



Being a full-fledged partner in your child's education

## **Handbook for parents of children with special needs**

 Fédération  
des comités de parents  
du Québec



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## **Project manager**

Québec Federation of Parents' Committees  
Lyne Deschamps LL.B., general manager

## **Coordinator and author**

Marie-Eve Proulx, M.A., consultant

## **Orientation committee**

In January 2010, the Québec Federation of Parents' Committees (QFPC) held a consultation meeting with more than sixty parents on issues affecting students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties. Following this meeting, an orientation committee was struck to help create this handbook.

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Serge Baillargeon, pedagogical and special education consultant, Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec  
Louise Bertrand, parent and president of the CCSEHDAA (Advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities), Commission scolaire des Laurentides  
Yves Cossette, parent and member of the CCSEHDAA, Commission scolaire de l'Énergie  
Mireille de Palma, consultante and president of the CCSEHDAA, Commission scolaire de la Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles  
Maude Dubé, Direction de l'adaptation scolaire, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport  
Solange Gauvin, Association des cadres scolaires du Québec  
Marie-Josée Lapointe, parent and vice-president of the CCSEHDAA, Commission scolaire de Montréal  
Sonia Roberge, Association québécoise du personnel de direction des écoles  
France Tremblay, parent and president of the CCSEHDAA, Commission scolaire des Patriotes  
Johanne Vachon, parent and president of the CCSEHDAA, Commission scolaire des Appalaches

## **External collaboration**

Anne Boucher, special education teacher  
Sylvie Chantal, parent and teacher

## **Graphic design and page layout**

Julie Payeur

## **English translation**

Direction des services à la communauté anglophone - Services langagiers  
Secteur des services à la communauté anglophone, affaires autochtones et Plan Nord

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# Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Background</b> .....  | 3  |
| <b>1. Who does what in the school system</b> .....   | 4  |
| 1.1 Overview of the Québec education system and the <i>Education Act</i> .....   | 4  |
| 1.2 The school.....  | 4  |
| 1.2.1 Key partners in your school .....  | 5  |
| 1- The teacher.....  | 5  |
| 2- The principal .....   | 5  |
| 3- Professionals and resource persons .....  | 6  |
| 4- The governing board .....   | 7  |
| 1.3 The school board (SB).....   | 7  |
| 1.3.1 The council of commissioners .....   | 7  |
| 1.3.2 The parents' committee.....  | 8  |
| 1.3.3 The advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments<br>or learning disabilities (CCSEHDAA) ..... | 8  |
| 1.4 The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS).....  | 9  |
| <b>2. What to expect when your child starts school</b> .....   | 10 |
| 2.1 Assessments, tests and diagnoses.....  | 10 |
| 2.2 Overview of the most frequent diagnoses .....  | 11 |
| 2.3 Services available to your child.....  | 12 |
| 2.3.1 Integration into a regular class.....  | 12 |
| 2.3.1.1 Assistance services .....  | 12 |
| 2.3.1.2 Complementary educational services.....  | 12 |
| 2.3.2 Special classes.....   | 12 |
| 2.3.3 Inter-board agreements.....  | 13 |
| 2.3.4 School daycare services.....   | 13 |
| 2.4 The individualized education plan (IEP) .....  | 13 |
| 2.4.1 What is an IEP? .....  | 13 |
| 2.4.2 Why establish an IEP?.....   | 13 |
| 2.4.3 Individuals involved in an IEP .....   | 14 |
| 2.4.4 How to help prepare your child for an IEP meeting.....   | 15 |
| 2.4.5 Your role as a parent during an IEP meeting.....   | 15 |
| 2.4.6 The IEP meeting .....  | 16 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>3. Transition periods during your child's education</b> .....        | 18 |
| 3.1 Transition to school.....   | 18 |
| 3.2 Before your child starts school.....                                | 18 |
| 3.2.1 Smoothing the transition to school.....                           | 18 |
| 1- Planning.....  | 18 |
| 2- Organizing information.....  | 19 |
| 3- Notifying the school .....   | 19 |
| 3.2.2 From registration to the first day of school.....                 | 20 |
| 3.3 Transition from preschool to elementary school .....                | 20 |
| 3.4 Transition from elementary school to secondary school.....          | 21 |
| 3.4.1 How to help your child through this transition .....              | 21 |
| 3.5 Planning the transition to active life .....                        | 22 |
| 3.5.1 The transition from school to active life.....                    | 22 |
| <b>4. Parents' toolbox</b> .....  | 23 |
| 4.1 Supporting your child's education .....                             | 23 |
| 4.1.1 How to support your child.....                                    | 23 |
| 4.2 Get involved to be better equipped.....                             | 23 |
| 4.3 Communication: a few tips.....                                      | 24 |
| 4.4 Resolving differences is a skill that can be learned .....          | 26 |
| 4.4.1 Win-win conflict resolution strategy.....                         | 26 |
| 4.5 Support in the community.....                                       | 27 |
| <b>5. Rights and recourse</b> .....                                     | 28 |
| 5.1 Complaints and the student ombudsman .....                          | 28 |
| 5.2 Your child's rights, your rights and the school's obligations ..... | 28 |
| <b>6. Useful resources</b> .....  | 30 |
| List of acronyms.....   | 34 |
| List of references.....   | 35 |
| <b>APPENDIX</b> .....   | 36 |
| Sample individualized education plan                                    |    |

## Background

This handbook is addressed to parents of children with special needs who are now attending school or who will soon be enrolling in school, and to parents who discover that their children have adjustment or learning difficulties.

It is intended as a tool to help parents navigate the process of supporting and representing their special needs child throughout the school experience—a process that may seem daunting or difficult at times. The idea behind this document is to provide parents with useful information that will enable them to better monitor their child's progress throughout his or her schooling.

Seen from the outside, the education system may appear complex. It is so broad that it may be difficult to grasp all of its ramifications. The purpose of this handbook is to help parents understand the school system, the way it operates and the roles that various staff members play.

This document also contains information on the options available to families of children with special needs. Most of the measures and the people with whom you may work are mentioned in this guide. With this information, you will be able to contact specific resource persons in your community and school board who will help you better manage the experience of being the parent of a child with special needs.

Because each region and school board has its own services, policies and support measures, it was not possible to group all of these into a single guide for the entire province. To learn more about the services offered in your school board territory, consult the staff members, the parents' committee or the advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments and learning disabilities of your school.

Although the term “student with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties” (EHDA) is used in the education system, this handbook will also use the terms “child,” “student,” or “student with special needs or challenges.”

Finally, this guide provides an introduction to the subject. It enables you to begin dealing with your child's situation; henceforth, it will be up to you to pursue your research, if necessary. We hope this document will provide you with enough useful information to facilitate your child's progress in school.

The Québec Federation of Parents' Committees  
June 30, 2010

**NOTE :** THE HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS PROVIDES A HOST OF INFORMATION ON MANY TOPICS. WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU READ ONE SECTION AT A TIME. WHEN YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SIMPLY CONSULT THE TABLE OF CONTENTS TO FIND THE SECTION THAT WILL BE MOST USEFUL. THIS HANDBOOK IS BEST EXPLORED SECTION BY SECTION, RATHER THAN COVER TO COVER.

# Who does what in the school system

Your child has started or is about to start school and will be part of a complex system that has its own vocabulary, concepts and ways of doing things, which may seem difficult to understand at times. As a parent, how do you make sense of it all? How can you help your child find his or her place and achieve personal growth in this system?

To answer these questions, you must first understand how the school system **works** and which **key individuals** can help you.

It is perfectly normal to be confused by the education system at first. Because of its history and broad scope, it has developed its own language.

## 1.1 Overview of the Québec education system and the *Education Act*



Schools, school boards and the Ministère form the basis of the elementary and secondary public education system in Québec. Responsibilities are shared among them and all three come under the *Education Act*. The purpose of the *Education Act* is to govern the public education system in Québec and its instructional and administrative structures. Because reading the *Education Act* is not an easy task, we have summarized in this document the sections that concern you most.

To consult the *Education Act*, go to:

[http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=/I\\_13\\_3/I13\\_3\\_A.html](http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=/I_13_3/I13_3_A.html)

## 1.2 The school

Schools are the first link in the Québec education system (Association pour l'intégration sociale de la région de Québec, 2006 and Ministère de l'Éducation, 2004b). In keeping with the principle of equality of opportunity, the mission of a school "is to impart knowledge to students, foster their social development and give them qualifications, while enabling them to undertake and achieve success in a course of study" (*Education Act*, s. 36).

All children aged 5 to 16 years (or 21 years in the case of handicapped students) are entitled to receive an education that is adapted to their needs, age and situation. According to the Act, a school is an institution that provides educational services to students. Elementary schools provide services from kindergarten to grade 6, while secondary schools provide compulsory education to students up to 16 (or 21) years of age. After that, the type of school will depend on the choices made by students, their parents or on the students' level of development or handicap.

*Don't be too quick to judge!  
Sometimes, we can jump to the wrong conclusions about people who work with our children.  
Talk to people and try to give them all the information they need to better understand your child.*

### 1.2.1 Key partners in your school

There are four key partners in your school: 1) your child's teacher, 2) the principal, 3) professionals and resource persons, 4) the governing board.

#### 1- The teacher

Teachers are considered specialists in education intervention, since they must make decisions and take action to guide students' learning.

