

# Individualized Education Plans: Helping Students Achieve Success

**Reference Framework  
for the Establishment of  
Individualized Education Plans**

**Reach** for  
your **Dreams**

Québec 

# **Individualized Education Plans: Helping Students Achieve Success**

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# INTRODUCTION

Individualized education plans have been an established part of educational practice in Québec schools for several years. However, there are significant differences from one school board to another, and even from one school to another, in the way the plans are prepared, implemented and evaluated. Several school boards have developed interesting approaches, and the skills acquired, along with the new elements introduced by the education reform, can be used to make the adjustments needed for a new comprehension of the individualized education plan.

Since the publication of the initial reference framework for individualized education plans,<sup>1</sup> several major changes have occurred in the school system. The changes have affected the applicable legislative and regulatory provisions, the programs of study and the orientations of the Policy on Special Education. The many questions raised in the school system concerning the nature and content of individualized education plans, given this new context, have made it necessary to review the various facets of a tool that provides invaluable assistance for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities.

This document sets out guidelines for drawing up and applying individualized education plans, and

provides much-needed support for staff in schools and school boards as they reflect on how best to proceed. It highlights some of the most promising methods used to help students achieve success. Given the range of different, and sometimes complex, situations that exist, the document cannot answer all the questions raised. However, it deals with the main elements and provides a new viewpoint during a time of change.

The document specifies the underlying orientations of the individualized education plan, and is intended to lead to the development of a shared vision. It defines the individualized education plan as one element in a positive approach to help students and coordinate services, while reaffirming the need to involve the students concerned, and their parents, in the process. The implementation of the approach is based on the idea that the student concerned should play an active role at the centre of an individualized education plan. School staff are encouraged to take into consideration all aspects of a student's situation, and to focus on his or her strengths and the resources of the school in order to help him or her to progress. The document also underlines the need to make the individualized education plan part of a creative approach to problem solving that demands teamwork and an open-minded attitude in all involved.

1. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Cadre de référence pour l'établissement des plans d'intervention* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1992), 42 pages.

It is important to note that this document results from the joint work of the main partners in the Groupe de concertation en adaptation scolaire (GCAS).<sup>2</sup> The references for their work include a review of existing literature<sup>3</sup> and the gathering of data<sup>4</sup> concerning the use of the individualized education plan in elementary and secondary schools in Québec.

The document has four chapters.

- Chapter 1 examines the context in which individualized education plans are established. A brief historical overview and description of the current situation are followed by an examination of the main reference documents.
- Chapter 2 presents the MEQ orientations for the individualized education plan.
- Chapter 3 describes the situations in which an individualized education plan should be established, and specifies its nature and function. The components of a plan are described, and presented in diagrammatic form. Lastly, the chapter specifies the roles and responsibilities of the players in the individualized education plan.
- Chapter 4 describes the conditions that are conducive to the implementation of individualized education plans.

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2. The members of the group are listed in Appendix 1.

3. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Recension des écrits sur le plan d'intervention auprès des personnes handicapées ou en difficulté*, research report prepared by Pauline Beaupré, Guy Ouellet and Sarto Roy (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002), 66 pages.

4. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Rapport sur les questionnaires à l'intention de la direction d'école sur le plan d'intervention auprès des personnes handicapées ou en difficulté*, prepared by Pauline Beaupré, Guy Ouellet and Sarto Roy (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2003), 126 pages.  
Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Rapport sur les groupes de discussion portant sur le plan d'intervention auprès des personnes handicapées ou en difficulté*, prepared by Pauline Beaupré, Guy Ouellet and Sarto Roy (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, February 2003), 122 pages.

# Background

## 1.1

### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In Québec, meeting the needs of students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities (students with particular needs) has been a focus of the education system for many years. In 1979, in the publication *The Schools of Québec: Policy Statement and Plan of Action*,<sup>5</sup> the Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ) stated the objective of providing high-quality education adapted to the needs of these students in as normal a setting as possible.

However, it was not until 1988 that the *Education Act*<sup>6</sup> required school boards to specify their orientations and standards concerning the organization of services for students with particular needs. The Act also requires school principals, with the assistance of

the student's parents, the staff providing services to the student, and the student, to establish an individualized education plan for each student with particular needs.

More recently, in a brief dealing with the integration of students with particular needs, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation stated that:

individualized education plans now seem to be established as a matter of course for all students attending special schools or classes.... However, this approach seems far less systematic in the case of students integrated into regular classes, and often does not involve such active participation by the parents [translation].<sup>7</sup>

5. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *The Schools of Québec: Policy Statement and Plan of Action* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1979), 159 pages.

6. *Education Act*, R.S.Q., c. I-13.3.

7. Québec, Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *L'intégration scolaire des élèves handicapés et en difficulté* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1996), p. 47.

The management of individualized education plans appears to be somewhat unwieldy. One of the recommendations made by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation was to encourage school staff to streamline the drafting process for individualized education plans, and to involve the students and their parents more.

In the same brief, it was noted that individualized education plans have made an important contribution to the progress made in providing schooling for students with particular needs:

Schools have begun to focus on the educational needs of these students rather than on their weaknesses, and their work with the students seems to be better planned than before, thanks in particular to the individualized education plan, which is starting to be used more generally [translation].<sup>8</sup>

However, the Auditor General of Québec noted in his 1999-2000 report that "individualized education plans tend to reflect administrative standards more than student needs [translation]."<sup>9</sup> The Auditor

General expected the new Policy on Special Education and the related plan of action to improve the situation.

In 1999, in the wake of the education reform and the new focus on enabling as many students as possible to achieve educational success, the basic orientation of the new Policy on Special Education was helping students with handicaps or social maladjustments or learning disabilities to succeed in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications. The plan of action that accompanied the Policy was designed to help schools implement it; one of the measures it contained was the revision of the reference framework for individualized education plans.

Lastly, it is important to note that the language used to describe students targeted by individualized education plans has changed over the years. Instead of exceptional or maladjusted children, we now speak of special education students, students with difficulties, at-risk students or students with particular needs.

The following key points are drawn from an analysis of the data gathered.

- Individualized education plans are seen primarily as an ongoing process that involves more than just forms to be completed. They are mainly considered tools for joint action, individual monitoring of students and problem solving. Although the respondents did not consider individualized education plans to be an administrative measure, they pointed out that they involved a lot of work.
- Individualized education plans have become an established educational practice in almost all elementary and secondary schools in Québec. Their use is more integrated and systematic in specialized schools and special education classes than in regular classes.

## 1.2

### CURRENT SITUATION

A research project was completed in 2001-2002 to obtain a realistic view of current practices connected with individualized education plans. The project provided an overview of the current situation concerning the use of individualized education plans in elementary and secondary schools in Québec. A questionnaire<sup>10</sup> was sent to 1170 elementary and secondary school principals to gather information about aspects that encouraged, or discouraged, the establishment of individualized education plans. In addition, discussion groups bringing together a total of some 90 people were formed in all areas of Québec. This method provided a survey of a representative sample of individuals concerned, and also provided some qualitative data.

8. Québec, Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *L'intégration scolaire des élèves handicapés et en difficulté* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1996), p. 6.

9. Québec, Auditor General, «Gestion des services visant l'adaptation scolaire des élèves en difficulté,» in *Rapport à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 1999-2000*, vol. 1, chap. 4, p. 124.

10. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Questionnaire for the School Administration: Research on Individualized Education Paths for Students With Handicaps or at Risk*, prepared by Pauline Beaupré, Guy Ouellet and Sarto Roy (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec).

- Reliance on individualized education plans varies, depending on whether the student is an at-risk student or a student with a handicap.<sup>11</sup> The survey results show that:
  - 91 per cent of students with handicaps have individualized education plans
  - 60 per cent of at-risk students have individualized education plans
- The process used to establish the individualized education plan is different for a student with a handicap as compared with an at-risk student
- Individualized education plans seem to be harder to establish at the secondary level. The reasons given for this situation include the larger number of people working with the same student, and service organization (type of student groups, organization of complementary services, etc.).
- Fewer than a third of the students concerned are involved in establishing their individualized education plans. The most commonly given reason for this is their young age. Forty per cent of the respondents stated that participation by the student is not customary at their school.
- More than a third of the respondents stated that parents are not always asked to take part in establishing the individualized education plan for an at-risk student. On the other hand, the parents of students with handicaps are more likely (82 per cent) to be asked, especially in elementary schools.
- In the discussion groups where parents were present, they stated that they felt that schools should take into account their expertise concerning their own children and the content of the individualized education plans.
- A vast majority of respondents (90 per cent) stated that, before a meeting is held with parents to establish an individualized education plan, a meeting of school staff is held. The most frequently given reasons were the desire to pool information on the student and to define the services required, and the need to establish a consensus among the professionals involved.
- Over 40 per cent of the school principals surveyed stated that they delegate some or all of the activities connected with individualized education plans. At the secondary level, the activities are mainly delegated to the vice-principal or a professional, whereas at the elementary level, some duties are delegated to homeroom teachers, resource teachers or psychologists.
- The main strengths of the individualized education plan are in facilitating cooperation among players, promoting collaboration with parents and better identifying the needs of the student.
- The main difficulties encountered are related to managing the time required, using the individualized education plan as a teaching support tool and obtaining the student's participation.

The research, in keeping with the brief of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, confirms that the individualized education plan has become a common practice in elementary and secondary schools in Québec. However, some elements, such as student participation, genuine collaboration with parents and management of the time required to establish an individualized education plan, need improvement if the approach is to become an effective educational practice.

11. For the purpose of the questionnaire, students with serious behavioural disorders were considered to be at-risk students: Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Students With Handicaps, Social Maladjustments or Learning Difficulties: Definitions* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2000), 20 pages.

The research project mentioned above included a review of the literature dealing with various elements of the individualized education plan in all Canadian provinces and the United States. It is important to note that individualized education plans for students with particular needs are compulsory under the education legislation of most Canadian provinces and U.S. states.

#### *Definition of the concept*

There are several definitions of the individualized education plan, but the same elements are generally found in definitions by all authors. According to Goupil (1991), an individualized education plan is a tool for planning and joint action that provides a better response to the needs of a student with a handicap or difficulties. The importance of cooperation and joint action, especially in terms of participation by the student and parents, is highlighted in most studies. In addition, several education ministries, such as those in Manitoba and Alberta, have issued guides for the drafting and implementation of individualized education plans, in order to provide support for the schools concerned. The guides describe the steps in the process.

