realities, is that there has been relatively little hiring of new teachers by school boards in recent years. Initially, this reduction in hiring appeared to be due to declining enrolments. In simplistic management terms, fewer students mean fewer teachers, quantitatively speaking.

Sharp on the heels of this phenomenon come political restraint programs. Less money for education means less money for teachers' salaries. It means making education dollars go further by increasing the responsibilities of currently employed teachers and "making do" with existing resources, effectively shutting the door to employment prospects for new recruits.

Not our doing...

So while the aging of the profession was not of our doing — we aren't advocates of ever-increasing class size or reduction of services to students — we are somehow made to feel responsible for the real or imagined repercussions. It is said that it is increasingly difficult to find coaches for sporting teams because older teachers haven't the energy for the task.

Some critics are convinced that older teachers don't keep up with developments in their field, and are too old-fashioned and traditional for the brave new post-industrial world. They say that teachers who've been around for a long time get too set in their ways, and can't relate to their young students. The kinder critics advocate bringing in early retirement schemes to move out the old, make room for the new. (Not that early retirement isn't well earned and isn't tempting!)

Young teachers

Take heart. When our society opens its heart and its pocket book to education we shall again welcome large numbers of young teachers to our ranks.

We shall provide the shoulders to cry on when the neophytes encounter their first discipline problem; we'll help them observe the tell-tale student behaviors that signify learning problems or developing emotional problems, we'll discuss the various methods we've come up upon to help students understand complex mathematical problems or the

significance of the industrial revolution in a changing society; we'll help them take in their stride the 1001 administrative details that are part of teaching (with or without the aid of computer programs for classroom management). We'll bring our knowledge, experience, humor, patience and wisdom to their aid. And they will inject their questioning, their effervescence, their new knowledge and stubborn determination into our worlds.

Mix needed

It is sad that we cannot have a better mix of ages in the profession, for each age group has much to enjoy and learn from the other. Until we do, we who are the aging ones cannot allow ourselves to be the stereotype of the older teacher. We must instead bring out the wisdom, mystery, knowledge, intuition and energy we have acquired and use it for our students' best advantage.

Science has found out enough about the aging process to destroy the myth about "old dogs never learn". Our slogan can be "In Praise of Older Teachers" — if we keep ourselves open, alert and interested in our students and our professional competence.

Real Changes

In the meantime, as we live through the real changes in education under restraint, let us document the meaning of restraint to our students in terms of greater anonymity in larger class sizes, reduction of vital specialist services, diminishing and even out-dated learning materials, and loss of funds for para-curricular activities such as field trips and sports events.

Let us win the fight for a proper number of teachers to give Canadian children the education they need. Only then can we have the exciting age mix we want in the teaching population.

Note: Sylvia Gold is Director, Professional Development Services, CTF.