To achieve these goals, teachers work with different partners, such as the school principal, other teachers, parents, complementary educational services professionals, outside specialists from the health and social services network, and so on.

In certain cases, a teacher may work with the school team to better support students with special needs. This team may include a special education technician or partners from the health and social services centre (CSSS).

#### AS A PARENT

Communicate regularly with your child's teacher—it will help you and your child. Provide the teacher with relevant information about your child and ask for information about your child's progress in the classroom and in school. You have a right to receive this information.

Be proactive: ask for information rather than wait for it to be given to you. Better still, **meet with the teacher** or **let him or her know how to get in touch with you**. Let the teacher know you want to help and participate. A strong parent-teacher relationship will help your child achieve his or her goals. Nothing beats teamwork!

#### 2- The principal

School principals are under the authority of the director general of the school board. They ensure the quality of the educational services provided by the school. In addition to assisting the governing board in the exercise of its functions, principals see to the proper functioning of their school.

Three things to remember about school principals:

- 1- They encourage parents, students and staff members to **work together** and take part in school life and in students' educational success.
- 2- They organize complementary educational services in accordance with students' needs.
- 3- They are required by law to **establish an individualized education plan (IEP)** adapted to the needs of a student, with the assistance of the student's parents, the staff providing such services and the student, unless the student is unable to do so. This process takes place as soon as a child with special needs enters school OR as soon as a student experiences difficulties that could jeopardize his or her progress in school.

**See Section 2.4 for more information on IEPs.**

## AS A PARENT

Develop a relationship of trust with the school principal to facilitate your child's progress in school. The principal makes decisions, ensures that the required services are implemented in the school and acts as a link between the school and the school board. He or she is a spokesperson for students and their parents and represents the school in dealings with the school board.

The school principal should always be an ally and never a threat. He or she should be accessible and act in the best interest of the students, no matter what the level or type of situation, be it in regular or special education. Don't hesitate to meet with the principal to ask questions and voice your concerns.

If you feel you don't have the principal's support, contact the school board's special education services or the director general directly. **Obviously, it's always better to resolve issues with the principal first before going to the school board: you will achieve better cooperation for your child's well-being.**

### 3- Professionals and resource persons

Depending on your child's needs, you will probably meet with various professionals who may work with your child on a regular or an occasional basis. Here is a brief description of their functions and duties:

**Special education teachers** are professionals who work with children, adolescents or adults who learn differently. They focus on the overall development of the learner and are called upon to prevent, identify and correct learning difficulties. Special education teachers try to make learners aware of their individual learning styles so that they can feel more confident about their abilities. (Based on the Association des orthopédagogues du Québec).

*These specialists often work with several schools, so it may take some time to obtain an appointment. It's important that you talk to the school about access to these professionals.*

**Speech-language pathologists** are professionals who deal with communication disorders. They investigate, diagnose, assess and treat voice, speech and language disorders (Based on the Ordre des orthophonistes et audiologistes du Québec).

**School psychologists** are specialists in the psychology of education. They are qualified mental health professionals who assess childhood development and behaviour management and provide individual or group counselling.

**Psychoeducators** provide assessment, consultation, prevention and rehabilitation services to children, adolescents or adults with psychosocial adjustment difficulties in order to help these individuals resolve and prevent conflicts and promote their independence and social integration.

**School social workers** provide individual and group counselling, consultation to teachers and other services that help students cope with their difficulties. They provide a link between home, school and health and social services agencies. In fact, even though they often work in schools, they are under the authority of the health and social services network.

**Speech-language assistants (SLA)** work with children with language learning disabilities and participate in the implementation of individualized education plans. They assist speech-language pathologists.

**Guidance counsellors** are specialized in evaluating psychological and personal resources and environmental conditions. They help students discover their personality, values and interests so that students can continue their studies and find their place in society.

**Attendants for students with handicaps** help these students participate in school and nonschool-related activities. They may assist students in moving from one location to another and ensure their well-being, hygiene and safety, in accordance with the students' needs and the instructions specified in the individualized education plan.

**Special education technicians (SET)** work with students who have physical or intellectual disabilities, pervasive developmental disorders, or behavioural or mental health problems.

#### 4- The governing board

The governing board is a committee recognized by the *Education Act*. It is generally made up of parents, teachers and community representatives. Support and nonteaching staff members also sit on the governing board, although the support staff seat is not always filled. The principal of the school attends all meetings.

The governing board analyzes the situation prevailing at the school, principally the needs of the students, the challenges tied to student success and the expectations of the community served by the school. It adopts, oversees the implementation of, and periodically evaluates the school's educational project. It approves the rules of conduct and the safety measures proposed by the principal. It plays both a consultative and a decision-making role on matters related to the school (CCEHDAA de la Commission scolaire des Laurentides, 2006).

### AS A PARENT

You should be aware that the governing board is open to parents of students attending the school. The issues it considers are very broad and concern all students, regardless of whether or not they have special needs. Being on the governing board gives parents access to various committees established by the school board.

## 1.3 The school board (SB)

Elementary and secondary schools, adult education centres and vocational training centres all fall under the administrative authority of the school boards (Commission scolaire des Laurentides, n.d. *Guide EHDAA*). School boards act as an intermediary between the Ministère de l'Éducation and the teaching establishments. In addition to educational services, school boards are also responsible for arranging other services, including:

- complementary educational services
- services for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties
- meals
- lodging
- transportation

### 1.3.1 The council of commissioners

Every school board is administered by a council of commissioners composed of representatives who are either elected or appointed according to the *Act respecting school elections*. The number of commissioners on the council varies from one school board to another (Commission scolaire des Laurentides, n.d. *Guide EHDAA*).

As stipulated in section 143 of the *Education Act* (Gouvernement du Québec 2011), two commissioners must represent the parents' committee, "one chosen from among the representatives of schools providing instruction at the elementary level and the other from among the representatives of schools providing instruction at the secondary level."

Note that the *Education Act* is to be amended so as to include on the council of commissioners a representative of the advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities. When this amendment will come into effect is not known at the present time.

According to section 235 of the *Education Act*, every school board must adopt a **policy concerning the organization of educational services for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities** to ensure their harmonious integration. This policy must include:

- procedures for evaluating these students; the procedures must provide for the participation of the parents of the students and of the students themselves
- methods for integrating these students into regular classes or groups and into regular school activities as well as the support services required for the students' integration
- terms and conditions for grouping the students in specialized schools, classes or groups
- methods for preparing and evaluating individualized education plans intended for such students

### AS A PARENT

Don't hesitate to consult, or ask for more information on the policy for the organization of services in your school board. This policy may help you better understand your child's experience at school.

#### 1.3.2 The parents' committee

The parents' committee officially represents parents in a school board. It is made up of representatives elected by the parents of all the schools in a school board. Through its actions and interventions, the parents' committee seeks to improve the students' experience at school (CCEHDAA de la Commission scolaire des Laurentides n.d.). It consists solely of parents and advises the school board on numerous matters related to school organization. At the provincial level, parents' committees are grouped under the aegis of the Québec Federation of Parents' Committees.

#### 1.3.3 The advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities (CCSEHDAA)

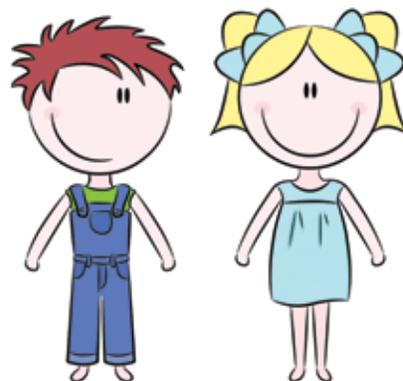
According to the *Education Act*, a school board must establish an advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities. This committee, which is designated by the parents' committee, advises the school board on such matters as:

- the policy for the organization of educational services to handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities
- the allocation of financial resources to the services intended for these students
- the implementation of an individualized education plan for a handicapped student or a student with social maladjustments or learning disabilities

It is composed of:

- parents of students, designated by the parents' committee
- a representative of the director general or the special education services
- a representative of the school principals
- representative(s) of teachers
- representative(s) of nonteaching professionals
- representative(s) of the support staff
- representative(s) of outside organizations

The Education Act also requires school boards to create bodies where parents can voice their concerns. The parents' committee and the advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities (CCSEHDAA) are two such bodies.



## AS A PARENT

You can become a member of the advisory committee by filling one of the seats available. Contact your school board or the chair of the committee to find out how you can get involved.

Being a member of the CCSEHDAA allows you to keep abreast of the services offered to students in the school board and to meet other parents and resource persons who are interested in promoting common issues. The aim of the committee is to improve the situation of all students with special needs in the school board.

## 1.4 The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS)

### Note

Each region has its own regional office—your direct access to MELS.

See

[www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/ministere/nousJoindre/index.asp?page=education](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/ministere/nousJoindre/index.asp?page=education)

The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport is responsible for developing and proposing policies to the Québec government in the areas of preschool, elementary and secondary education, college education, university education and research, as well as recreation and sports.

Although its management and administrative structure is complex and may seem far removed from the day-to-day realities of parents and students, the Ministère plays a major role in defining school and academic orientations. It ensures continuity and consistency regarding services in the area of education.

Each of its regional offices has a person in charge of special education.

## AS A PARENT

You will probably not deal directly with the Ministère or the Direction de l'adaptation scolaire; however, you should be familiar with their objectives and roles, as they influence the way schools work and the decisions made concerning your child.