The content of an individualized education plan is basically the same, whichever author is consulted. Each plan generally:

- identifies the student's strengths and needs
- sets objectives
- describes methods and resources
- sets a time frame
- defines roles and responsibilities

In the literature, individualized education plans are often considered in relation to service plans and transition plans, with a mention that all three

planning and coordination structures should be considered part of an integrated approach. In several Canadian provinces and in the United States, a transition plan must be drafted when a student reaches the age of 14 or 16, or when other criteria related to the end of schooling are met. According to Goupil, Tassé and Doré (2000), the transition plan is a tool used by teachers, students, professionals, parents and other partners, if any, to reflect on the future of a student following the end of his or her schooling. It includes objectives for the various life areas which the student will continue to develop after leaving secondary school: work, continued study, occupational activities, leisure activities, community service, place of residence. The transition plan is drawn up several years before the end of a student's schooling. It covers a period of several years, unlike the individualized education plan, which covers a one-year period.

Transition plans are a relatively new concern in Québec,<sup>12</sup> and the topic will be examined in more detail in Chapter 3.

#### *Target clientele*

Two elements are frequently mentioned in connection with the need to establish an individualized education plan:

- the student concerned is unable to progress and achieve success under the regular program of study
- the student's situation requires specialized services or adaptations to existing services (teaching strategies, instructional materials, specific resources, etc.)

12. Québec, Office des personnes handicapées du Québec, *La transition de l'école à la vie active: rapport du comité de travail sur l'implantation d'une pratique de la planification de la transition au Québec* (Drummondville: 2003), 43 pages.

The terms “students with special needs” or “students with particular needs” are regularly used to describe these students. In addition, “gifted children” are often mentioned as students who could benefit from an individualized education plan. Obviously, most policies establish categories of students on the basis of the definitions drawn up by the government departments concerned. In some cases, students must be identified as belonging to a certain category before an individualized education plan can be established, while in other cases, plans can also be established for students who have not been identified from an administrative point of view.

### *Difficulties in applying individualized education plans*

Several research reports highlight elements that are difficult to apply. Some of these difficulties have already been noted in the overview of the current

situation in elementary and secondary schools in Québec. They include the difficulty of establishing effective collaboration with parents, that of defining individualized, achievable objectives, and the excessive number of objectives often included.

### *Innovations*

One key innovation was identified in a review of the literature (Delaware, Kentucky). It involves the use of a portfolio for each student with particular needs, containing a wide range of information on the student, such as examples of schoolwork, data from teachers and professionals, and audio and video cassettes. The data are representative of the way the student functions, and reflect the progress observed. In addition, the portfolio makes it easier to monitor the interventions carried out under the individualized education plan and the various therapies applied (speech therapy, occupational therapy, etc.).

## 1.4

## MAIN REFERENCES

The 1997 educational policy statement, *Québec Schools on Course*,<sup>13</sup> set out the major orientations for the current reform, based on *A New Direction for Success*. A new focus was placed on the individual student, especially the student with particular needs. To ensure the implementation of the new orientations, a series of changes was made to the *Education Act*,<sup>14</sup> the Basic School Regulation<sup>15</sup> and the Policy on Special Education.<sup>16</sup> Some of these changes affect the context in which individualized education plans are established, but other elements have been unaffected.

### 1.4.1 Education Act<sup>17</sup>

#### *Entitlement to a school education (section 1)*

At the beginning, the *Education Act* confirms that every person is entitled to receive preschool education services and elementary and secondary school instructional services and other educational services,

student services (complementary educational services) and special educational services from the age of admission, in general five years of age, to 18 years of age, or 21 years of age in the case of a handicapped person.

#### *Reconsideration of a decision (section 9)*

The Act provides that a student, or a student’s parents, may request the reconsideration of a decision concerning the student with which they disagree.

#### *Teachers’ obligations (section 22)*

Teachers have obligations towards their students with particular needs, as they do towards any students under their responsibility. They must, among other things, contribute to the intellectual and overall personal development of every student entrusted to their care.

13. Québec, Ministère de l’Éducation, *Québec Schools on Course: Educational Policy Statement* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1997), 40 pages.

14. *Education Act*, R.S.Q., c. I-13.3.

15. *Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary education*, R.S.Q., c. I-13.3, r. 3.1.

16. Québec, Ministère de l’Éducation, *Adapting Our Schools to the Needs of All Students: Policy on Special Education* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1999), 37 pages.

17. The cited sections of the *Education Act* are found in Appendix 2.

### *The school's mission (section 36)*

In clearly defining the triple mission of schools, namely to impart knowledge to students, foster their social development and give them qualifications, the *Education Act* emphasizes the necessity for schools to provide students with qualifications. It highlights the importance of providing higher qualifications for students with particular needs. The three aspects of the school mission should be taken into consideration when establishing an individualized education plan.

### *Individualized education plan (section 96.14)*

The *Education Act* stipulates that, in the case of a handicapped student or a student with a social maladjustment or a learning disability, the principal must establish an individualized education plan adapted to the student's needs. The plan, established with the assistance of the student's parents, of the staff providing services to the student, and of the student, unless the student is unable to do so, is a tool used to coordinate the actions taken to meet the student's needs. It should be consistent with the ability and needs of the student as evaluated by the school board before the student's placement and enrollment at the school. It is important that this phase, during which information is gathered and analyzed, respect the spirit of the individualized education plan by involving all the partners concerned, and the parents in particular. In addition, the school principal must ensure that the individualized education plan is implemented and periodically evaluated, and inform the student's parents on a regular basis. Lastly, it is important to specify that all the steps related to a student's individualized education plan should be consistent with the school board's policy on the organization of educational services for students with particular needs.

### *The school's needs (section 96.20)*

After consulting with the school staff, the principal must inform the school board of the needs of the school in respect of each staff category and of the professional development needs of the staff. Some of the measures defined in the individualized education plans will allow the staffing needs to be defined with more precision.

### *Advisory committee (sections 185 to 187)*

Every school board must establish an advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities. The functions of the advisory committee are to advise the school board on a policy for the organization of educational services to handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities, and to advise the school board on the allocation of financial resources to the services intended for those students. The committee may also advise the school board on the implementation of an individualized education plan for a handicapped student or a student with social maladjustments or learning disabilities.

### *Organization of educational services (sections 234 and 235)*

Every school board must adapt the educational services provided to a handicapped student or a student with a social maladjustment or a learning disability according to the student's needs and in keeping with the student's abilities as evaluated by the school board according to the procedures prescribed in its policy concerning the organization of educational services for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities. The policy must include methods for preparing and evaluating individualized education plans.

#### 1.4.2 Basic school regulation for preschool, elementary and secondary education<sup>18</sup>

##### *Complementary services (student services, sections 4 and 5)*

The Basic School Regulation now requires each school board to establish four programs of complementary services to help students progress in their learning. The four programs are *support services, student life services, counselling services* and *promotion and prevention services*. Twelve types of services are covered by the four programs, which are interrelated and operate in conjunction with instructional services and special educational services. The program of counselling services, which is designed to assist students throughout their studies and help them with any difficulties they encounter, is the program most called on in individualized education plans.

An understanding of the four student services programs provided for in the Basic School Regulation and respect for the spirit of the underlying orientations of the programs can be of assistance when choosing methods and organizing services under an individualized education plan. The document *Complementary Education Services: Essential to Success*<sup>19</sup> contains more information on the four programs and their implementation.

##### *School age (section 12)*

Section 12 of the Basic School Regulation provides that children living in low-income areas and children with handicaps are admitted to preschool education if they reach the age of four before October 1 of the current school year, provided their parents have submitted an application. Once admitted, they are entitled to receive preschool education services and, depending on the programs established by the school board concerned, complementary and special educational services.

##### *Duration of elementary education (sections 13 and 36)*

The Basic School Regulation provides for promotion from elementary to secondary school after six years of elementary education, for students who began their elementary education during or after the 2000-2001 school year.<sup>20</sup> As an exceptional measure, the *Education Act* (section 96.18) allows a student to continue in elementary school education for an additional school year if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the measure will enable the student to achieve the objectives or master the compulsory notional content of elementary school education. For students with particular needs, the decision should be made as part of a joint action approach, under an individualized education plan.

##### *Information for parents (section 29)*

Lastly, to promote collaboration with parents, the Basic School Regulation stipulates that schools must provide parents, at least once a month, with information on their minor children if their individualized education plan so provides, or if their children experience difficulties that will probably prevent them from meeting the requirements of the program.

#### 1.4.3 Policy on Special Education<sup>21</sup>

The basic orientation of this success-based policy and its six lines of action should be used as a foundation and guide for every decision concerning students with particular needs. In addition, they can be used by schools to explore new methods, or to consolidate existing methods concerning the use of individualized education plans in schools. The principle *that educational success has different meanings depending on the abilities and needs of different students* should encourage all involved to reflect on current practices and on the concept of success.

18. The cited sections of the Basic School Regulation are found in Appendix 3.

19. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Complementary Education Services: Essential to Success* (Québec : Gouvernement du Québec, 2002), 59 pages.

20. Students who began their elementary education before July 1, 2000, move on to secondary education after seven years of compulsory schooling rather than six.

21. The basic orientation and the six lines of action are found in Appendix 4.

Knowledge of the Policy on Special Education is essential to understanding the changes that are expected in the way students with particular needs are dealt with. The following points should be noted.

- Recent research findings have shown the importance of early intervention. In certain situations, an individualized education plan should be established for a student as soon as difficulties arise, as defined in the first line of action. *Early intervention* helps prevent deterioration of the situation.
- The third line of action urges the school system to *organize educational services on the basis of the needs of the individual students*. This represents a major challenge for school administrators, who should plan all educational services in a way that meets the needs of individual students, rather than a category of similar students. The third line of action also gives priority to integrating students with particular needs into regular classes. The main focus should be on providing a student with particular needs with the same services as all other students, before more specialized, adapted services are considered.
- The fourth line of action, which emphasizes the importance of *creating a true educational community around the student*, has direct consequences for the individualized education plan. The school principal has primary responsibility for ensuring that a consensus is reached, and should see to the establishment of conditions conducive to the creation of a genuine support network for the student, including the student's parents, the school staff and the health and social services personnel involved in the student's situation.

