Policy Statement

COMMISSION SCOLAIRE WESTERN QUÉBEC SCHOOL BOARD	**Policy No. C-17**

SUBJECT:	Policy Governing the Organization of Educational Services for Students with Special Needs

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INTRODUCTION

The Western Québec School Board is committed to ensuring that all students achieve success. Furthermore, we support the inclusion of students with special needs in the regular school setting.

The Policy Governing the Organization of Educational Services for Students with Special Needs (henceforth titled Special Education Policy) is designed to ensure that we achieve our commitment in compliance with Section 235 of the Education Act.

The Québec Education Program (QEP) presents a vision for education that includes three essential components: to impart knowledge, to foster social development to prepare students to live in harmony and to provide qualifications through various pathways. It is the responsibility of the education institutions to provide all students with an education meeting their needs by differentiating instruction and offering a broad range of educational options. These three objectives underlie all the actions schools must take to ensure that students achieve educational success. **Success can mean different things for different students and schools must adapt their actions to the needs of their students to ensure that all have the best possible chance of achieving success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications.**

The MEES' Special Education Policy and Plan of Action: Adapting our Schools to the Needs of all Students was adopted and launched in January 2000. It emphasizes success in the most inclusive setting possible. Our Policy will respect the intent of these documents and will include procedures for the implementation of the Policy.

Each school board's policy must be in compliance with the Organization of Educational Services for At Risk Students and Students with Handicaps, Social Maladjustments or Learning Difficulties. (MEES, 2007)

OBJECTIVE OF THE POLICY

In conformity with Article 235 of the Education Act, the policy will address:

- Procedures for the evaluation of students with special needs which provide for the participation of the parents of the students and of the students themselves, unless they are unable to do so;
- 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;
- Terms and conditions for grouping those students in specialized schools, classes or groups;

- Methods for preparing and evaluating the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) intended for such students

ORIENTATIONS OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY

The Western Québec School Board endorses the six lines of action proposed by the MEES. - "Adapting our Schools to the Needs of All Students", MEES 2000:

1. Recognizing the importance of early intervention in the prevention of problems.
2. Making the adaptation of educational services a priority for all those working with students with special needs by continuously adjusting or modifying existing methods and by offering various pathways.
3. Placing the organization of educational services at the service of students with special needs by basing it on the individual evaluation of their abilities and needs and by ensuring that these services are provided in the most natural environment for the students (that which is closest to their residence and to their instructional cycle).
4. 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.
5. Devoting particular attention to students with difficulties and especially those with learning disabilities or behavioral difficulties, and determining methods of intervention that better meet their needs and abilities.
6. Developing methods for evaluating students' educational success in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications, assessing the quality of services and reporting results.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

The school board is responsible for ensuring that within the context of Article 235 of the Education Act, the Special Education Policy is implemented respecting the unique nature of each school and its student population. To this end:

1. The Director General designates an individual responsible for the Special Education Policy.
2. The individual responsible for the Special Education Policy will update and revise procedures and practices related to special needs, as necessary, following directives from the Ministry (MEES)
3. The board will initiate and participate on all committees designated for Special Education by law or by collective agreements.
4. The board will identify the human and financial resources within its means to support students with special needs.
5. The school board will review the application of this policy and will solicit feedback from The Management Team (in school administrators), The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), and The Western Quebec Teachers Association. The review process will be conducted by the Director of Complementary Services.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMPLEMENTARY SERVICES DEPARTMENT OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

Complementary Services as outlined in the Basic School Regulations consist of a multidisciplinary group of personnel who provide programs and services designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To provide support for classroom instructional activities
2. To develop autonomy, initiative, creativity and a sense of responsibility and belonging for all students in the school community
3. To work with the school community to help students with special needs overcome any difficulties they may be experiencing
4. To support schools in methods for adapting learning activities to meet the diverse needs of students
5. To support principals by providing professional development (E.A. 96.20) and in-service training