For more information about the Ministère and its services, visit [www.mels.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca). This Web site contains several reference documents on the *Education Act*, the Policy on Special Education, information on codes and definitions regarding students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties, etc.

On its own, a diagnosis of a physical or intellectual impairment or a particular condition does not provide enough information to plan an educational program for a student. Two children could have the same diagnosis on paper but have very different learning needs. One child might be able to function in a regular classroom, while the other might need to be placed in a smaller or a specialized class.

# 2. What to expect when your child starts school



Section 1 of the *Education Act* states that “every person is entitled to the preschool education services and elementary and secondary school instructional services.” Children with special needs are also entitled to educational services that are adapted to their needs, age and abilities. To help students succeed, we must accept that educational success has different meanings depending on the abilities and needs of different students, and adopt methods that favour their success and provide recognition for it (Ministère de l'Éducation 1999).

At the beginning of or during the school year, it is possible to determine whether a student needs special education services. Parents and teachers are often in the best position to notice certain characteristics about a child, including (Government of Alberta 2004):

- **Behaviour:** how a child responds to the environment and other people, independent skills, ability to adapt to new situations
- **Communication:** how a child uses language to communicate and makes sense of what he or she is learning
- **Intellect:** how a child reasons and understands information and concepts
- **Cognitive skills:** how a child solves problems and processes information
- **Learning:** how a child acquires new information and makes links between concepts
- **Physical characteristics:** coordination, gross and fine motor skills, any physical or intellectual handicap or visual or hearing impairment

## 2.1 Assessments, tests and diagnoses

After making certain observations, the teacher or principal may recommend that you have your child assessed. Depending on your child's needs, a number of specialists may be involved in the assessment plan. For example, a psychologist could assess your child's cognitive skills, while a special education teacher could analyze your child's learning skills or learning style. These specialists may use a variety of assessment tools to determine your child's needs.

Why have your child assessed?

- To find out whether your child has special learning needs.
- To identify your child's current capabilities, aptitudes and needs.
- To find out how those special learning needs affect your child's ability to learn and function in school.
- To identify appropriate programming and services that will meet your child's individual needs.
- To establish a diagnosis.

If your child is already in the school system and an assessment is done, the professionals involved will contact you to transmit and explain the results to you.

**Did you know?**  
Before any assessment can be done, as a parent, you must provide written consent. You may also ask for an outside assessment by a professional of your choice, at your own cost.



**Tip**  
It is very important to keep a copy of every document you sign for future use.  
(See Section 3)

If you are having the assessment done at your own expense by independent professionals, you will be responsible for communicating the results to the teacher. You will be able to discuss the recommendations and participate in decisions concerning your child. You may also receive a written report, which you can share with the individuals who work with your child.

## AS A PARENT

If you have any concerns about the assessment process or how long it will take, talk to your child's teacher or the school principal. You or your child's school will work with the professionals to determine the clinical support and resources your child needs.

You will no doubt be asked to participate in assessing your child's needs. Building a strong partnership is the best way to ensure your child receives the right services.

## 2.2 Overview of the most frequent diagnoses

In its Policy on Special Education (1999), the Ministère de l'Éducation underscored the importance of prevention, which consists in creating an environment that is conducive to learning and in intervening quickly as soon as difficulties appear. **All students who experience difficulties in their schooling will be given proper support, without necessarily being labelled as having handicap[s], social maladjustments or learning difficulties** (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport 2007, 2).

The Ministère grants various allocations to school boards to allow them to organize instructional, support, complementary and professional development services to meet the needs of **all students**. The following table presents some of the handicaps and difficulties as well as their related codes.

| AT-RISK STUDENT  | STUDENT WITH HANDICAPS, SOCIAL MALADJUSTMENTS OR LEARNING DIFFICULTIES   |
|--|--|
| Students who are at-risk exhibit certain learning difficulties or behaviours that may prevent them from achieving the learning and socialization objectives established by the school. (Saint-Laurent et al. 1995) | <b>1- Student with social maladjustments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student with attention deficit disorder (ADD) or with hyperactivity (ADHD)</li><li>• Student with behavioural disorders (code 12)</li><li>• Student with severe behavioural disorders (code 14)</li></ul>   |
|  | <b>2- Student with learning difficulties</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student with learning difficulties</li><li>• Student with specific learning disorders (dyslexia, dysorthographia and dyscalculia)</li><li>• Student with mild impairment</li><li>• Student with mild to moderate dysphasia or primary language disorder</li></ul> |
|  | <b>3- Handicapped student</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student with language disorder (code 34)</li><li>• Student with pervasive developmental disorder (code 50)</li><li>• Student with moderate to severe intellectual impairment (code 24)</li><li>• Student with psychopathological disorder (code 53)</li></ul>                    |

For more information on these terms and codes (including definitions), please read *Organization of Educational Services for At-Risk Students and Students With Handicaps, Social Maladjustments or Learning Difficulties*, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, at <http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/das/orientations/pdf/19-7065-A.pdf>.

## AS A PARENT

You will be involved in the assessment process, **whether a diagnosis is established at birth, in early childhood or once your child is in school.**

You will always be one of the most important people in your child's life, but this is particularly true at this stage. You are the one who knows your child best. You are and will be your child's biggest supporter, guide and mentor!

## 2.3 Services available to your child

Depending on your child's needs, the principal and the special needs services of the school board will discuss with you all of the options available to maintain or integrate your child into a regular or a specialized classroom (Commission scolaire des Laurentides).

### 2.3.1 Integration into a regular class

After the assessment, your child may be placed in a regular class. In that case, the school board will enroll your child in a regular class, with or without assistance or other services.

#### 2.3.1.1 Assistance services

Assistance services are provided by a special education technician or an attendant for handicapped students. These services vary depending on the student's needs, the time of day and the location.

For example, the technician or attendant could:

- shadow your child
- work with your child in a full- or part-time basis
- provide in-class support only
- assist your child outside the classroom, during lunch, recess, etc.
- accompany your child on field trips
- help your child with hygiene care

#### 2.3.1.2 Complementary educational services

Complementary educational services are provided by professionals such as psychologists, special education teachers, speech language assistants, special education technicians, etc. These services may be provided by the school or by outside organizations. All these professionals can offer support services such as intervention, attendant care, evaluation and counselling.

**The services offered are based on your child's needs and abilities, as specified in his or her individualized education plan. See Section 2.4 for more information.**

### 2.3.2 Special classes

Depending on the way services for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties are organized in your school board, different types of special classes may be set up to meet the most common needs. These classes generally offer a lower student-teacher ratio (fewer students per class) and adapted teaching methods to meet the different needs of each student.

**To find out more about special classes, contact the special education services of your school board or read the school board's policy on the subject.**

## Note

This handbook does not provide a detailed list of all the services available, since services vary from one school board to another. Contact your school or school board for more information.

### 2.3.3 Inter-board agreements

If your school board does not have the room or the resources to meet a child's needs, it can enter into an agreement with another school board that offers special needs services. Generally, when a child must attend school outside of the school board's territory, transportation is provided by the school board.

### 2.3.4 School daycare services

All elementary school children, from kindergarten to grade 6, residing in the territory of a school board can attend their school's daycare, provided their school offers such services.

Qualified individuals create a stimulating and enriching environment for students before and after school, during lunch and on pedagogical days. Children thus receive quality services in an appropriate environment.



**Tip**  
You can help your child adapt to school daycare services gradually. Start with 30 minutes a day and increase it slowly.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Daycare services can receive a supplementary allowance for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties who attend the daycare facility. This extra funding makes it possible to organize adapted services to meet these students' needs.

Consult the document ***School Daycare Services, Information Document***, for more information.

[http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/publications/publications/EPEPS/Formation\\_jeunes/daycare.pdf](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/publications/publications/EPEPS/Formation_jeunes/daycare.pdf)

## 2.4 The individualized education plan (IEP)

### 2.4.1 What is an IEP?

In general terms, an IEP is a tool designed to meet the specific needs of a child who faces particular challenges (CCSEHDAA. Commission scolaire De La Jonquière. n.d.). More specifically, it is a planning process that allows parents and the school to identify the problems or limitations that prevent a child from achieving certain objectives. It lists the child's specific needs as well as the services and intervention that must be planned and organized (CCSEHDAA. Commission scolaire des Appalaches). **A sample individualized education plan is presented in the appendix.**

An IEP considers several areas of development: academic, behavioural, psychological, social, motor skills, pedagogical, remedial, speech/language and family (CCSEHDAA. Commission scolaire des Grandes-Seigneuries. n.d.).

### 2.4.2 Why establish an IEP?

An IEP is used to identify a student's abilities and needs. It is also used to find the means, methods and resources that will help the student learn, by mobilizing the resources and expertise of several individuals.

In concrete terms, an IEP:

- involves parents as active and equal team members in the planning and implementation of their child's IEP
- is a working document, linked to daily planning and activities
- clearly identifies who is responsible for what in the child's development
- is constantly reviewed and updated to provide the most accurate portrait of the child's particular learning situation
- promotes collaboration among all partners from both the education and the health care networks, by linking the reports and recommendations of specialists and consultants who work with the child on a daily basis. In such cases, the plan is known as an individualized intersectorial services plan (IISP).