#### 1.4.4 Québec Education Program

Certain elements of the *Québec Education Program*<sup>22</sup> should be taken into consideration to ensure the quality of the individualized education plan.

#### *A competency-based approach*

The *Québec Education Program* is competency-based. A competency is defined as “a set of behaviours based on the effective mobilization and use of a range of resources.”<sup>23</sup> The term resources refers not only to the academic learning the student has acquired, but also to the student's experience, skills, interests, and so on. These resources, which could also be called internal or personal resources, are supplemented by the range of external resources on which the student can draw, such as fellow students, teachers, and new information and communications technologies. These resources should be taken into account and put to use when the individualized education plan is established.

#### *Cross-curricular competencies<sup>24</sup> and broad areas of learning*

In addition to subject-specific competencies, the Program includes cross-curricular competencies and broad areas of learning. A competency is described as “cross-curricular” when it is used in all areas of learning; it may be intellectual, methodological, personal or social, or communication-related. All personnel in the school system should be involved in helping students develop their cross-curricular competencies.

Several of the objectives of an individualized education plan are directly linked to the development of cross-curricular competencies. For example, a student with behavioural difficulties will often encounter personal or social difficulties. The objectives selected for the student's individualized education plan should be closely linked to the competencies in the Education Program to ensure that they are as significant as possible for the student and the teacher.

22. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Québec Education Program: Preschool and Elementary Education*, approved version (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2001), 350 pages.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

24. A table of cross-curricular competencies is found in Appendix 5.

The broad areas of learning cover a set of topics of concern to young people. They allow students to make connections between different subject areas, and to take a critical look at their personal, social and cultural environment.

### *Giving students primary responsibility for their learning*

Learning is considered an active process for which students should take primary responsibility. Particular attention is paid to the students' learning processes. In addition, it is recommended that students play a more active role in evaluation in the course of learning. Placing the student at the centre of the learning process in this way is also fundamental to the design of an individualized education plan.

### *Continuous progress*

The concept of continuous progress is used mainly to analyze the students' paths. The program is divided into cycles, and the competencies to be developed are spread over a longer period of time, allowing for continuous progress in learning. The organization of the program in learning cycles facilitates the development of competencies that require pedagogical work over longer periods of time. This conception of learning is especially well suited to students who require a more differentiated approach.

### *Differentiated instruction*

Differentiated instruction is an approach that allows the diversity and heterogeneity of a student group to be taken into account. This view of teaching targets the maximum development of each student's potential. For students with more particular needs, it calls for an individualized education plan to be established.

### *The need to adapt instruction*

For some students, the individualized education plan offers an opportunity to determine what adaptations or strategies are needed to help them acquire and develop their knowledge and competencies. The plan allows links to be made between students' abilities and needs and the outcomes defined in the Education Program. It also helps to define the best way for students to contribute positively to their educational success.

### *Evaluation as support for learning*

Lastly, evaluation methods have been redesigned. Evaluation is now expected to be an aid to learning, rather than just a means of recognizing the mastery of competencies. "Evaluation must be integrated into the teaching and learning process and be used to monitor both student learning and teaching practices."<sup>25</sup> This approach to evaluation as support for learning should be taken into account when establishing an individualized education plan.

## 1.4.5 Other references

### **Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms**

#### **Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights**

The introduction of compulsory individualized education plans was influenced by the provisions of the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* and the *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights*. All players in the school system should be aware of these provisions and the obligations they entail.

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25. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Evaluation of Learning at the Preschool and Elementary Levels: Framework* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002), p. 7.

The *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*,<sup>26</sup> for example, recognizes that every person in Québec has fundamental rights and freedoms, including the right to personal security, inviolability and freedom, and the right to the safeguard of his or her dignity. In addition, the Charter recognizes the right of every person to be treated equally, and as a result, the right to protection against discrimination in the exercise of all the rights and freedoms upheld by the Charter. The *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights*<sup>27</sup> was enacted in the same spirit in 1978. The Act created the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ), whose mission is to coordinate services for people with handicaps, inform and advise them, defend their interests and promote their academic, occupational and social integration. Under the Act, the Office may, at the request of a handicapped person, make representations and assist the person in dealings with bodies such as school boards and educational institutions.

#### **Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and the protection of personal information**

The *Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and the protection of personal information*<sup>28</sup> also has an impact on individualized education plans. The Act ensures the confidentiality of nominative information held by public bodies, including school boards, and sets out rules governing the gathering, retention and release of this information. Under the Act, nominative information is defined as information concerning a natural person which allows the person to be identified. School staff should therefore ensure that the gathering, keeping and release of nominative information for the purposes of an individualized education plan is in compliance with the Act.

Methods should be established that, while preserving the confidentiality of the information, allow the persons concerned to consult and use the information for the purpose of working with the student. A document has been produced by the Ministère de l'Éducation concerning the protection of personal information in schools, and provides much valuable information.<sup>29</sup>

#### **Agreement for the complementarity of services between the health and social services network and the education network**

To ensure that the services they offer are complementary, and to meet the need for more joint action, the education network and the health and social services network have signed an agreement concerning all interventions affecting the development of young people. The agreement concerns health and well-being, education, prevention, and adjustment and rehabilitation services.

To ensure the continuity and coordination of the interventions, the partners in the two networks should take the necessary steps to give young people access to the services they need. One of the principles of the agreement is that an adapted response should be provided for young people with particular needs.<sup>30</sup> From this point of view, an individualized education plan should clearly be part of a joint approach.

26. *Charter of human rights and freedoms*, R.S.Q., c. C-12, updated to July 2002, s. 10.

27. *Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights*, R.S.Q., c. E-20.1.

28. *Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and the protection of personal information*, R.S.Q., c. A-2.1, updated to July 2002.

29. Québec, Ministère de l'éducation, Direction de l'adaptation scolaire et des services complémentaires, *La protection des renseignements personnels à l'école*, information document (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1994), 95 pages.

30. Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, *Agreement for the complementarity of services between the health and social services network and the education network and the education network* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2003), p. 5.

## Orientations

Developing an individualized education plan is a demanding pedagogical challenge. It can only be meaningful if it is based on certain principles,<sup>31</sup> which each school team should take the time to master. In this way, the individualized education plan becomes a significant, effective tool for the student as well as for everyone involved in the process. The school system should follow these principles:

- All students are unique, and have potential that can be developed.
- Students should play an active role in their own development; they should be allowed to make choices or to influence them.
- Students have a wide range of needs; the best response is one that is adapted to their individual needs and abilities.

- Parents have primary responsibility for their children and their children's development; they should be recognized as genuine partners in the process.
- Early intervention, as soon as difficulties are observed, should become standard practice.

These principles underlie the orientations<sup>32</sup> drawn up by the MEQ to promote the development of a shared view of the individualized education plan. The five orientations are seeing success in a differentiated way, placing students at the centre of their own success, adopting a systemic view of the student's situation, focusing on the student's strengths and the school's resources and, lastly, strengthening school-family-community cooperation.

31. According to Legendre, a principle is "the statement of an initial proposition that constitutes the foundation or primary cause of an action, behaviour or judgment": Renald Legendre, *Dictionnaire actuel de l'éducation*, 2d ed. (Boucherville: Éditions françaises, 1993), p. 1015, translation.

32. According to Legendre, an orientation is "a general, long-term direction that is inevitable or is projected by a person, field of learning, institution or society": *ibid.*, p. 949, translation.

## 2.1

### SEEING SUCCESS IN A DIFFERENTIATED WAY

#### *An evolving concept*

Success, in the field of education, is a constantly evolving concept. Rather than *academic success*, reflected essentially in the awarding of diplomas and certificates, the emphasis is now on *educational success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications*. This view of success is based on the three components of the school's mission, and focuses on the progress accomplished by an individual student as part of an ongoing process. This does not mean that any less is required of the students; on the contrary, the expectations remain high, based primarily on the student's strengths, with consideration given to his or her abilities and needs. This is where the individualized education plan becomes a key tool, which sets a direction for success for the student with particular needs. The individualized education plan requires the three components of the school's mission to be taken into account in planning actions to assist the student. This is a necessity for a student for whom the achievement of success poses a particular challenge.

#### *Different meanings of success*

This new concept, introduced in the Policy on Special Education, implies that if the needs and abilities of each student are taken into account, then success must have different meanings for different students. It is important for all players to understand the implications of this orientation:

- *A priori*, the outcomes defined in the *Québec Education Program*, and the methods used, must be the same for all students.
- In some cases, adaptations must be made (to instructional materials, teaching methods, etc.) to allow certain students with particular needs to develop the competencies prescribed by the Education Program. For example, a visually impaired student may need Braille editions of materials, and formal examinations may have to be adapted for that student.
- In more exceptional cases, a student may be unable to develop all the competencies prescribed by the Education Program by the end of a cycle or by some other point. Realistic objectives must then be defined, based on the student's abilities, while retaining a degree of difficulty that will allow the student to reach as high a level of competency as possible. The outcomes defined in the Education Program should always remain the main reference. In this way, the student is assured of a high-quality education, in a spirit of equity and equal opportunity. Official recognition in a variety of possible forms, including a statement of competencies, should be provided to certify the student's achievement.

**First and foremost, the school system should adopt and apply a broader conception of success. The use of an individualized education plan for a student with particular needs should be seen as indispensable to the student's success.**

*Students as having primary responsibility for their own success*

The *Québec Education Program* places students at the centre of the learning process. The same should be true of each individualized education plan. According to the results of certain research projects, however, it appears that students are not directly involved in their individualized education plans. To allow students to become the key players, they should be closely involved with each step in the process. Of course, the student's actual contribution will depend on the situation and the steps taken to encourage the student's involvement.

Every decision should be taken in the student's interest, and the adults involved should avoid making decisions based on their own concerns. The student's interests and motivation can be used as levers to increase the significance of the individualized education plan in the eyes of the student.

*Significance*

An individualized education plan that is meaningful to the student can make it considerably easier for the student to learn. "Its effectiveness will be increased if it makes the student aware of his or her own cognitive and emotional characteristics [translation]."<sup>33</sup> It also allows the student to understand the requirements of each task, and the means to be used to complete it. In emotional terms, an individualized education plan is significant if it triggers the student's commitment and allows him or her to take more control of his or her actions. Without motivation, there is no commitment or perseverance.

