

Conditions for **Greater** Success

ACTION PLAN

TO PROMOTE SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS
WITH HANDICAPS, SOCIAL MALADJUSTMENTS
OR LEARNING DISABILITIES

GIVEN THE ORIENTATIONS OF THE POLICY ON SPECIAL EDUCATION AND THE DIFFICULTIES REGARDING STUDENTS WITH HANDICAPS, SOCIAL MALADJUSTMENTS OR LEARNING DISABILITIES, THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, RECREATION AND SPORTS HAS ANNOUNCED THE FOLLOWING PRIORITIES FOR ACTION:

Support the organization of a variety of services, including special classes.

- 1) The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) will remind schools that the **organization of services must be based on the evaluation of each student's needs and abilities.** To this end, by providing support resources (see measure 2 below), MELS will propose a **variety of ways of grouping students** so that they can be integrated into regular classes on a full-time or part-time basis and, as necessary, attend special classes. For example, other approaches may be used to supplement regular and special classes in order to meet the needs of certain students: a temporary class for students with behavioural difficulties, a resource class in a basic subject for students with learning difficulties, or at the secondary level, a special class only in the basic subjects.
- 2) As of the 2007-2008 school year, MELS has earmarked **\$2.4 million annually** to provide a **team of experienced personnel to help school boards and school administrators diversify their methods of organization for students with special needs.**
- 3) MELS will provide **even more rigorous monitoring of the application of the approach** described in the teachers' collective agreement, **which calls for the organization of educational services on the basis of students' needs rather than a categorization according to their difficulties.** This monitoring will be carried out by the Comité national de concertation, which is made up of representatives of the employer and the union. The committee will on an ongoing basis examine the application of the provisions of the collective agreement concerning services for students with special needs in order to plan for any adjustments required in the schools.

Where possible, foster better integration into regular classes.

- 4) MELS will **significantly lower (20 per cent) the number of students per class in schools in Québec's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods** (socioeconomic index of 9 or 10). This will affect students in **Elementary Cycle Two and Cycle Three in these neighbourhoods**, as well as those in **Secondary I**. This reduction will be spread over three years beginning in 2009-2010 and will require an **additional budget of \$56.3 million** in order to recruit more than **1000 teachers**.
- 5) MELS will define **guidelines on the conditions required for the successful integration of students with special needs into regular classes** while ensuring that the needs of the other students are also taken into account. These guidelines will specify the factors to be considered in order to provide the necessary **positive conditions for students and teachers** and will set out a process for analyzing the constraints of the situation. The guidelines will encourage the schools to consider the following elements, for example: the total number of students in a class; the number and characteristics of students with special needs; the preparation, implementation and monitoring of individualized education plans (IEPs); the support services to be provided for the students and the teacher; training required by the teacher. The guidelines will be published during the 2008-2009 school year.
- 6) MELS will allocate **\$3.5 million** annually to school boards to provide **occasional release time for teachers who have several students with special needs in their regular classes**. This time will be used primarily for concerted action by staff and to improve the quality and monitoring of IEPs. This funding is in addition to the sum of \$14.6 million already included in the basic funding for professional development for teachers. It brings the funding in this area to a total of \$18.1 million, which represents an increase of nearly 24 per cent.
- 7) MELS will adopt and distribute a **reference framework** to support the schools with regard to **intervention measures for students with behavioural difficulties**. The framework will be intended to guide school staff, particularly teachers, in working with these students, and will cover aspects of the organization of services for them.

Provide support for parents.

- 8) Subject to the adoption of Bill 88 on democracy and school board governance, the Minister will require school boards to establish by regulation **a procedure for examining complaints submitted by students or their parents**. This procedure should allow complainants who are not satisfied with the outcome of the examination of their complaint to apply to **a student advocate** designated by the school board. The advocate should be **neutral** and should be from **outside the school board**. He or she should give the council of commissioners his or her opinion on the validity of the complaint and, where applicable, suggest appropriate corrective action.
- 9) In addition, MELS will **follow up on requests for reconsideration** addressed to school boards in connection with section 187.1 of the *Education Act* in order to identify possible solutions.
- 10) In order to support parents, MELS will in the course of next year develop **information tools accessible to all parents** and will implement various measures to enable the advisory committees on services for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities to fulfill their role (training, networking, etc.).

Strengthen the complementarity between MSSS and MELS services.

- 11) As of September 2008, MELS will add the equivalent of **eight resource persons to support school staff in carrying out local joint action plans** under the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS)–MELS complementarity agreement. These resource persons will work in all the regions of Québec.
- 12) MELS, in collaboration with the MSSS, will support **joint projects that foster the development of expertise and the harmonization of interventions**, specifically those involving early prevention of difficulties and students requiring more specialized services.
- 13) **A guide for developing a draft agreement** on the joint provision of services to students will be produced in order to **facilitate students' access** to evaluation and intervention **services** and **ensure the harmonization of these services**.
- 14) MELS, in collaboration with the MSSS, has revised the **terms and conditions of funding for MELS-MSSS places to take into account the MSSS shift to ambulatory care and the new needs of these students**, particularly in detoxification centres. These new terms and conditions will affect students in youth centres (rehabilitation centres, group homes and intermediate resources), short-term and long-term care hospitals, and detoxification centres. These changes will be implemented in 2008-2009 and will mean **the addition of 955 places and an increased net cost of \$2.3 million**.

Increase training and support for personnel.

- 15) In collaboration with the universities, MELS will define **components of initial teacher training to prepare all future teachers for working with students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities**, whether they are integrated into regular classes or are in special classes.
- 16) MELS will ask the universities to develop **flexible approaches for master's programs** to meet the need for specialists in **remedial education**.
- 17) As of the 2008-2009 school year, MELS will ask school boards to see that **all teachers make activities related to working with students with special needs part of their continuing training plans**. It will also ask them to see that **continuing training plans for all personnel include activities related to working with these students**.

Facilitate the distribution of funding for services for students with handicaps and provide better information.

- 18) MELS will **examine the terms and conditions of the funding and provision of services for students with handicaps** in order to see that they ensure greater and **faster support for the services provided to these students** instead of being subordinated to the students' categorization.
- 19) In an appendix to the budgetary rules for each school year, MELS will publish the **amount allocated to each school board** for a student in a regular class for each category of educational services, the amount allocated for students with handicaps, and the additional amount provided for at-risk students or students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities. **For purposes of transparency and accountability, each school board must submit this information to the schools, the unions and the parents.**

Publish the results of the application of the Policy on Special Education.

- 20) In collaboration with its partners in the Working Group on Special Education, MELS will **analyze the results of the evaluation** of the application of the Policy on Special Education **in order to propose any other adjustments** needed to better meet the needs of students with special needs.
- 21) MELS will follow up on a recommendation of the evaluation report proposing that **school administrators be trained and equipped to prepare and evaluate an IEP**. It will also see that the schools provide regular monitoring of IEPs..