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Students with special needs are entitled to adaptive measures when taking examinations to demonstrate their learning. For example, a student who is blind may take an examination in Braille. It should be noted that only those support measures applied during the course of learning may be considered.

The adaptive measures permitted during evaluation must be specified in the student's IEP. If the measures are in the best interest of the student, the Ministère could, for example, **provide additional time for an examination or allow the presence of an attendant or the use of a computer or assistive technology** under certain conditions.

For more information, see Appendix 2, Guidelines for Adapting the Conditions for Administering Ministerial Examinations in General Education in the Youth Sector in *Certification of Studies*. Administrative Guide for the Studies and Management of Ministerial Examinations: General Education, Youth Sector - General Education, Adult Sector, Vocational Training - 2011 Edition  
<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/publications/index.asp?page=fiche&id=1849>

### **2.4.3 Individuals involved in an IEP**

- The student (unless he or she is unable to do so)
- The student's parents or guardians
- The school principal
- The homeroom or classroom teacher
- Other school staff members, depending on the case: specialist teachers (e.g. physical education, second language or visual arts teachers) or nonteaching professionals (e.g. special education teacher, psychologist, psychoeducator).
- Outside resource persons involved in the child's day-to-day activities and in monitoring the student's progress (e.g. professionals from the CSSS or rehabilitation centres [CRDI-TED, CRDP]).

## AS A PARENT

You can ask someone you trust to accompany you to an IEP meeting (e.g. a member of an association or CLSC, a friend or relative); however, you should notify the school that you will be bringing someone with you. The school should also let you know who has been invited to the meeting.

You have the right to participate in the development of your child's IEP (*Education Act*, s. 96.14). You may not be given much advance notice about the meeting. If you can't make it, try to have the meeting rescheduled. If that's not possible, you will have to go at the appointed time.

You could decline to attend the meeting; however, be aware that the IEP and services will be established even if you are not there. We strongly recommend that you attend so that you can follow up on your child's progress throughout the school year. Remember it's for the good of your child!

### **Your child's presence at IEP meetings** (CCSEHDAA. Commission scolaire De La Jonquière)

Your child is the main person affected by decisions made during the IEP process. His or her presence and participation at meetings is recommended, provided he or she is able to participate. As a parent, you can help prepare your child for these meetings.

#### **2.4.4 How to help prepare your child for an IEP meeting**

- Explain the reasons for the meeting.
- Let your child know ahead of time who will be present and make sure he or she is comfortable with the situation.
- Talk to your child about the IEP, its content and objectives.
- Discuss with your child his or her strengths, difficulties, likes and dislikes at school, what he or she would like to learn; make your child feel comfortable.
- Talk to your child about the different elements of an IEP (e.g. strengths, difficulties, learning objectives, people involved, services).
- Let your child know what you intend to say at this meeting.
- Let your child know that he or she has the right to speak up at the meeting and that his or her input may or may not be taken into account, depending on the case.
- Work as a team with your child: write a list of the topics you discussed and the questions you would like to ask and make sure you bring this list with you to the meeting.
- After the meeting, remember to tell your child that you are proud of him or her. Your child is taking part in important decisions affecting his or her education.

#### **2.4.5 Your role as a parent during an IEP meeting**

As a parent, you are the main person responsible for your child's education. Your role in the IEP process is therefore invaluable. Here are a few tips to help you prepare for an IEP meeting (Commission scolaire des Appalaches and Commission scolaire des Grandes-Seigneuries):

- **Establish a profile of your child**, including his or her abilities, needs and limitations. This profile will make it easier to identify your child's needs and implement measures that are adapted to his or her situation.
- **Participate in decision making by identifying possible solutions:** What type of attitudes work best with your child? What support measures might be most appropriate? What other specialized assessments might be useful? What educational path might be most suitable for your child? What direction will you take to guide your child through the school system and beyond? What kind of outcome would you like to see for your child's career/work and other activities?

See Organizing information in Section 3.2.1 to learn how to prepare your child's file.

- **Participate actively with others to promote your child's success and well-being:** Your child must feel that you and the school team are working together for his or her benefit. The IEP lays the groundwork for this type of joint action.
- **Ask questions** about your child's situation and the services offered.
- Don't be afraid to **ask for clarifications** on items discussed or terminology used; ask questions as they arise.
- To understand the actions taken, **ask for examples of typical situations that your child faces.**
- You should automatically receive **a copy of your child's IEP**; if you don't, request one so that you can keep track of the specific objectives and the measures to be implemented.
- **Inform all participants** about the steps taken and the services your child has received from health and social service organizations.

### 2.4.6 The IEP meeting

All of the individuals concerned get together in a room. Generally, the meeting is facilitated by the principal of your child's school. The participants introduce themselves and their role, and someone is assigned to record the decisions that will be made at the meeting (Commission scolaire De La Jonquière).

Items on **the meeting agenda** might involve:

- discussing your child's situation
- sharing information on your child's abilities and needs
- establishing objectives
- planning how the objectives will be attained
- confirming the evaluation procedure
- scheduling the next meeting to review and evaluate the plan

*For each item discussed, all those present should be able to give their opinion or ask questions in order to make the best decisions regarding the student.*

#### AS A PARENT

At the end of the meeting, all decisions made will be summarized. Once this is done, you will be given a copy of your child's IEP. If you are satisfied with it, you may sign it on the spot.

However, if the meeting was long and covered a lot of information, you are perfectly within your rights to take a few days to think things over and discuss them with other people. It is very important that the IEP be tailored to your child's needs and help your child learn.

If you would like to make changes to the IEP, ask for another meeting with the principal to discuss this further.

#### Remember

An IEP is a record of the support measures required by your child. All of the information recorded in the IEP shows decision makers the nature and extent of your child's needs and situation. For this reason, it is imperative that it contain all relevant information concerning needs and services. If for some reason, a suggestion you make is turned down, you can still ask that it be recorded in the IEP.

*Ask for a copy of the IEP to monitor your child's progress and keep it in your files.*

## AS A PARENT

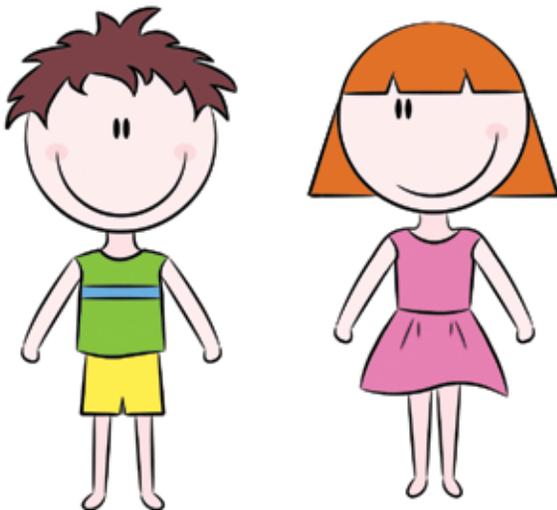
You have the **right** to:

- ask for an IEP to be developed and implemented
- participate in the IEP process
- ask someone you trust to accompany you to meetings
- add the names of professionals to the list of participants
- be informed of your child's progress with respect to the objectives
- wait before signing the IEP, if you don't feel ready
- ask that the IEP be reviewed if you feel it no longer meets the objectives

Participants in the IEP process have the **obligation to**:

- keep discussions confidential
- see to it that everyone concerned, even those not in attendance, receive a copy of the IEP, regardless of whether it is signed or not
- involve parents in monitoring the effectiveness of the measures put in place

In short, the IEP is a crucial step in your child's education. It must be reviewed and adjusted every year, since your child's needs and learning will change as he or she develops. For this reason, it is essential that you become involved in the IEP, not only to monitor your child's progress but also to participate in his or her development and achievements.



# 3. Transition periods in your child's education

Transitions are a part of life and occur throughout our lives. For children, transitions occur at various times during their education, for example, when they:

- start school for the first time
- go from preschool to elementary school
- move between activities or settings
- go from elementary to secondary school
- prepare to enter the job market

## 3.1 Transition to school

Starting school for the first time is an important event in a child's life: it marks the child's entry into an institutional system and occurs at a critical moment in his or her development as an individual. Whether a child has stayed home or attended daycare, a well-planned transition to school will have a lasting effect on his or her educational success. This stage is all the more crucial for students with special needs.



Don't be afraid to ask about phased entry to kindergarten, which can help your child adjust.

## 3.2 Before your child starts school

As a parent of a child with special needs, you will need to ask yourself questions and think about the learning and developmental goals you have for your child. You may have to revise the dreams and aspirations you have for your child, based on his or her true abilities. This is no easy task, but certain organizations or individuals can help you (see Section 6). This exercise will help you facilitate your child's experience in school. At least your ideas will be clearer!

### ROADMAP TO PRESCHOOL

Visit this interesting Web site developed by the Université du Québec en Outaouais. It contains a host of information that can help you smooth the different transitions of your special needs child. <http://w3.uqo.ca/transition/carte/index.html> (in French only)

### 3.2.1 Smoothing the transition to school

#### 1- PLANNING

When planning your child's transition to school, ask yourself the following questions (Government of Manitoba 2004):

- What is your vision of your child's educational experience?
- Is there information about your child that would be helpful for the school to know? Refer to the section below on *Organizing information*.
- Does your child have specific needs? What are they?
- Have you thought about the impact that regular or special schooling can have on your child?
- Are you ready to get involved in your child's life at school? In what way?