Viau (1994) considers that motivation in a given task is the result of three main variables: perception of one's ability to complete the task, perception of the value of the task, and perception of the controllability of the task. Perception of one's ability to complete the task refers to the student's belief that he or she will be able to attain the objectives set in the individualized education plan. Perception of the value of the task refers to the student's belief that the objectives are worth attaining. Perception of the controllability of the task refers to the student's belief that he or she has a measure of control over the individualized education plan, and that it represents a challenge that matches his or her abilities. The student's motivation with respect to the individualized education plan therefore depends on his or her belief that the plan will succeed, on the benefits he or she expects to gain, and on the knowledge that he or she will be able to influence the process.

It is also important to take into consideration the fact that one of the characteristics of students with particular needs is a tendency to underestimate their ability with regard to academic tasks. This means that staff members must make the students understand the importance of their individualized education plans in order to engage their commitment. Of course, the degree of commitment will depend on the age and needs of each student—a teenager of 14 will not participate in an individualized education plan in the same way as a preschool student. Students can participate in an individualized education plan in a variety of ways, and it is important to choose the ones that best match their situation.

**Students who help identify their own abilities and needs, who commit to objectives because they consider them useful and achievable, and who see that various players are working together with their parents will feel more motivated and will make a bigger effort to achieve the objectives.**

33. C. Bourdages and R. Chouinard, « L'élève et la signification de son plan d'intervention personnalisé: pistes d'intervention visant l'implication de l'élève, » in *Recension des écrits sur le plan d'intervention auprès des personnes handicapées ou en difficulté*, research report, 2002, p. 3.

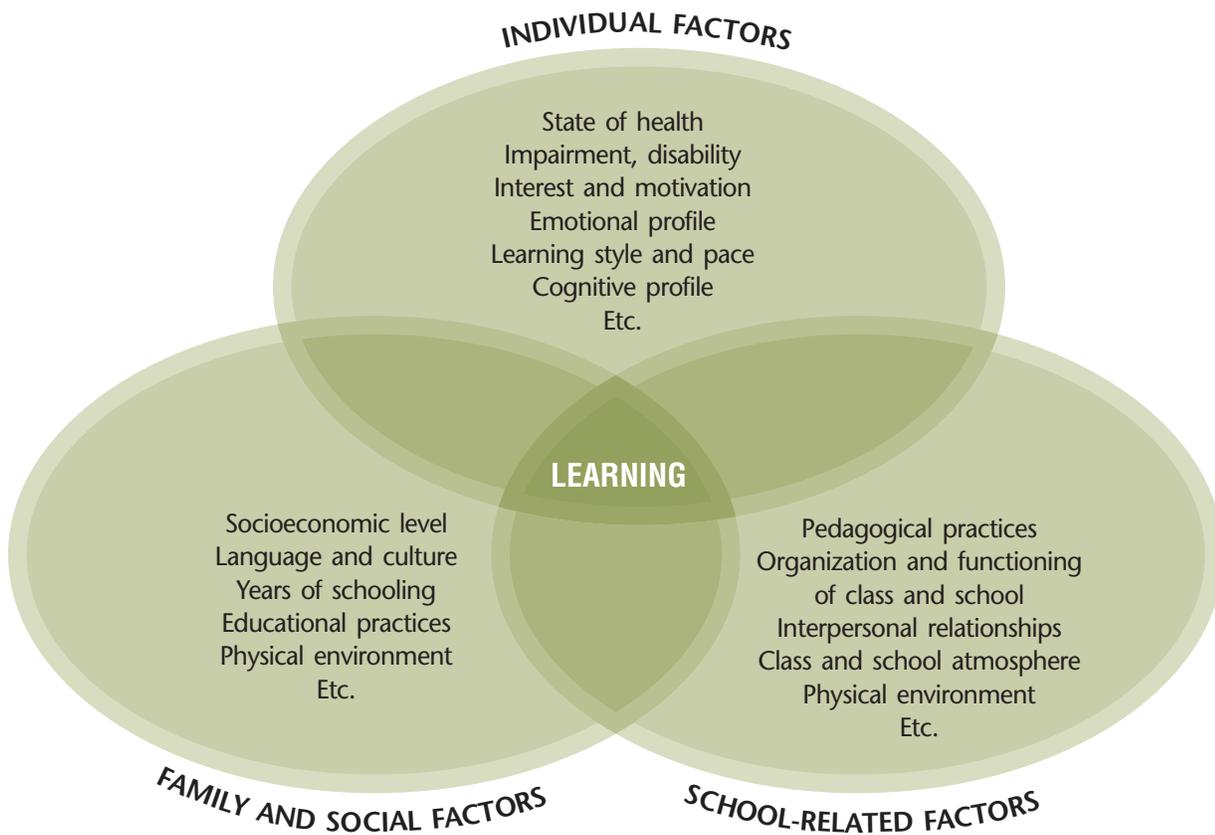
2.3

**ADOPTING A SYSTEMIC VIEW OF THE STUDENT'S SITUATION**

To adopt a systemic view of a student's situation means to take into consideration all the factors likely to influence the student's learning and academic progress. These include individual, family, social and school-related factors. Some of them may increase (risk factors) or decrease (protection factors) the possibility that the student's difficulties will become more pronounced.

The following diagram<sup>34</sup> shows the factors that may influence a student's learning.

**Factors that may influence learning**



34. Adaptation of a diagram from Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction de l'adaptation scolaire et des services complémentaires, *Learning Difficulties in School: Reference Framework for Intervention*, working document (2003), p. 21.

### *Individual factors*

Obviously, individual factors such as an impairment, a slow learning pace or a particular cognitive profile will have repercussions on a student's learning. It is important to make the necessary adaptations to reduce or eliminate obstacles to the development of the student's competencies. To ensure that the individualized education plan is effective, the methods it contains should be chosen on the basis of several factors. For example, it is possible that for a student with an intellectual or motor impairment, access to adapted instructional materials will help eliminate obstacles. In addition, support for the teacher may help improve the services received by the student.

### *Family and social factors*

Many research projects have shown the influence of the family and social environment on personal development. When an individualized education plan is established, it is essential to take these factors into account in order to ensure a proper analysis of the student's situation. Possible ways of helping the student should be defined by considering the realities of the student's life and, when possible, using methods that will encourage participation by the parents and the community.

In this connection, it is important to note that the parents' contribution to the individualized education plan will depend on their own situation. It is important for school staff to adjust their expectations and select methods on the basis of the student's family and social situation. Being the parent of a child with particular needs is a difficult situation that must be dealt with on a daily basis. Other elements, such as belonging to a cultural community or living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, can make the situation even more complex. The parents may find it difficult to provide the support needed at home for their child's homework, or may be

unable to help the child with speech therapy exercises, as prescribed by a speech therapist, without extra assistance. The use of community services can help ensure that the objectives are attained.

### *School-related factors*

Other elements that should not be underestimated are related to the student's school environment. They can increase the student's difficulties or, on the contrary, make a positive contribution to the student's learning. The teacher-student relationship and the teaching strategies used can have an impact on the learning of a student with particular needs. For example, teachers should have a proper understanding of the limitations caused by the handicap, social maladjustment or learning disability in order to understand the student's learning style and, if needed, to adapt their methods.

### *Interaction among factors*

It is important to understand that the interaction among personal and environmental (family, social and school-related) factors has considerable impact on a student's experience, in particular the student's school experience. If the school environment is not to handicap a student who has an impairment, it must be adapted to the student's abilities and needs.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, if the school environment (teaching strategies, instructional materials, etc.) is adapted, then the student will be able to take his or her place and help enrich the school.

**A systemic approach is now recommended in the education network to help students with particular needs to progress and succeed. By taking action on environmental factors, a set of variables can be brought into play to help find solutions for these students.**

35. Patrick Fougeyrollas et al., *Processus de production du handicap*, CQCIDH/CSICIDH edition, Bibliothèque nationale du Québec (1998), p. 36.

## FOCUSING ON THE STUDENT'S STRENGTHS AND THE SCHOOL'S RESOURCES

This orientation promotes an approach involving a search for solutions<sup>36</sup> based on the strengths of the student and the resources of the school. It is generally recognized that a student's strengths should be taken into account when objectives are selected and methods are defined in an individualized education plan. However, in practice it appears that it is easier to identify a student's strengths than to use and apply them throughout the process. In addition, experience has shown that the individualized education plan, generally triggered by a problem situation, is seen primarily as a problem-solving tool.

There are basically two ways to consider, discuss and take action on a situation. A solution-based method is not the same as a problem-based method, and the solution-based approach is preferable to an approach that focuses too much on the problem and in fact tends to amplify it. According to de Shazer (1994), the more one focuses on the problem, the more one is concerned by it and talks about it, the more one actually creates it. Gérard Lavoie, citing Freeman, Epston and Lobovits (1997), points out that by creating feelings of anxiety, despair and powerlessness, an excessive focus on a problem eventually paralyzes both the family and the people trying to help them.<sup>37</sup> It is important that, when dealing with a student with particular needs or the student's parents, the attitudes and interventions of the school

staff are oriented towards solutions rather than problems. Quoting O'Hanlon and Wiener-Davis (1989), Lavoie adds that a block often results from too much information about the problem and too little about the solution.<sup>38</sup> This does not mean that when the individualized education plan is established the student's situation should not be properly defined. It does mean that a new perspective is required.

A solution-centred approach allows a more dynamic appraisal of a student's situation. The appraisal should include positive elements, such as the student's strengths, qualities, resources and knowledge. It is important for the student's strengths and resources to be identified as a first step. The same attention to detail that is normally applied when defining the problem should be applied in the search for solutions. For this purpose, instead of focusing only on what the student needs to acquire or to do, the plan should state how the student's present abilities can be used.

**This orientation, based on a solution-centred approach, encourages schools to change paradigms to focus more on what is working than on what is not working or is causing problems.**

36. Gérard Lavoie, *L'approche orientée vers les solutions en milieu scolaire* (1999), <[http://www.adaptationscolaire.org/themes/dico/textes\\_dico.htm](http://www.adaptationscolaire.org/themes/dico/textes_dico.htm)>.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

The Policy on Special Education stresses the importance of creating a true educational community around the student, and the *Education Act* prescribes various participatory structures that can facilitate partnerships. An individualized education plan creates an important opportunity for cooperative action. The educational community begins with cooperation between the school and the family. Many studies have shown the importance of this kind of collaboration for student success, for various reasons:<sup>39</sup>

- Students' attitudes are influenced by those of their parents.
- Parents have expertise concerning their children.
- Parents can be important resources and partners for the school team.
- Intervention is facilitated by consistent approaches at home and at school.