Complementary services are reviewed annually by the school board. These services are organized into four 'programs' that are to facilitate students' progress in their various learnings. (DASSC, 2002)

- **Support services** designed to provide students with conditions that are conducive to learning
- **Student life services** designed to contribute to the development of students' autonomy and sense of responsibility, their moral and spiritual dimensions, their interpersonal relationships and their feeling of belonging to the school and to the community
- **Assistance services** designed to help students throughout their studies, with their academic and career choices and with any difficulties they encounter
- **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

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMPLEMENTARY SERVICES PARITY COMMITTEE

As defined in the provincial collective agreement this Committee is mandated to:

- Give its view on the policy on the organization of educational services for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties.

- Make recommendations concerning the implementation of the policy and the methods for integrating students into regular groups as well as the support services required for the students' integration.
- Recommend models for organizing services that could be implemented in schools to provide support for the formation of classes including, among other things, setting up groups of students as a result of a priori weighting, the creation of a resource or transition class or the addition of services.
- Give its view on the services to be offered at the board level.
- Verify all the resources available under clause 8-9.01 by April 30.
- Determine the criteria for the allocation of resources to schools according to the policy in effect at the board.
- Analyze requests from schools in relation to the allocation criteria established.
- Recommend to the board (based on the total available resources allocated under clause 8-9.01): the allocation of resources among the schools, the portion of resources allocated as compensation as a result of the weighting of certain students with special needs to be paid or, where applicable, to be included in the school's budget, and the reserve to be maintained for additional services that will be determined during the following year under clause 8-9.05.
- Receive and study the reports prepared by the school committee and to make the recommendations it deems appropriate.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL-LEVEL SPECIAL NEEDS COMMITTEE

As defined in the provincial collective agreement the School-Level Special Needs Committee, composed of teachers and school administration, is mandated to:

- Identify the specialized and financial resources necessary for the following school year intended for students with special needs and as support for teachers (taking into account the criteria defined by the parity committee set up under clause 8-9.02).
- Inform the parity committee of the resources required for the following school year by April 1 or at another date that the board determines.
- Distribute the resources allocated to the school as well as the additional services to be determined during the year.
- Define the conditions of access to services including, where applicable, the possibility of setting up provisional support services before a decision is made.
- Periodically assess the effectiveness of the conditions facilitating access to the services in place.
- Report to the parity committee on the allocation of resources.
- In carrying out its mandate, the committee shall take into account the recommendations formulated by the other categories of personnel in the school. Also, in the context of the application of points 1 and 3, it shall take into account, where applicable, the school organization plan established under article 8-10.00.
- The committee may call upon a member of the professional or support staff working regularly with at-risk students or students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties to take part in the discussions.

IDENTIFICATION OF A STUDENT WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Prevention strategies and early intervention must be put into place as soon as difficulties are noted and are not contingent on a student being formally identified.

- The term "identified" refers to the formal recognition of a particular set of needs which correspond to definitions provided by the MEES.
- When a student has been formally identified there must be an active IEP developed. There may, however, already be an active IEP in place prior to formal identification. (E.A. 96.14)
- The school administrator and/or the Special Education Consultant(s) shall inform the Director of Complementary Services of the names of students having I.E.P.s who have been identified according to the MEES definitions. The names of all students with IEPs are transmitted to the Ministry of Education on September 30 of each school year.
- Remedial and Supporting Teachers as well as qualified professionals may assist the school administrator in evaluating the needs of the student, determining the correct identification, and assisting in the development of the IEP.
- Every new identification of a student's special needs is confirmed through the Ad Hoc Committee process.
- The school principal is responsible for the process leading to identification of students with special needs and must respect the guidelines outlined by the MEES and the school board.
- Upon request, school board personnel shall provide assistance to schools during this process.