Taking into consideration your child's needs, explore resources and practices in your neighbourhood or municipality:

- Check what services are available in the school nearest you and in your school board.
- Find out about the school's or school board's policies on inclusion, placement, transportation and organization of student services.

## AS A PARENT

Find out what services are available by calling the school directly or contacting the special education services of your school board.

Don't be shy: ask to visit the school and talk to school staff.

## 2- ORGANIZING INFORMATION

When your child starts school or moves to another class, we strongly recommend that you prepare a portfolio on him or her. This practice has many advantages: it helps school staff better understand your child, helps you find services that are better adapted to your child's situation and improves home-school relations.

Information in the portfolio might include:

- your child's strengths, needs and limitations
- your child's interests, talents and desires
- your goals and aspirations for your child
- past assessment reports and diagnoses concerning your child
- relevant medical history and health-care needs
- outside professionals with whom your child has worked or is working
- family or school experiences that could have impacted your child's learning situation
- report cards, past individualized education plans (IEP), or other documents concerning your child, if applicable
- assistance that your family can provide to practise or reinforce new skills
- list of your child's friends or significant persons
- learning activities you do with your child

This list is just a guide; feel free to add any other information you think might be relevant! Store it in a binder or folder that you will keep throughout your child's schooling.

## 3- NOTIFYING THE SCHOOL (Government of Manitoba 2004)

- Before your child is registered in school, contact the school to let staff know when your child will be coming. Ask to have a meeting to begin planning.
- If you are not sure about where your child should attend school, contact your school board.
- If your child is currently receiving services from a program or a health care agency (CSSS, CRDI-TED, CRDP), ask that a preparatory, multidisciplinary meeting be organized between the agency and the school to support your child's entry to school.
- Once your child is registered in school, arrange a meeting with the school principal to discuss your child's integration and how his or her specific needs will be met. (This is where the portfolio you prepared on your child will come in handy.)
- Start this process well in advance: time is a rare commodity for everyone and reconciling timetables is often difficult!

## TIPS FOR PARENTS DURING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Build a **team** around your child: involve outside resources, specialists in private practice, if necessary, and school staff. Promote communication among all those involved!

Ask your child's **former teacher and new teacher** to meet with you at the beginning of every school year.

Give the teacher a home/school **communication book** that can go back and forth daily in your child's backpack. Or decide with the teacher what other format might work best for keeping each other informed (e.g. agenda, flow sheet, voice mail, e-mail).

Keep a **record** of the requests you make, the people you meet with, your conversations and meetings. That way you will always be prepared!

### 3.2.2 From registration to the first day of school (Working document, commission scolaire des Patriotes 2010)

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Fall, one year before the start of school</b> | Prepare your child's registration.  | <b>AS A PARENT</b><br><br>THE YEAR BEFORE YOUR CHILD STARTS SCHOOL, OBTAIN INFORMATION AND PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE AND POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS. |
| February   | Register your child at the local school.  |   |
| March  | The school principal reviews the information received.  |   |
| April  | Make an appointment with the principal to discuss your child's needs and the organization of services.  |   |
| May  | Most schools organize half-day orientation sessions.<br>Make sure you attend!   |   |
| June   | You should receive information about your child's placement.<br>Determine, with the school principal, any measures that could facilitate your child's transition to school. |   |
| Summer   | Prepare your child for school.  |   |
| September,<br>first day of school                | Introduce yourself to the teacher and start establishing a relationship, if you haven't already done so.  |   |

## 3.3 Transition from preschool to elementary school

There is a considerable difference between what children experience in daycare and kindergarten and what they experience when they reach elementary school. In preschool, children are used to working in small groups; they are able to move around in the classroom, manipulate objects and chat with friends. Activities are often very hands-on and project-based (Ministère de l'Éducation 2004b).

Starting in grade one, and in later grades, children have less freedom to move around and playgroups are not as common. Activities are generally more static and require students to use their heads more than their hands. Some schools have found innovative ways to minimize differences during these transitions. For example, some schools allow kindergartners to visit a grade one class at the end of the school year, while others organize joint projects involving both preschool and Elementary Cycle One students.

### AS A PARENT

You are the one constant in your child's life, particularly during transitions. Your child may be more vulnerable during transitions, so give him or her more attention and praise. In these challenging times, give your child more support.

## 3.4 Transition from elementary school to secondary school

In elementary school, students are part of a stable group supervised by a single teacher, whereas in secondary school they have to change classrooms, groups and teachers frequently (Ministère de l'Éducation 2004b). Support and supervision, as well as parent-teacher relationships, also differ significantly in elementary and secondary school. The concept of collaboration between home and school changes, giving your child more opportunities to be independent.

### 3.4.1 How to help your child through this transition

(Government of Manitoba 2004).

**NOTE:** The following suggestions may not all apply to your child's specific situation:

- Begin exploring your child's career interests.
- Encourage your child to identify his or her learning strengths.
- Help your child learn how to monitor his or her own progress and develop a plan to share his or her points of view and ideas with teachers and classmates.
- Encourage independence and provide opportunities to socialize and participate in different activities.
- If possible, teach your child to use the public transportation system.
- Be aware that your child can benefit from support services during ministerial examinations. For more information, see Appendix 2, Guidelines for Adapting the Conditions for Administering Ministerial Examinations in General Education in the Youth Sector in *Certification of Studies*. Administrative Guide for the Studies and Management of Ministerial Examinations: General Education, Youth Sector - General Education, Adult Sector, Vocational Training - 2011 Edition  
<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/publications/index.asp?page=fiche&id=1849>

### Did you know?

In addition to the stress of changing schools, students at this age also experience the stresses of puberty. This factor should be taken into account during school transitions, since students may be coping with hormonal changes as well.

Studies show that maintaining contact with peers is a key element during transitions. Peer groups have a positive influence on educational success and behaviour.

## 3.5 Planning the transition to active life

Whether your child is interested in post-secondary studies or entering the job market, you will need to help refine his or her choices. Transition planning often begins at school because that is where students spend the day and have individuals or a team of people who know them. To work towards a successful and smooth transition to adult life, planning needs to expand to include other parts of students' lives (Government of Manitoba 2004).

For example, this is a time for the student, parents and the school team to begin the following steps in transition planning (Government of Manitoba 2004):

- Identify the student's strengths, abilities, aptitudes, interests and needs.
- Identify the services that may be available to address the student's individual needs.
- Explore the availability of and requirements for:
  - postsecondary education, vocational training and employment
  - independent or supported living options
  - leisure or social opportunities
- Develop a student-centred plan for leaving school, based on the student's individual needs.

### 3.5.1 The transition from school to active life

Planning the transition from school to active life is intended to help students attain postsecondary goals by taking into account their:

- social and professional integration
- changing social network
- leisure activities
- level of community involvement
- interest in pursuing their education
- ability to live independently

This process is known as TÉVA in French (Transition de l'école à la vie active). Its objective is to smooth the transition at this important time in your child's life by fostering collaboration between parents, the adolescent, the school, outside agencies and the rehabilitation centre, if applicable. Make sure transition planning for this phase is included in your child's individualized education plan.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Visit the OPHQ Web site at [www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca) or [www.ensembleautravail.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.ensembleautravail.gouv.qc.ca) (in French only).

# 4. Parents' toolbox



As a parent, you know your child best. From the time of his or her birth, you have seen your child develop and discover his or her strengths and weaknesses. You have witnessed your child's successes and difficulties along the way. One might say you are an expert on your child. When your child enters the school system, your role as a guide becomes crucial. This section contains a few tips on how to facilitate your dealings with school staff or any other individual involved in your child's education.

## 4.1 Supporting your child's education

Supporting means helping, being there and, at times, speaking on behalf of someone. As a parent of a child with special needs, you will be called upon to play a supporting role throughout your child's education in order to encourage and stimulate his or her learning.

### 4.1.1 How to support your child

- Being a parent means wanting what's best for your child; this means collaborating with school personnel, other parents or looking for outside support.
- As a parent, learn to recognize your limitations and be willing to seek help in your community or school. Sometimes all you need to do is ask!
- Change doesn't necessarily happen overnight. This is especially true when dealing with massive administrative structures like the education system. Patience and compromise are a must when trying to move your case forward or reach a goal.
- Listen to and consider the perspectives of others. It's an important way to build understanding and relationships.
- Recognize and cherish your accomplishments and the positive impact they have on your child's learning and emotional and social life. We often tend to minimize our achievements, but we all need a pat on the back from time to time: give yourself one!

Change can take time  
You must be patient,  
but that doesn't mean  
you can't be passionate!

#### AS A PARENT

Remember, you can eat an elephant—one bite at a time.

Choose your battles wisely and save your energy for those that are important. Some situations may annoy you, but it's always best to intervene where your child stands to benefit most.

## 4.2 Get involved to be better equipped

As the parent of a special needs child, you will undoubtedly have to make a lot of decisions for your child. It might be worthwhile for you to get involved in order to facilitate your child's experience in school. Here are four ways to get involved:

- 1- **Be a parent first!** You have been supporting your child since birth and that is no small feat. Being the parent of a child with special needs should not make you feel obligated to get involved in areas where you don't want to be. Your ongoing efforts as a parent already mean a lot in terms of supporting your child.
- 2- **Strike out on your own:** Obtain outside services or build relationships with resource people both in the school system and in the health and social services network. This may be time consuming but it will facilitate the development of your child's individualized education plan.