Collaboration can be increased by certain factors under the control of the school staff:

- showing the school's concern for the realities faced by families
- using methods to foster a relationship, for example by planning meetings with parents in a flexible way
- taking into account the specific situation of the parents of students with particular needs
- promoting mutual understanding by taking the constraints faced by each party into account
- encouraging parents to recognize the importance of collaboration with the school, and to become aware of their own key influence
- demonstrating positive attitudes

Some students with particular needs, such as those with handicaps or severe behavioural disorders, also receive assistance from professional workers in the health and social services system. The effectiveness of an individualized education plan depends on the mobilization of all the people working with the student, both inside and outside the school. It is important to work to establish conditions that will facilitate this partnership, and the school principal has an important role to play in this respect. First, the principal should know the community resources available and the services provided by other public systems. He or she should be open to collaborating with other resource providers and ensure that they are taken into account and used. In this connection, the implementation of the agreement for the complementarity of services between the health and social services network and the education network should promote global, concerted action to better meet the needs of students who have handicap or difficulties.

#### *Collaboration and joint action*

“To collaborate: to work in combination with.”<sup>40</sup> Acting jointly with and for a student improves the student's chances of achieving success, but joint action is always a challenge. When identifying a student's strengths and needs and selecting objectives and methods to help the student progress, each person involved has a different viewpoint depending on his or her role and concerns, although the focus remains on the student:

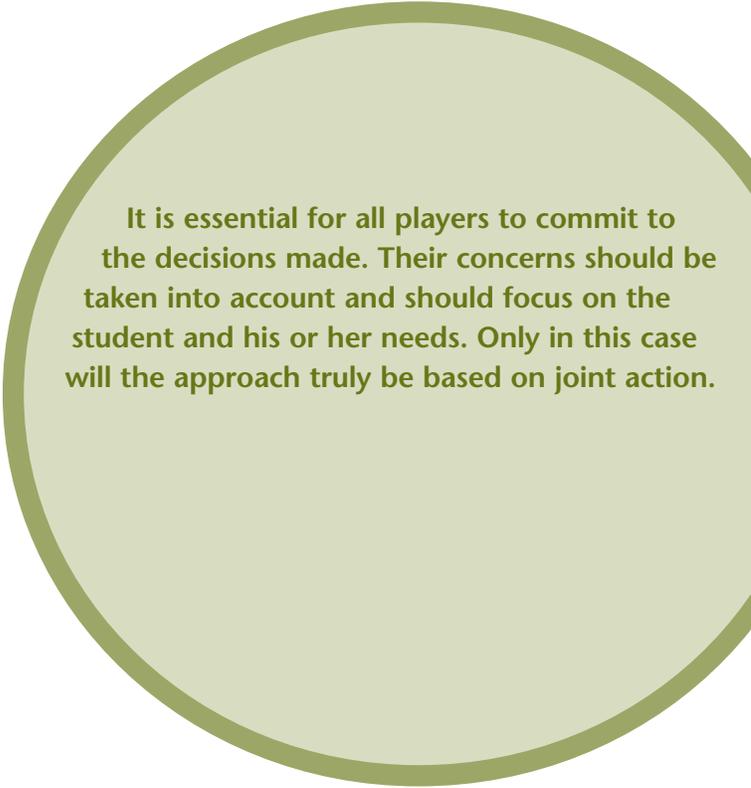
- Parents want their children to receive the best possible services, including close monitoring.

39. Based on Georgette Goupil, *Communications et relations entre l'école et la famille* (Montréal: Les Éditions de la Chenelière inc., 1997), p. 6.

40. *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* (London and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

- Teachers are concerned about how to integrate strategies and adaptations for a student with particular needs into their planning while continuing to meet the needs of all the other students in the class.
- Principals have to demonstrate leadership and take into account the administrative implications of decisions made.
- Students want to feel understood and respected.
- The staff of complementary educational services and of other service networks, if present, have to consider their own responsibilities.

The joint action process should take these realities into consideration. In this way, everyone involved in the individualized education plan will feel respected, and will be more willing to work together to attain a consensus.



**It is essential for all players to commit to the decisions made. Their concerns should be taken into account and should focus on the student and his or her needs. Only in this case will the approach truly be based on joint action.**

## A dynamic, ongoing process

School boards should define the conditions for establishing and evaluating individualized education plans in their policies governing the organization of educational services for students with particular needs. This chapter provides additional information, first by setting out the situations in which individualized education plans should be established, and then by describing the nature, purpose and phases of the plans. It also clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the various people involved in the process.

### 3.1

#### **SITUATIONS IN WHICH INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLANS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED**

A major concern for educators and parents alike is to decide which students need individualized education plans. The Policy on Special Education asks the school system to base its actions first and foremost on the needs and abilities of individual students, avoiding categorization. The same applies to the individualized education plan, which should be based on the specific needs and situation of the

student concerned. If a category-based approach is used to decide whether or not an individualized education plan is required, there is a risk not only that the individual needs of students will not be considered, but also that certain students who would benefit from individualized education plans will in fact be excluded from the process.

For some students, the need for an individualized education plan is clear. This is the case for students with handicaps, for example, for whom specialized resources may be required to compensate for their limitations and difficulties in the classroom. For an at-risk student, the decision to introduce an individualized education plan will be made when the usual methods, including differentiated instruction,

prove to be inadequate to allow the student to progress in his or her learning. It is important to remember, however, that the MEQ first introduced the concept of at-risk student in order to trigger intervention at the first sign of difficulties, so that the student's situation could be improved without the need for an individualized education plan.

*An individualized education plan should be established when one or more of the following situations arises:*

- The student's *complex situation* is such that a more sustained and coordinated **effort** is required on the part of the student, teacher(s), parents, principal and, in some cases, other players inside or outside the school, to find solutions to the difficulties encountered and thus enable the student to progress.
- The student's *situation* calls for the **introduction of specialized resources** or for **certain adjustments** (teaching strategies, adapted materials, specific resources, etc.) in addition to the actions normally taken by the teacher, in cooperation with the cycle team, to adjust his or her actions to the student's needs.
- The student's *situation* requires **certain decisions** that will have an impact on the student's educational path, such as decisions concerning adjustments to evaluation methods, departures from the Basic School Regulation or special orientations regarding the student's educational path or placement.

## 3.2

### NATURE AND FUNCTIONS

An individualized education plan is a plan of activities coordinated jointly by the people involved. Its purpose is to help a student who, because of a handicap or difficulties, needs adapted intervention in order to progress optimally in developing the competencies required for success.

An individualized education plan is part of a dynamic support process that takes place for the benefit and with the participation of the student. It is based on a systemic view of the student's situation, and is implemented using a solution-centred approach.

An individualized education plan is a *process*, and is based on continuity of action over time. It highlights all the elements that should be considered if the results are to be effective for both the student and the players involved. It may also require certain actions outside the classroom context. For example,

in the case of a student who uses the school's daycare service, contacts could be established with daycare staff to ensure continuity of action under the plan. For a student with behavioural difficulties, the objectives and methods set out in the plan should be extended as far as possible to cover all the situations experienced by the student within the school context.

The plan is thus perceived as a process rather than simply as a form to be completed or an occasional meeting. The various phases presented below clearly illustrate the long-term perspective within which an individualized education plan should be situated.

All the various functions of the plan should be taken into consideration if its objective is to be achieved, and if it is to be used to the full. The functions in question are *planning and coordination, communication, regulation, decision making, continuity and transition planning*.

### *Planning and Coordination*

The term *planning* as used in the individualized education plan process means:

- establishing objectives for, among other things, the development of the competencies specified in the Education Program
- deciding on interventions and resources, based on the various factors affecting the student's situation
- setting a time frame

The planning function is one of the phases of the individualized education plan, and will be addressed in more detail in section 3.3.

Coordination is one of the most important functions for the success of the process, for a variety of reasons. First, many different people are involved in the student's situation, and coordination is vital to ensure that they all work towards the same end and that their actions do not conflict. Coordination requires division of responsibilities and clearly defined roles for everyone concerned.

To coordinate the intervention, the school principal should also consider the fact that certain students receive services other than those provided by the school system—for example, services from a CLSC, a private clinic or a rehabilitation centre.

Some students may also benefit from a service plan. Unlike an individualized education plan, which is usually associated with just one institution, namely a school, and with one specific field, a service plan includes contributions from several different fields and often involves more than one service network. Thus, an individualized education plan may be an element of a service plan.

Under a service plan, players from all the networks concerned will be asked to work together to meet the student's needs and obtain an overview of the services required. For example, the school may be

asked to cooperate in a service plan drawn up by a partner organization—a health institution, for example. Conversely, the school can ask partner organizations to contribute to an individualized education plan. A cooperative approach such as this is essential to ensure the continuity, complementary nature and quality of the services provided to the student.

### *Communication*

Research has shown that the principal benefits of an individualized education plan are that it promotes cooperation among the players and facilitates collaboration with parents. All this requires good communication. The individualized education plan, especially at the planning stage, is an excellent way of focusing communication on the student's needs and strengths.

Sustained communication among all concerned, particularly the student and parents, is also required when evaluating the student's progress towards achieving the objectives of the individualized education plan.

### *Regulation*

For student and teacher alike, the regulation function provides a means of adjusting educational actions to enable the student to progress in his or her learning. It is of relevance to everyone who works with the student, making it easier to monitor and evaluate progress made. Regulation—continual adjustment—is required to achieve continuity, in terms of both the objectives and the methods used.

Adjustments may be made without the need for a formal meeting of those concerned by the student's situation. There is no point continuing an ineffective process until the formal review. However, when a decision is made to adjust an intervention, the principal partners, including the parents, should be informed of the change.

### *Decision making*

To enable a student with particular needs to progress, decisions may be required that will impact upon the student's educational path. As stated earlier, such decisions may concern adjustments to teaching or evaluation methods, or to a specific orientation of the student's path or placement. Decisions concerning the student's placement are based on an assessment of his or her needs and abilities, and on the school board's policy concerning the integration and grouping of students with particular needs. All these elements are closely related. Integration into regular classes should be considered first where it would promote learning and social integration and would not constitute an excessive constraint or significantly infringe upon the rights of other students.