## PARENT TESTIMONY

To support the teacher and attendant of our child, we organize regular meetings between the speech-language pathologist (whom we see privately) and school staff members. This way, we build a team around our child where everyone is working towards the same goals.

- 3- Volunteer in **your child's classroom**. If you are interested in what your child is learning and have the time, help out in your child's classroom by assisting your child. Volunteer parents can be of great help to the teacher and school.
- 4- Get involved in **committees that promote special needs issues**. As mentioned in sections 1 and 2, there are many committees at the school and school board level and many outside agencies that you can participate in (see the list of resources). Being involved in these committees will allow you to meet other people and promote common issues that can improve the situation for all children with special needs.

## 4.3 Communication: a few tips

Supporting your child places you in situations in which communication is crucial to your child's case. As the parent of a child with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties, you will have to attend numerous meetings (e.g. IEP meetings; meetings with the teacher, principal or other professionals). Knowing how to communicate effectively can save you a lot of headaches and sleepless nights. Effective communication involves **trust, mutual respect, active listening, empathy, flexibility, emotional control and validation**. How are these principles put into practice?

**Trust** is essential in relationships and in interpersonal communication. To create a relationship of trust, being truthful and setting limits can help create a communication environment that is beneficial to everyone. Stay true to yourself.

*Trust yourself so you can trust others.*

**Mutual respect** may seem difficult to put into practice. Throughout the course of your journey, you will come across many individuals and parents who may be very different from you and have their own way of seeing things. It is often when people don't see eye to eye that communication breaks down. Being open-minded and accepting other points of view can help you communicate more effectively. Don't forget, you too have the right to be treated with respect!

*Taking a moment before reacting is often a good way to maintain mutual respect.*

Although communication always involves speaking and listening, good communication involves far more than simply speaking and hearing. People who don't know how to listen cannot really communicate. No doubt you may have dealt with someone who didn't listen and remember how that felt!

**Tips for active listening** (Adler and Rodman 2009, Adler and Procter 2011)

- 1- **Talk less**: This does not mean you should stop talking altogether, but rather that you respect others when they try to express their ideas. **Start by taking a deep breath and listen!**
- 2- **Remove distractions**: Cell phones and personal preoccupations are distractions that can prevent us from focusing on what someone is saying. **Start by turning off your cell phone!**

- 3- **Suspend judgment:** We often make snap judgments about people before we even hear what they have to say—it's the power of nonverbal communication. Hearing someone out often lets us correct faulty first impressions. Before leaving the house, avoid saying things like “This is what I want and nothing else!” or “He’s always unpleasant.”
- 4- **Look for the main ideas:** Some people tend to ramble on. Try to sort out their main ideas and figure out what they’re trying to say. **Start by saying to yourself: “The main thing to remember is...”**
- 5- **Ask questions:** To listen proactively, ask questions to fully understand what the speaker is saying. This approach promotes understanding. Remember, all questions are worth asking! **Start by saying: “Why did you say that... you said this...”**
- 6- **Rephrase:** Rephrasing or paraphrasing is often used to clarify information. It consists in repeating the thoughts or feelings of the speaker in your own words. (Adler and Rodman 2009, Adler and Procter 2011) **Start by saying: “If I understand correctly, you said... you feel...”**

**Empathy** is often used to understand what others are saying. It is a way of listening to differences. Empathy is defined as the ability to put oneself in the place of others in order to understand them, to see the world through their eyes (Adler and Rodman 2009, Adler and Procter 2011). Put yourself in another’s place by asking questions. You will understand the issues better and be able to make more informed decisions.

*Empathy is being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes to suspend judgment.*

*Don't be rigid. Be open to other ways of dealing with difficult situations.*

**Being flexible** does not mean letting people walk all over you! Flexibility means finding creative solutions to problems that seem insurmountable. This may mean that you will have to “pick your battles.” Every day, you may be confronted with upsetting news or people, and you won’t have the energy to deal with and react to them all. In this sense, being flexible means choosing actions based on your child. Is what you are about to do really going to change anything in your child’s life or are you doing it because you are personally affected or offended? While it’s not easy to answer these questions, they will help you learn to be flexible.

**Managing emotions** is a subject that could fill an entire book. Many situations can give rise to strong emotions. Managing emotions does not mean ignoring them, but rather accepting them as they arise. Sometimes situations can make us uncomfortable, but accepting emotions is the first step in learning how to manage them. There are organizations or professionals who can help you in this regard. Don’t be afraid to consult them; you will feel better able to cope with other situations.

*Sleep on it. Taking a step back is the best way to diffuse a tense situation and find a solution.*

Reacting on emotion is seldom the best way to solve problems. Take a step back from the situation before jumping to conclusions or saying something you don’t mean. You should never have to make a decision if you feel the time is not right. Don’t be afraid to put off a decision if you don’t feel ready.

*If a person does not explain his or her actions as a matter of course, check with him or her before jumping to conclusions.*

**Validate** or make sure you have understood a situation before attributing false or bad intentions to others. For example, just because the school principal does not return your call in what you consider an acceptable amount of time does not mean that he or she doesn’t want to talk to you. It could simply be that that he or she is out of the office for a few days. Relying on impressions can lead to the wrong conclusions and aggravate situations.

## AS A PARENT

You may hear terms or expressions you are not familiar with. The school system has its own jargon. If at any time you are unsure about a term, don't be shy; interrupt the meeting and ask for clarifications or explanations. To communicate effectively, we all need to speak the same language, particularly when working towards the same goals.

## 4.4 Resolving differences is a skill that can be learned!

Sometimes, despite our best intentions, differences and conflicts can arise. We often tend to see conflict in a negative light; however, something positive can come out of a tense situation. There has to be a willingness to resolve the conflict. There are also helpful techniques.

In the school system, conflicts can occur as a result of interpersonal relations, misunderstandings or misinterpretations about a situation or problem related to your child, frustration about not obtaining a service for your child or feelings about being treated unfairly. There are as many reasons for conflict as there are people.

### 4.4.1 Win-win conflict-resolution strategy (Adler and Rodman 2009, Adler and Procter 2011)

There are many ways to resolve conflicts. The conflict-resolution strategy suggested below should help you arrive at a win-win solution. Feel free to adapt it or use it as a model to create your own!

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>STEP 1</b><br>Identify the problem and the needs to be satisfied | 1- Acknowledge that you have a problem.<br>2- Identify the elements with which you are not satisfied.   |
| <b>STEP 2</b><br>Set up a meeting                                   | 1- Be proactive and set up a meeting.<br>2- Formulate a specific request to try to resolve the conflict.  |
| <b>STEP 3</b><br>Describe the problem and needs                     | Make sure you present your view of the problem clearly and precisely.   |
| <b>STEP 4</b><br>Consider the point of view of the speaker          | 1- Ask questions to make sure the other person has clearly understood your point of view.<br>2- Listen to the other person's perception of the problem.               |
| <b>STEP 5</b><br>Negotiate an arrangement                           | To resolve the issue, list all the solutions that might be acceptable to either party.<br>Be open to different suggestions.   |
| <b>STEP 6</b><br>Apply the solution                                 | When a solution is found, both parties have the right to try it out before deciding to adopt it.<br>Make sure both parties concerned are satisfied with the decision. |

Despite these steps, you may not always be able to arrive at a win-win solution, or you may find that the parties involved cannot be reconciled. If that's the case, the school board offers other recourses (see Section 5).

## 4.5 Support in the community

Several resource persons outside the school can help you and your child. If you already had your child diagnosed before he or she started school, you are probably already familiar with these resources. If not, your local health and social services centre (CSSS) is the first place to turn to for services outside the school. Professionals at the CSSS will refer you to specialized community organizations. Depending on your child's situation, there may be organizations offering help at the local level. Contact them.

See **Section 6** for a list of useful resources.

### **Other parents**

At your child's school, you will be able to meet other parents who are going through similar situations with their children. This will give you an opportunity to share ideas. In addition to empathy, other parents may also provide you with information on available resources, support groups and useful organizations and give you tips on how to deal with everyday challenges. Don't underestimate them as a resource!



*Consult the list of resources at the end of this guide. By becoming a member of an association, you can receive regular updates on upcoming workshops or events.*

# 5. Rights and recourse



## 5.1 Complaints and the student ombudsman

The *Education Act* has set up various procedures in school boards to allow you, as a parent, to voice your concerns should you feel your rights are being not respected or your child is being treated unfairly in school (Québec Federation of Parents' Committees October 2009).

Every school board now has a bylaw that explains the procedure to follow, should you want to file a complaint concerning a decision or situation.

According to section 9 of the *Education Act*, “a student or parents of a student affected by a decision of the council of commissioners, the executive committee or the governing board, or of an officer or employee of the school board may request the council of commissioners to reconsider such decision (Gouvernement du Québec, 2011b).”

If you are not satisfied with the way your complaint has been handled or its outcome, you can refer to the *student ombudsman*, a specially-designated person in each school board who acts in a manner similar to the Québec Ombudsman. Student ombudsmen deal with complaints in a neutral fashion. In certain cases, they may even intervene before the end of the complaint examination procedure. Get informed!

Contact your school board to find out how to file a complaint. The school board has the obligation to make this information public and accessible.

### Comparison

The Québec Ombudsman prevents and corrects errors or injustices committed against any individual or group of individuals in connection with a Québec government department or agency.

## 5.2 Your child's rights, your rights and the school's obligations

You and your child have certain rights: you can receive different types of support services throughout your child's education. School staff may not always be aware of this, so ask questions. According to the law, you have a right to support. The school also has certain obligations. It is important to be aware of this to ensure mutual respect.

### • CHILD'S RIGHTS

#### Right to preschool education

By law, children may receive school services from the age of five. In certain cases, such as that of children with handicaps, they may be entitled to such services starting at age four.

#### Right to daycare services

Children with special needs have the right to receive daycare services until they are twelve years of age. The daycare may receive a financial allocation if a child requires special support services.

[http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/publications/publications/EPEPS/Formation\\_jeunes/daycare.pdf](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/publications/publications/EPEPS/Formation_jeunes/daycare.pdf)

#### Right to adapted services during exams

Your child may receive support during exams if evaluation methods are specified in the individualized education plan. Otherwise, you may request that the conditions for administering a ministerial examination be adapted, by filling out the appropriate form. Allowing a student additional time or authorizing the presence of an attendant or the use of a writing aid are examples of possible adaptations. For more information, see Appendix 2, Guidelines for Adapting the Conditions for Administering Ministerial Examinations in General Education in the Youth Sector in *Certification of Studies*. Administrative Guide for the Studies and Management of Ministerial Examinations: General Education, Youth Sector - General Education, Adult Sector, Vocational Training - 2011 Edition

<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/publications/index.asp?page=fiche&id=1849>

### **Right to instructional services until 21 years of age**

According to the *Education Act*, schools must provide instructional services to students with special needs until they reach 21 years of age.

## **• PARENTS' RIGHTS**

### **Right to choose your child's school**

As a parent, you have the right to choose your child's school. However, certain restrictions may apply, such as the number of places available in the school. The school principal or school board officials may not automatically grant your request; generally, the school board has an established policy on the matter. (*Education Act*, s. 4).

### **Right to consult your child's record**

Your child will have a student record containing his or her professional assessments. You can ask to see this record and ask a professional to interpret the information it contains.

### **Right to participate in the individualized education plan**

You are one of the key partners in your child's individualized education plan; by law, you have the right to participate.

### **Right to be consulted when a school board is considering entering into an agreement with another board to organize services for your child**

If your child must go to another school board to receive specialized services, you have a right to be consulted and take part in the discussions.

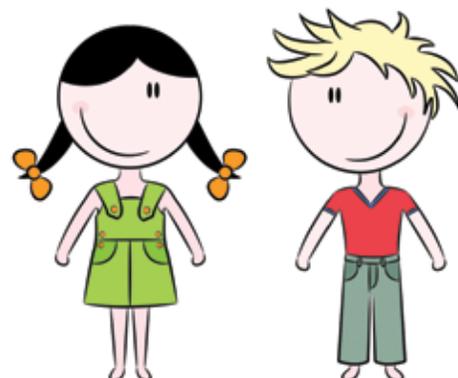
## **• SCHOOL'S OBLIGATIONS**

### **Obligation of the school to obtain your authorization for an assessment**

Any person who wishes to conduct an assessment of your child must obtain your written consent.

### **Obligation of the school to obtain your authorization to disclose information**

The school must obtain your consent if your child's records will be seen by other specialists or leave the school, should your child be moved. For more information, go to <http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dfgj/csc/pdf/protect.pdf>





## PROVINCIAL RESOURCES

### **Association québécoise des parents d'enfants handicapés visuels (AQPEHV) (Québec association for parents of the visually impaired)**

*Mission:* Provide a network of support to parents of children with visual impairments in Québec; offer parents services that complement those offered in the public sector; carry out initiatives to promote the interests of families and advocate individually and collectively for their rights. In French only.

[www.aqpehv.qc.ca](http://www.aqpehv.qc.ca) • 1 888 849-8729

### **Association québécoise des troubles d'apprentissage (AQETA) (Learning disabilities association of Québec)**

*Mission:* Promote and advocate for the rights of children and adults with learning difficulties. The AQETA represents parents and supports their efforts. In French only.

[www.aqeta.qc.ca](http://www.aqeta.qc.ca) • 514 847-1324

### **Association québécoise de la dysphasie (AQD) (Québec dysphasia association)**

*Mission:* Formerly known as the Association québécoise pour les enfants atteints d'audimutité (AQEA), the ADQ was created in February 1986 by parents of children with dysphasia in order to group together, provide mutual support and improve the various services available to children. In French only.

[www.dysphasie.qc.ca](http://www.dysphasie.qc.ca) • 1 800 495-4118

### **Association québécoise du syndrome de la Tourette (Tourette syndrome association of Québec)**

*Mission:* Support, integrate, provide information and increase understanding of people with Tourette Syndrome (TS). Support, inform and train those who work and live with them in order to increase public awareness about the syndrome. In French only.

[www.aqst.com/](http://www.aqst.com/) • 514 328-3910

### **Association du Québec pour enfants avec problèmes auditifs (AQEPA) (Québec association for children with a hearing loss)**

*Mission:* Promote and develop services for the inclusion of children with a hearing loss. In French only.

[www.aqepa.org/](http://www.aqepa.org/) • 1 877 842-4006

### **Association du Québec pour l'intégration sociale and Institut du Québec pour la déficience intellectuelle (Québec association for community living and Québec institute for intellectual disability)**

*Mission:* Promote the interests and defend the rights of people with intellectual disabilities and those of their families. Act as a spokesperson. Encourage and support initiatives promoting services and support to families or helping people with mental disabilities become independent. In French only.

[www.aqis-iqdi.qc.ca](http://www.aqis-iqdi.qc.ca) • AQIS: 514 725-7245 • IQDI: 514 725-2387

### **Association de la paralysie cérébrale du Québec (Quebec cerebral palsy association)**

*Mission:* Improve the living conditions and social integration of people living with cerebral palsy or any other deficiency, in all areas of human activity. In French only.

[www.paralysiecerebrale.com](http://www.paralysiecerebrale.com) • 1 800 311-3770

### **Comité d'adaptation de la main-d'œuvre (CAMO) (Labour force adaptation committee for people with handicaps)**

*Mission:* Promote access to training and employment for people with handicaps. In French only.

[www.camo.qc.ca](http://www.camo.qc.ca) • 1 888 522-3310

### **Commission des droits de la personne (Human rights commission)**

*Mission:* Promote and uphold the principles set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

<http://www2.cdpcj.qc.ca/en/Commission/Pages/default.aspx> • 1 800 361-6477

**Direction de l'adaptation scolaire – Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS)**

*Mission:* Ensure the development and implementation of educational services adapted to the needs of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties (EHDA) in preschool, elementary and secondary school. In French only.

[www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/das/](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/das/) • 418 643-3468

**Québec Federation of Parents' Committees (QFPC)**

*Mission:* Defend and promote the rights and interests of the parents of students in public elementary and secondary schools in order to ensure the quality of the education provided to students. In French only.

<http://www.fcpc.qc.ca> • 1 800 463-7268

**Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec (FCSQ) (Federation of school boards of Québec)**

*Mission:* Contribute to the promotion of the public education system as well as represent and defend with determination the interests of school boards. In French only.

[www.fcsq.qc.ca](http://www.fcsq.qc.ca) • 418 651-3220

**Fédération québécoise de l'autisme et des autres troubles envahissants du développement (Québec federation of autism and other pervasive developmental disorders)**

*Mission:* Mobilize all stakeholders concerned in order to promote the well-being of individuals; increase awareness and understanding of autism, other pervasive developmental disorders and the circumstances for families; and contribute to the development and diffusion of knowledge. In French only.

[www.autisme.qc.ca](http://www.autisme.qc.ca) • 1 888 830-2833

**Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ) (Québec board of handicapped persons)**

*Mission:* Ensure compliance with the principles and rules set out in the legislation regarding the rights of handicapped persons with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration. In French only.

[www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca) • 1 800 567-1465

**Regroupement des associations de parents PANDA (Network of PANDA parent associations)**

*Mission:* Promote the development of services addressed to children with attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity. Promote exchanges among associations of parents of children with attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity. In French only.

[www.associationpanda.qc.ca](http://www.associationpanda.qc.ca) • 1 877 979-7788

**Regroupement pour la Trisomie 21 (Down syndrome network)**

*Mission:* Develop a network to support and provide information to parents of children with Down syndrome. Increase awareness and understanding among the general population and staff working in education, health and social settings. Promote the social and educational integration of people with Down syndrome. In French only.

[www.trisomie.qc.ca](http://www.trisomie.qc.ca) • 514 850-0666

**Québec Society for Disabled Children**

*Mission:* Accompany youngsters living with a disability to help make their dreams come true. Assist parents in their efforts to provide all the care, attention and support their child needs.

[www.enfantshandicapes.com/en/](http://www.enfantshandicapes.com/en/) • 1 877 937-6171

## REGIONAL RESOURCES

### **Centre de réadaptation en déficience intellectuelle et des troubles envahissants du développement (CRDITED) (Rehabilitation centre for intellectual disabilities and pervasive developmental disorders)**

*Mission:* Offer adaptation, rehabilitation and support services to families and social integration services to people with intellectual disabilities or pervasive developmental disorders. These centres can be found in all regions, although intervention methods vary from one centre to another. Consult the Web site's directory to find the centre nearest you. In French only.  
[www.fqcrdi.qc.ca](http://www.fqcrdi.qc.ca) (Click on "Les membres" and select a region.)