The information recorded in the individualized education plan explains the measures taken and the decisions made. Given the importance of these decisions, the student and his or her parents should always be involved in the decision-making process, which should be a collaborative exercise in which all potential impacts are considered. In addition, the people involved in implementing the individualized education plan should ensure that follow-up action is taken.

### *Continuity<sup>41</sup> and transition planning*

One of the functions of the individualized education plan is to enable educational actions to be continued from one school year to the next, and through certain transitions. When specific educational actions are required for a student with particular needs,

the school should ensure that the whole process does not start over at the beginning of each school year, but should look instead at what has been done in the past, building upon actions that were beneficial to the student and avoiding the possibility of services being interrupted. This type of approach also allows for preventive action. If someone decides to ignore past actions and develop his or her own idea of the student's situation, precious time may be wasted, to the detriment of the student's needs. Continuity is of particular importance during transitions, for example from home to school, from preschool to elementary school and from elementary school to secondary school. Continuity of services can also be an important issue for students who change schools or move to a different province.

The transition from school to working life is an important one, and for some students special attention should be paid to this stage of their development. To facilitate the transition, the individualized education plan should include longer-term, multi-sector planning involving social and occupational integration for when the student leaves school, covering work, leisure, transportation and so on. This longer-term planning should be included in both the individualized education plan and the service plan. As mentioned in the first chapter, a report on this aspect has been submitted by a think tank, in cooperation with the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec, as a guide to the transition planning process.

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41. *Continuity* is defined in the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* as "uninterrupted connection, succession": <<http://www.m-w.com>>.

### 3.3

## PHASES OF THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN

The individualized education plan is part of a dynamic, ongoing process in which the student and his or her success is the constant focus. This section proposes a process<sup>42</sup> divided into four interdependent phases covering all the components of the plan:

- Data collection and analysis
- Planning of interventions
- Application of the interventions
- Review of the plan

The time required for the various phases will vary according to whether or not the student already has an individualized education plan. The following diagram provides an overview of the four phases.

### Phases of the Individualized Education Plan

#### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

- Read through the student's prior records.
- Examine the student's recent work.
- Consult the student, parents, school staff and any other people concerned.
- Perform evaluations where necessary.
- Consider the effectiveness of the various interventions, especially with regard to differentiated teaching.
- Examine and interpret all available information on the student's situation.

#### PLANNING OF INTERVENTIONS

- Pool all information on the student's situation (strengths, difficulties, etc.).
- Reach a consensus on prioritizing the student's needs.
- Establish objectives.
- Determine means: strategies, resources, time frame.
- Record the information.

#### APPLICATION OF THE INTERVENTIONS

- Inform everyone concerned.
- Implement and monitor the various methods.
- Evaluate the student's progress on a continuous basis.
- Adjust the interventions to suit the student's situation and development.
- Maintain communications with the parents.

#### REVIEW OF THE PLAN

Review and evaluate the individualized education plan, maintaining or altering some or all of its elements in relation to the student's situation, in consultation with the student and his or her parents.

42. Based on the models in *Recension des écrits sur le plan d'intervention auprès des personnes handicapées ou en difficulté*, a research report prepared by Pauline Beaupré, Guy Ouellet and Sarto Roy (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002), 66 pages.

These four phases encompass all the elements to be considered in the individualized education plan process. However, some of these elements deserve further consideration because of their significant impact on the plan's effectiveness.

### *Careful preparation*

Interventions are generally planned at a meeting attended by the student, parents, principal, teacher and, where necessary, other players from inside or outside the school. If the meeting is to be effective, it is important for everyone to be well prepared. The student and parents, in particular, may need support in this respect, and the school should work with them to make sure they are properly prepared.

Some schools have devised interesting ways of doing this:

- An adult who plays a significant role in the student's life meets with the student to:
  - provide information on the purpose and procedure of the meeting
  - help the student identify his or her strengths, areas of interest and difficulties
  - help the student set achievable objectives
  - agree upon the terms and conditions of the student's involvement in the process

It goes without saying that the student's level of involvement will vary according to his or her personal characteristics.

- A member of the school staff contacts the parents to:
  - explain the individualized education plan process and the purpose and procedure of the meeting
  - underscore the importance of their committing to the process
  - listen to their apprehensions and provide reassurance, if necessary

Adequate preparation should be a concern for all those involved in the process, since it will enable them to spend more time on decisions relating to objectives and methods.

### *Multidimensional evaluation*

At the planning stage, the emphasis should be on the student's strengths. However, it is equally important to have a good understanding of the student's *difficulties*. This can be a considerable challenge, since it involves identifying any obstacles to competency development due either to the student's own characteristics or to the environment.

There may not be a cause-and-effect relationship between the student's characteristics and the difficulties encountered. For example, not all students with serious language disorders face the same learning difficulties. It should also be remembered that the student, parents, teachers and other players may not have the same perception of the difficulties. Lastly, the difficulties depend to some extent on the student's context.

In the individualized education plan, *needs*, which may be defined as the difference or divergence between a desirable or anticipated situation and the situation that actually exists,<sup>43</sup> are expressed in terms of the expectations of the Education Program, the demands of group life, the organization of the physical environment and measures to ensure the student's health and well-being. A need reflects what is to be developed by the student in terms of the targeted competencies, or to be provided by the school to enable the student to meet expectations.

In the individualized education plan process, all the student's needs should be considered. Only then can the people concerned decide which of those needs require priority action.

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43. Renald Legendre, 1993, p. 135.

The school cannot meet all the student's needs on its own, and it is therefore important to establish priorities according to the partner organizations' respective missions (family, school, community), in a spirit of joint action and cooperation. If there is a consensus on the priorities, everyone concerned will be all the more motivated to apply the plan.

### *Well-defined objectives*

The objectives set out in the individualized education plan are based on the student's needs. They form a link between those needs and the competencies to be developed to meet the requirements of the Education Program, and they also serve as guidelines when selecting the methods to be used to support the student. In line with the systemic approach, it is important to remember that the objectives set out in the plan should also be related to the factors impacting upon the student's situation.

If we look at some of the individualized education plan models used by different schools, it is clear that there are many possible ways of setting objectives, especially with regard to their formulation, number, precision, individual nature and use. Despite these differences, however, some common characteristics can be identified and should be considered.

The plan's objectives should be:

- established according to the characteristics of the student and the environment
- relevant to the reasons for the individualized education plan
- based on an assessment of the student's most important needs
- linked to the competencies in the *Québec Education Program*
- defined in such a way that they can be regulated according to the student's progress without requiring input from all the players to modify an objective
- the result of a consensus

- formulated clearly so that they can be understood by everyone concerned, especially the student and parents
- realistic, i.e. achievable in terms of their number and the time allotted
- verifiable

### *Recording of information*

The recording of information is vital in the individualized education plan process, since it:

- facilitates the transfer of information among the people concerned
- makes it easier to evaluate and adjust actions, as when the plan is reviewed
- ensures continuity from year to year, especially in terms of the services offered
- makes it possible to keep a record of decisions having an impact on the student's path, and the reasons underlying those decisions

Information should be recorded at every step of the process. It is up to each school board to select its own way of doing this.

The school principal, or the principal's representative, is responsible for ensuring that all concerned are aware of the plan's content and have access to the information they need to support the student. Clearly, given that the plan contains confidential information, it is important for schools and school boards to adopt procedures that are flexible and are consistent with the provisions of the *Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and the protection of personal information*.

### *Evaluation and review*

The individualized education plan is reviewed according to the evolution of the student's situation. Thus, the frequency and timing of reviews will depend on the nature of the plan and the needs of the student.

During a review, the people concerned discuss the strategies used and the results obtained. The following questions may be addressed:

- Does the plan still reflect the student's situation and needs?
- Are the strategies and resources used conducive to achievement of the objectives, especially in terms of the development of the competencies of the Education Program?
- Have the objectives set out in the plan been achieved?

### 3.4

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The *Education Act* states that the individualized education plan is established by the school principal, and should be drawn up with the help of the student, the parents and the staff providing services.

The principal has a duty and a responsibility to establish an individualized education plan for a student who has a handicap or difficulties, and is accountable for the decisions made as part of the plan. It is therefore up to the principal to ensure that all such decisions are properly monitored.

The methods used to fulfill this responsibility may vary according to the features of the school. For example, in a secondary school with numerous students with particular needs, the principal may delegate certain activities (calling meetings, moderating meetings, recording information in the plan, etc.) to a vice-principal or staff member.

The principal is responsible for ensuring that the people to whom tasks are delegated work within the spirit of the process and have the information and support they need to do their jobs properly, given the resources available.

When these questions have been answered, decisions can be made to maintain or to change some or all of the plan's components.

It may happen, at the end of a school year, that recommendations are required to ensure the continuity of learning. These recommendations are particularly important when the student changes cycle, moves from elementary to secondary school or changes schools. They can help harmonize future interventions and services. Depending on the context, it is then up to the players to take the most appropriate steps to ensure that their intervention is continued.

In some respects the principal can be compared to a choreographer, since his or her job is to make sure all concerned play their roles to achieve a common goal, namely the success of the student. Only those people who are able to make a real contribution should figure in the process; minor players or "extras" may not only be unable to help achieve the anticipated results, they may actually hinder the process. This would be the case, for example, where the school's usual practice is to involve certain professionals in every individualized education plan, even if they have not worked with the student in question. Not only is this extremely time-consuming, it is also likely to increase the stress level for the parents and student, who will be forced to meet people who have no role to play in a situation that is already extremely demanding for them.

The student and parents should always be the central participants in all meetings concerning the individualized education plan, and it is essential that they play an active role. The emotional demands often associated with this type of meeting may be a positive motivating factor for them, or may make

them feel they are being judged and prevent them from committing to the process. It is therefore important that the student be given choices in the decisions that concern him or her. The parents should be treated as true partners who are able to make a difference in the preparation of the plan.

Teachers' presence at the meeting is of vital significance. Teachers' involvement in the plan preparation is a true expression of professional responsibility. They should play a leading role and ensure that the proposed interventions are incorporated into the classroom dynamics and the monitoring of the student. In view of their frequent contact with the student and parents, teachers may also be the people best placed to adjust the approach and discourse to reflect their specific needs, and to help the parents understand the limitations imposed by the classroom situation and adjust their expectations accordingly. In ensuring that the interventions in the plan are carried out, teachers work actively to help the student achieve the objectives and become more successful.