### **Centre de santé et de services sociaux (CSSS) (Health and social services centre)**

*Mission:* The CSSS is a network of CLSCs, CHSLDs and hospital centres in a given territory. These establishments provide health and social services free of charge and assist individuals in identifying services. Consult the Web site's directory to find the centre nearest you.  
[www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/en/repertoires/csss](http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/en/repertoires/csss) • 1 877 644-4545 (services Québec)

### **Montreal Oral School for the Deaf (MOSD)**

*Guiding principles:*

- the development of listening and spoken language
- early integration into the regular school system
- ongoing services of MOSD teachers and professionals for the child and family
- involvement and training for family members

4670 Ste. Catherine St. West, Westmount, Quebec H3Z 1S5 • 514 488-4946 Voice / TTY • Email: [info@montrealoralschool.com](mailto:info@montrealoralschool.com)

### **School boards**

*Mission:* School boards are responsible for managing schools in a given territory. All school boards and their respective schools have as their mission to provide instruction, socialize and provide qualifications to all of their students. In French only.  
[www.fcsq.qc.ca/Commissions/Listes/index.html](http://www.fcsq.qc.ca/Commissions/Listes/index.html)

### **Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport Regional offices**

<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/administ/tel-dr.pdf> • 1 866 747-6626

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### **Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sainte-Justine**

Excellent site for documentation and references on child development.  
[www.hsj.qc.ca](http://www.hsj.qc.ca) • 514 345-4931

### **Montreal Children's Hospital**

Family Resource Library  
<http://www.mchfamilylibrary.ca/page.asp>

### **TDAH.CA**

Web site addressed to educators to help them deal with children. In French only.  
[www.tdah.ca](http://www.tdah.ca)

### **CADDRA : The Canadian Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Resource Alliance**

[www.caddra.ca](http://www.caddra.ca) • 416 637-8583

**Allô, prof!**

Homework help provided via telephone, virtual classrooms, forums or virtual library. In French only.

[www.alloprof.qc.ca](http://www.alloprof.qc.ca) • 1 888 776-4455

**SOS Learn: Learn Quebec Free Online Homework Help and Tutoring with Real Classroom Teachers**

<http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/services/tutorials.html> • 1 877 647-6060

**Ordre des orthophonistes et des audiologistes du Québec (Order of speech-language pathologists and audiologists of Québec)**

*Mission:* The Ordre supports the development and ensures the competence of speech-language pathologists and audiologists, oversees the exercise of the profession and promotes access to quality services. In French only.

<http://www.ooaq.qc.ca> • 1 888 232-9123

## OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH

**Centre of Excellence for Autism Spectrum Disorders**

Lester B. Pearson School Board

1925 Brookdale Avenue, Dorval (Quebec) H9P 2Y7

Contact: Andrew Bennett

Tel.: 514 422-3000 ext. 4395

[abennett@lbpsb.qc](mailto:abennett@lbpsb.qc) or

<http://www2.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/asdn/index.asp>

**Centre of Excellence for Speech and Language Development**

English Montreal School Board

6000 Fielding Avenue, Montreal (Quebec) H3X 1T4

Contact: Carol Jazzar

Tel.: 514 483-7200 ext. 7238

Fax: 514 483-7514

[cjazzar@emsb.qc.ca](mailto:cjazzar@emsb.qc.ca)

**Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management**

Riverside School Board

299 Sir Wilfrid Laurier, St. Lambert (Quebec) J4R 2V7

Contact: Eva de Gosztonyi

Tel.: 450 672-4010 ext. 6066

Fax: 450 465-8809

[edegosztonyi@rsb.qc.ca](mailto:edegosztonyi@rsb.qc.ca)

**Centre of Excellence for Mental Health**

Lester B. Pearson School Board

1925 Brookdale Avenue, Dorval (Quebec) H9P 2Y7

Contact: Elana Bloom

Tel.: 514 422-3000 ext. 4125

514 422-3014

[ebloom02@lbpsb.qc.ca](mailto:ebloom02@lbpsb.qc.ca)

**Inclusive Learning Resource Network (I-LRN)**

Riverside School Board

299 Sir Wilfred Laurier, St. Lambert (Quebec) J4R 2V7

Contact: Lynn Senecal

Tel.: 450 672-4010

Fax: 450 465-8809

[lynnsenecal@sympatico.ca](mailto:lynnsenecal@sympatico.ca)

**Centre of Excellence for Physically, Intellectually and Multi-Challenged**

Eastern Townships School Board

101 du Moulin, No. 205, Magog (Quebec) J1X 6H8

Contact: M. Bernard Messier & Ms. Diana Poot

Tel.: 819 868-0512

[centreofexcellence@tsb.qc.ca](mailto:centreofexcellence@tsb.qc.ca)

# List of acronyms

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| CCEHDAA  | French acronym for advisory committee on services for students with handicaps, maladjustments or learning disabilities. Also known as the Advisory Committee on Special Education Services (ACSES), the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), the Special Needs Advisory Committee (SNAC), depending on the school board. |
| GB       | Governing board  |
| CLSC     | French acronym for local community service centre (now grouped under CSSS)   |
| PC       | Parents' committee   |
| IPL      | Individualized path for learning   |
| CRDI-TED | French acronym for rehabilitation centre for intellectual disabilities and pervasive developmental disorders   |
| CRDP     | French acronym for rehabilitation centre for physical disabilities   |
| SB       | School board   |
| CSSS     | French acronym for health and social services centre   |
| HI       | Hearing impairment   |
| LD       | Learning difficulty  |
| SLD      | Severe learning difficulty   |
| MII      | Mild intellectual impairment   |
| MSII     | Moderate to severe intellectual impairment   |
| PII      | Profound intellectual impairment   |
| LD       | Language disorder  |
| SMI      | Severe motor impairment  |
| OI       | Organic impairment   |
| DPJ      | French acronym for youth protection  |
| VI       | Visual impairment  |
| DX       | Atypical disorder  |
| EHDA     | French acronym for students with handicaps and/or social maladjustment and/or learning difficulties  |
| QFPC     | Québec Federation of Parents' Committees   |
| SLA      | Speech-language assistant  |
| ISPMT    | French acronym for social insertion and job-market preparation program   |
| EA       | <i>Education Act</i>   |
| MELS     | French acronym for the ministry of education, recreation and sports  |
| MSSS     | French acronym for the ministry of health and social services  |
| PEH      | French acronym for an attendant for handicapped students   |
| IEP      | Individualized education plan  |
| ISSP     | Individualized sectorial service plan  |
| BD       | Behavioural disorder   |
| AD/HD    | Attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity   |
| PDD      | Pervasive development disorders  |
| SET      | Special education technician   |
| SBD      | Severe behavioural disorder  |
| PD       | Psychopathological disorders   |

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- **CCSEHDAA. Commission scolaire des Patriotes.** n.d. *Quoi faire lorsque mon enfant rencontre des difficultés à l'école?* Saint-Bruno.
- **CCSEHDAA. Commission scolaire de la Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles.** n.d. *Avez-vous un jeune présentant des difficultés ou des troubles d'apprentissage? Avez-vous un enfant handicapé? Connaissez-vous le comité CSEHDAA de la Commission scolaire de la Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles?* Saint-Eustache: Commission scolaire de la Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles
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# APPENDIX

## Sample individualized education plan

# Individualized Education Plan



|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| School board logo | <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/><br>School board contact information |
|-------------------|--|



|                                      |                |                     |                |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Student's first name and family name | Permanent code | Age on September 30 | School year    |
| Father                               | Mother         | Guardian            | Title          |
| Group                                | Year/cycle     | Path                | Classification |

|             |                          |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| Date opened | Revision-evaluation date |
| Date closed |                          |

**Abilities**

**Needs**

Objective

Date

 -  - 

Expiration

 -  - 

Types of intervention

Means

Means-adaptation

Means-modification

Identification of means

Personnel associated with means

Comments

Objective

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Date

[Date input field]

Expiration

[Expiration input field]

Types of intervention

Means

Means-adaptation

Means-modification

Identification of means

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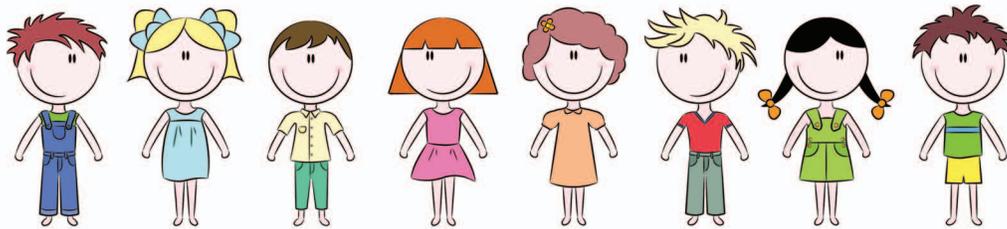
Personnel associated with means

[Empty text box for Personnel associated with means]

Comments

[Empty text box for Comments]





Fédération  
des comités de parents  
du Québec

2263, boulevard Louis-XIV  
Québec (Québec) G1C 1A4  
Telephone : 418 667-2432  
Toll free : 1 800 463-7268  
Fax : 418 667-6713  
Email : [courrier@fcpq.qc.ca](mailto:courrier@fcpq.qc.ca)  
[www.fcpq.qc.ca](http://www.fcpq.qc.ca)