The other personnel, both professionals and support staff, working with the student and parents—including those in other service networks—play

complementary roles. That is not to say they are of secondary importance; on the contrary, their contribution should be recognized as essential in certain situations. They are, however, able to provide a different viewpoint; often, because of their training and the nature of their jobs in the school or elsewhere, they are able to provide a certain objectivity as well as a range of tools that can be useful in solving problems encountered.

It is important that the diagnosis not be introduced for the first time at the meetings on the individualized education plan. It should be presented beforehand by the appropriate professionals, at meetings with the people concerned.

The contributions of all these people, at different but complementary levels, are vital to the success of the process. Each person understands the student in his or her own way and is able to contribute a personal or professional viewpoint. The pooling of all these perceptions allows for a better understanding of the student's situation, and this is useful in preparing an effective strategy to meet the student's needs. Well-defined roles and responsibilities also facilitate teamwork by promoting cooperation and joint action.

## Preparing individualized education plans: Some conditions

Certain conditions are known to help ensure the quality of practices used to establish individualized education plans. They are derived primarily from the principles and orientations set out in the second chapter, but also depend on the situation in elementary and secondary schools as described in the research project, the literature and recent research in the field. Their primary purpose is to support school staff in developing their practices, and they also provide guidelines for dealing with problems related to time management, school-family relations and professional development needs.

## 4.1

### A CLEAR POLICY GUIDING THE ORGANIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH HANDICAPS AND STUDENTS WITH SOCIAL MALADJUSTMENTS OR LEARNING DISABILITIES

The *Education Act* (s. 235) provides that every school board, after consultation with its advisory committee, must adopt a policy concerning the organization of educational services for students with handicaps and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities.<sup>44</sup>

A clear policy will provide the school with a solid basis for the management and implementation of its individualized education plans. A good policy should set out the links between the individualized education plan and the various regulatory texts such as the *Education Act*, the *Québec Education Program*, the Basic School Regulation, the Special Education Policy and the collective agreements. It should also state the values and principles applied by the school board to create a policy that is consistent with the MEQ policy.

The policy shall include:

- procedures for evaluating students with handicaps and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities
- methods for integrating those students
- grouping conditions
- methods used to prepare and evaluate individualized education plans

All these elements should be consistent to ensure clarity. The policy should allow schools a certain amount of flexibility, so that they can adjust the process to suit their own contexts, based on factors such as the characteristics of the students, the size of the school and the level of education. These factors should be taken into account when planning the management of individualized education plans in a school.

## 4.2

### RECOGNIZED LEADERSHIP BY THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

The principal has primary responsibility for implementing individualized education plans in the school. His or her vision, commitment and convictions will therefore affect the practices employed by the school. The greater the focus on the support required by the student, the less the process is likely to drift from its primary goal. Above and beyond administrative obligations, the process should aim first and foremost to help the student succeed by providing individualized support.

It is also the principal's job to ensure consistency between the school's practices with respect to the plan and the various supervisory requirements arising from the school board's responsibilities as defined in its policy. Where necessary, the principal may be called upon to identify elements of the policy for review.

At the same time, the principal is responsible for identifying the school's needs in terms of the services required for students with particular needs, as defined in the individualized education plans. He or she should make sure those services are organized, coordinated, monitored and evaluated.

For some students with individualized education plans, it may be necessary to form partnerships with outside resources, especially in the health and social services network. In such cases it is up to the principal to coordinate and mobilize the various players inside and outside the school, and to reduce the impact of any obstacles to cooperation.

44. A guide has been prepared to help school boards update their policies: Comité patronal de négociation pour les commissions scolaires francophones, *Politique relative à l'organisation des services éducatifs aux élèves handicapés ou en difficulté d'adaptation ou d'apprentissage pour « Une école adaptée à tous ses élèves, »* préparation guide (Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 2001), 85 pages.

### 4.3

## A CLIMATE RESPECTFUL OF INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR EXPERTISE

The importance of the climate in which individualized education plans are prepared can often be underestimated. Yet, the attitude of the people concerned has a significant impact on the success of the process, in that individuals are more likely to commit and participate actively in a climate of respect.

An open attitude and willingness to listen to others will make it much easier for participants to share their opinions and expertise, especially at intervention planning meetings. As far as the parents are concerned, they are much more likely to feel like true partners in the process, and be willing to commit to it, if their expertise is acknowledged.

Given that the process is designed for students who have handicaps or difficulties, it is extremely important for participants to avoid discriminatory attitudes towards either the students or their parents.

Generally speaking, as mentioned earlier, conditions are required that will enable the student to make a positive commitment to the support process. The student should feel comfortable expressing his or her opinions and proposing solutions. An effort should therefore be made to use accessible language so as to facilitate participation by the student and parents.

### 4.4

## ACCESSIBLE SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE METHODS ADAPTED TO THE NEEDS

In the report mentioned earlier on the situation in elementary and secondary schools, most of the respondents mentioned the need for training and support in a variety of forms including information, professional development and follow-up.

It is important to provide for effective communication of information concerning individualized education plans. Access to information is vital not only for school staff, but also for parents and students, if they are to participate fully in the process. Other measures are also required to ensure that all players, especially the students and parents, are properly prepared for meetings. The methods and tools used will vary from school to school. It is vital that everyone concerned be in a position to play an active role.

Staff training in working with students with particular needs should be part of a process of continuous professional development, since most participants will already have been involved in preparing an individualized education plan. Hence the importance of meeting the needs of each school, based on its specific features and experience, and of offering customized training. Training content should also vary according to the target group; school principals, teachers and other staff members will not necessarily have the same needs in this respect.

Lastly, the people concerned will often need guidance, depending on their post-training experience, to help them assimilate and apply new practices. Follow-up is thus as important as the training itself, in that it helps people to develop their expertise and recognize its effectiveness.

## 4.5 EFFICIENT TIME MANAGEMENT

Generally speaking, management of the plan is fairly time-consuming, especially with regard to information recording, monitoring and evaluation. The importance of making informed choices with respect to time management is clear, as is the need for conditions that will make it easier for the people concerned to take part in and commit to the process—for example, provision for coordination time in staff timetables and teachers' workloads, presence of the people necessary, and so on.

Effective, structured facilitation of planning and monitoring meetings also has an impact on time management, as does proper preparation for the meetings. Lastly, if school staff regard individualized education plans as useful in helping students who have handicaps or difficulties to succeed, they will be more inclined to give them priority in their schedules.

## 4.6 RENEWAL OF METHODS

The individualized education plan encourages those involved to seek solutions that will help students to succeed. The solutions and the methods used may involve human or material resources or educational strategies. In some cases, additional resources may be envisaged, but often needs can be met simply by using existing resources in a different way. The strengths of the student, the environment and the school should be identified and used to the full.

Other service networks and community resources can also make a significant contribution.

An individualized education plan is more than simply a way of obtaining services. It involves identifying existing resources that can help a student with particular needs to succeed, and, above and beyond the addition of new resources, examining how the services are organized and used.

## 4.7 HIGH-QUALITY TOOLS BASED ON THE CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF THE SCHOOL

A number of school boards offer their schools some basic tools they can draw on, such as information documents (e.g. a leaflet for parents) and recording documents (e.g. individualized education plan forms).

Regardless of the nature and purpose of these documents, their quality depends on certain features. They should:

- be consistent with the spirit of the process
- contain essential elements such as identification of the student, details of the student's strengths

and needs, planning of the interventions involved, monitoring and evaluation methods and the names of participants in the process and their roles

- be easy to use and manage
- be flexible and adjustable according to the student's needs and characteristics

Many people feel the need to be better informed and to share information on these tools, which several school boards have developed. It is not always necessary to reinvent the wheel, but the process should always take precedence over the tool.

## CONCLUSION

Parents and school staff share a common desire to help students with handicaps and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities become more successful. There are many ways of doing this, and one of the most important is the individualized education plan. The plan should be given the attention it needs if it is to play its role to the full. The positive results obtained from better practices are well worth the time and effort involved.

Potential improvements include better-coordinated interventions in which the strengths of the various partners are brought to bear in support of the student, who is also actively involved in the process. There is no single “right” way of renewing school practices with respect to individualized education plans. However, the school principal, through his or her leadership, has the major role to play. It is the principal who must provide training for school staff and establish a dynamic partnership with parents, as well as ensuring that the school gives priority to the goal of educating all its students.

The educational community around the student can also help him or her to succeed, providing a network that gives support and encouragement. The school cannot do everything on its own. Close links should be forged between the school, community services, health and social services and municipalities in order to ensure that all energies are channelled in the same direction. The individualized education plan provides a good opportunity to coordinate the resources of all these organizations to give the student the necessary support.

Finally, the individualized education plan should convey social and educational values such as equality of opportunity, thus helping students who have handicaps or difficulties to take their rightful place in society.

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## SECTIONS OF THE *EDUCATION ACT* CONCERNING THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN

### Students' Rights (s. 1)

1. Every person is entitled to the preschool education services and elementary and secondary school instructional services provided for by this Act and by the basic school regulation made by the Government under section 447, from the first day of the school calendar in the school year in which he attains the age of admission to the last day of the school calendar in the school year in which he attains 18 years of age, or 21 years of age in the case of a handicapped person within the meaning of the Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights (chapter E-20.1).

Every person is also entitled to other educational services, student services and special educational services provided for by this Act and the basic school regulation referred to in the first paragraph and to the educational services prescribed by the basic vocational training regulation established by the Government under section 448, within the scope of the programs offered by the school board.

The age of admission to preschool education is 5 years on or before the date prescribed by the basic school regulation; the age of admission to elementary school education is 6 years on or before the same date.

### Revision (s. 9)

9. 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.

### Teachers' Obligations (s. 22)

22. A teacher shall

- 1) contribute to the intellectual and overall personal development of each student entrusted to his care;
- 2) take part in instilling into each student entrusted to his care a desire to learn;
- 3) take the appropriate means to foster respect for human rights in his students;
- 4) act in a just and impartial manner in his dealings with his students;
- 5) ...
- 6) take the appropriate measures to attain and maintain a high level of professionalism;
- 7) comply with the educational project of the school.

### Mission of a School (s. 36)

36.... 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....

### Individualized Education Plan (s. 96.14)

96.14 In the case of a handicapped student or a student with a social maladjustment or a learning disability, the principal, with the assistance of the student's parents, of the staff providing services to the student, and of the student himself, unless the student is unable to do so, shall establish an individualized education plan adapted to the needs of the student. The plan must be consistent with the school board's policy concerning the organization of services for students with handicaps and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities and in keeping with the ability and needs of the student as evaluated by the school board before the student's placement and enrolment at the school.

The principal shall see to the implementation and periodic evaluation of the education plan and inform the student's parents on a regular basis.

### Staffing Needs (s.96.20)

96.20 After consulting with the school staff, the principal shall inform the school board, on the date and in the form determined by the school board, of the needs of the school in respect of each staff category and of the professional development needs of the staff.

### Advisory Committee (s. 185)

185. Every school board shall establish an advisory committee on services for students with handicaps and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities.

The committee shall be composed of

- 1) parents of the students concerned, designated by the parents' committee;
- 2) representatives of the teachers, of the members of the non-teaching professional staff and of the members of the support staff, designated by the associations which represent them in their dealings with the school board and elected from among the persons who provide services to the students concerned;

3) representatives of bodies which provide services to students with handicaps or to students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities, designated by the council of commissioners after consulting with those bodies;

4) a school principal designated by the director general.

The director general or his representative shall take part in the sittings of the committee but he is not entitled to vote.

### Representatives (s. 186)

186. The council of commissioners shall determine the number of representatives from each group.

The representatives of the parents shall constitute the majority of the members of the committee.

Responsibility of the Advisory Committee (s.187)

187. The functions of the advisory committee on services for students with handicaps and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities are

1) to advise the school board on a policy for the organization of educational services to students with handicaps and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities;

2) to advise the school board on the allocation of financial resources to the services intended for those students.

The committee may also advise the school board on the implementation of an individualized education plan for a handicapped student or a student with social maladjustments or learning disabilities.

### Adapted Services (s. 234)

234. Every school board shall, subject to sections 222 and 222.1, adapt the educational services provided to a handicapped student or a student with a social maladjustment or a learning disability according to the student's needs and in keeping with the student's abilities as evaluated by the school board according to the procedures prescribed under subparagraph 1 of the second paragraph of section 235.

### Policy Concerning the Organization of Services (s. 235)

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

The policy shall include:

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

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

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

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

Specialized schools referred to in subparagraph 3 of the second paragraph are not schools established under section 240.

## PROVISIONS OF THE BASIC SCHOOL REGULATION FOR PRESCHOOL, ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CONCERNING THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN

### Student Services (s. 4)

4. Student services for which programs are to be established under the first paragraph of section 224 of the Education Act (R.S.Q., c. I-13.3) shall include the following:

- (1) support services designed to provide students with conditions that are conducive to learning;
- (2) student life services designed to foster students' autonomy and sense of responsibility, their moral and spiritual dimensions, their interpersonal and community relationships, as well as their feeling of belonging to the school;
- (3) counselling services designed to help students throughout their studies, with their academic and career choices, and with any difficulties they encounter;
- (4) promotion and prevention services designed to provide students with an environment conducive to the development of a healthy lifestyle and of skills that are beneficial to their health and well-being.

### Student Services (s. 5)

5. Student services provided under section 4 must include the following:

- (1) services designed to promote student participation in school life;
- (2) services designed to educate students about their rights and responsibilities;
- (3) sports, cultural and social activities;
- (4) support services for the use of the documentary resources of the school library;
- (5) academic and career counselling and information;
- (6) psychological services;
- (7) psychoeducational services;
- (8) special education services;
- (9) remedial education services;

(10) speech therapy services;

(11) health and social services;

(12) services in spiritual care and guidance and community involvement.

### Promotion from Elementary to Secondary School After Six Years (ss. 13 and 36)

13. A student shall be promoted from elementary to secondary school after six years of elementary school studies; a student may however be promoted after five years of studies if he or she has achieved the objectives of the programs of studies at the elementary level and has acquired sufficient emotional and social maturity.

It is up to the school board responsible for the elementary education of the student to determine whether or not that student satisfies the requirements of the elementary level.

36. The provision of the first paragraph of section 13 in respect of the mandatory promotion of a student from elementary to secondary school shall apply to students who begin their elementary education after 1 July 2000.

Students who begin their elementary education before 1 July 2000 shall normally be promoted after 6 years of elementary studies, but must be promoted after 7 years of elementary studies.

### Cycles of Instruction (s. 15)

15. Elementary education is organized into three cycles of two years each.

Secondary education is organized into two cycles; the first covers three school years and the second, two school years.

A cycle is a period of learning during which students acquire competencies in each subject area and cross-curricular competencies which prepare them for further studies.

## BASIC ORIENTATION AND LINES OF ACTION OF THE POLICY ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

### Basic Orientation

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

### The Policy's Six Lines of Action

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

## CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

INTELLECTUAL COMPETENCIES	To use information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To organize a systematic search for information</li> <li>To integrate information</li> <li>To put information to use</li> </ul>
	To solve problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To analyze the components of a situational problem</li> <li>To test possible solutions</li> <li>To adopt a flexible approach</li> </ul>
	To exercise critical judgment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To form an opinion</li> <li>To express his/her opinion</li> <li>To qualify his/her opinion</li> </ul>
	To use creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To become familiar with all the elements of a situation</li> <li>To explore the possibilities</li> <li>To adopt a flexible approach</li> </ul>
METHODOLOGICAL COMPETENCIES	To adopt effective work methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To obtain an overview of the task</li> <li>To regulate his/her procedure</li> <li>To analyze his/her procedure</li> </ul>
	To use information and communications technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To use appropriate technologies</li> <li>To benefit from the use of technology</li> <li>To evaluate the effectiveness of using technology</li> </ul>
PERSONAL AND SOCIAL COMPETENCIES	To fulfill his/her potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To become familiar with his/her personal characteristics</li> <li>To take up his/her place among others</li> <li>To make good use of his/her personal resources</li> </ul>
	To cooperate with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To contribute to team efforts</li> <li>To benefit from team efforts</li> <li>To interact with an open mind in various contexts</li> </ul>
COMMUNICATION-RELATED COMPETENCY	To communicate appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To learn different languages</li> <li>To use different methods of communication</li> <li>To manage his/her communication</li> </ul>

# Glossary

## Ability

“An ability is an aptitude, either acquired or developed, that enables a person to successfully perform a physical, intellectual or occupational activity [translation].”<sup>45</sup>

## Competency

“A competency is a set of behaviours based on the effective mobilization and use of a range of resources.”<sup>46</sup>

## Cycle Team

“A cycle team is made up of teachers and professionals who are collectively responsible for students’ learning for the duration of a cycle [translation].”<sup>47</sup> It consists of cycle teachers, specialized teachers and complementary services staff.

## Differentiated Pedagogy

“Differentiated pedagogy is an approach that involves implementing a broad range of teaching and learning methods and procedures to enable students of different ages and aptitudes and with different competencies and skills to achieve common goals and, ultimately, educational success, through a variety of different paths [translation].”<sup>48</sup>

## Difficulties

Difficulties are obstacles that prevent students from progressing in their learning. They may be related to the students’ own characteristics or to the environment.

## Disability

“A reduction, limitation or disturbance of a person’s ability to function normally at the intellectual, social or physical level as a result of an impairment. A disability may be temporary or permanent, partial or total [translation].”<sup>49</sup>

## Educational Community

“An educational community is a school that involves all its stakeholders, including those in the surrounding community, and relies on the sharing of responsibility and the quality of the relationships it builds to fulfill its educational mission.”<sup>50</sup>

## Handicap

“A handicap is a reduction in a person’s ability to perform everyday tasks as a result of the interaction between personal factors (impairments, disabilities and other personal characteristics) and environmental factors (facilitators and obstacles) [translation].”<sup>51</sup>

## Impairment

“An impairment is a degree of anatomical or physiological damage to an organic system [translation].”<sup>52</sup>

## Individualized Education Plan

An individualized education plan is a plan of coordinated actions established jointly by the people involved. Its purpose is to help a student who, because of a handicap or difficulties, needs adapted interventions in order to progress optimally in developing the competencies required for success.

An individualized education plan is part of a dynamic support process that takes place for and with the student. It is based on a systemic view of the student’s situation, and is implemented using a solution-centred approach.

45. Renald Legendre, 1993, p. 159.

46. Ministère de l’Éducation, *Québec Education Program: Preschool and Elementary Education*, approved version (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2001), p. 4.

47. Conseil supérieur de l’éducation, *Cycle-based Instruction in Elementary Schools: Supporting the Implementation Process*, brief to the Minister of Education, abridged version (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002), p. 66.

48. Conseil supérieur de l’éducation, *L’organisation du primaire en cycles d’apprentissage: une mise en œuvre à soutenir* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002), p. 13.

49. Renald Legendre, 1993, p. 704.

50. Conseil supérieur de l’éducation, *The School as an Educational Community: Suggestions for the Renewal of Secondary Education*, summary (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1998).

51. Patrick Fougeyrollas et al., *Processus de production du handicap*, CQCIDH/CSICIDH edition (Québec: Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 1998), p. 36.

52. Ibid., p. 34.

### **Individualized Service Plan**

“An individualized service plan is an instrument used to coordinate and integrate services provided to a young person by staff members from different institutions. It addresses the person’s needs in all the areas of intervention. It is established in cooperation with the young person and the parents, and includes the following elements:

- A shared understanding of the young person’s abilities and needs, based on a general needs evaluation
- A ranking of the needs
- The overall objective, based on the situation, and the indicators of the results expected
- Intervention strategies to be implemented to achieve genuine coordination of the principal services
- The anticipated duration of the services and the date on which the plan will be reviewed
- The name of the person in charge of coordination, drafting and evaluation of the plan [translation]”<sup>53</sup>

### **Need**

The term *need* refers to the difference or divergence between a desirable or anticipated situation and the situation that actually exists. In the individualized education plan, a need reflects what is to be developed by the student in terms of competencies, or what is necessary to allow the student to meet expectations.

### **Objective**

“A specific, definable, verifiable result whose achievement requires a focusing of consistent action and concerted effort over a given period of time [translation].”<sup>54</sup>

### **School Team**

The school team is composed of the principal (management team), teachers and other members of the school staff.

53. Régie régionale de la santé et des services sociaux de la Montérégie, *Cadre de référence du plan de services individualisé: jeunes/familles en Montérégie* (Régie régionale de la Montérégie, 2001), p. 4-5.

54. Renald Legendre, 1993, p. 907.

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