PROCEDURES FOR THE EVALUATION of and/ or IDENTIFICATION OF A STUDENT'S SPECIAL NEEDS

- Teacher recognizes student's difficulties or challenges through observation and other relevant information
- Teacher intervenes with appropriate strategies.
- Teacher is in contact with the parents regarding their child's progress
- Teacher is in contact with the principal (and the school board consultant in some cases) regarding the student's progress

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School Principal ⇨ **School Principal requests additional educational assessment or consultation as needed.**

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School principal sets up Ad Hoc Committee meeting with these possible outcomes.

- No need for intervention at this point.
- Commencement of IEP process may include the following:
  - Student
  - Parents
  - Administrators
  - Teachers
  - Professionals, support personnel
  - External agencies
  - Periodic review and evaluation of goals
- Further assessment by teacher, professional or external agency.
  - Follow-up Ad Hoc Committee Meeting with theses possible outcomes.
    - No need for intervention at this point.
    - Commencement of IEP process may include the following:
      - Student
      - Parents
      - Administrators
      - Teachers
      - Professionals, support personnel
      - External agencies
      - Periodic review and evaluation of goals

PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IDENTIFIED OUTSIDE THE WESTERN QUEBEC SCHOOL BOARD.

1. If a PSI (Personal Intervention Plan) has already been established for a student by outside health and social services agencies, the school administration will collaborate to ensure the co-ordination of services provided to the student. An IEP will be established.
2. If a student with special needs transfers from another school board, the existing IEP may be used on an interim basis until it can be updated by school personnel.
3. If diagnostic documents are received by the school board, the Complementary Services Department will advise the school of any new identification relevant to learning, behavior and/or social-emotional difficulties. A new, draft IEP will be implemented.

THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Section 235(2) of the Education Act states that the policy must include:

> *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.*

Organization of Services

- In accordance with the MEES policy (Policy Concerning the Organization of Educational Services for Students with Handicaps, Social Maladjustments or Learning Disabilities), the Western Québec School Board believes that the preferred placement for students with special needs is in a regular classroom, with their age peers, and in their neighborhood school. Inclusion for students with special needs implies the student is working within the educational and social framework with the rest of the class. The student's objectives, however, may be quite different than those of the other students.

- The organization of special education services must serve the best interest of students with special needs.

- The IEP states the student's current abilities and establishes goals for the student in the current school year. The school or school board may organize their services, on an annual basis, to include alternative settings or groupings. Integration into the school community and/or the outside community for social and/or work-study purposes may be a component of a student's IEP.

- *The teacher should select methods of instruction corresponding to the requirements and objectives fixed for each group or for each student entrusted to (the teacher's) care*. (E.A., s. 19). Teachers may receive support to adapt their teaching strategies or modify the curriculum content to accommodate this organization of service.

Transition from Elementary School to the High School

Each year, school principals will facilitate the transition of students with special needs from the elementary to the secondary sector. The secondary school principal is responsible for ensuring the implementation of their IEPs. This involves informing teachers which students have IEPs and/or other special needs.

Support Services for Students and Teachers

The school board identifies, within the designated funding, human and financial resources to support students with special needs. These supports may be either direct or indirect and assist both students and teachers simultaneously. The delivery of services will vary according to student needs and will be influenced by the organization of human and/or financial resources.

Support services are determined by the School-Level Special Needs Committee, the Basic School Regulation and the financial and human resources allocated by the school board.

The following are examples of support services to students and teachers:

Human Resources:
Remedial or Supporting Teacher
Guidance Counsellor
Academic Advisor
Psychologist
Speech-Language Pathologist
Special Education Consultant
Social Work Technician
Special Education Technician
Attendant to the Handicapped
Itinerant Services (e.g. Montreal Oral School for the Deaf)
Spiritual Animation, Guidance and Community Involvement Services

Specialized Services:
Provincial Centres of Excellence for Behavior, Autism, etc. offered through the Inclusive Education Service of the MEES
Adaptation of physical facilities
Adapted equipment (desks, chairs etc)
Special transportation services
Supervision Services
Adaptive technology
Specialized Programs

Other:
Adapted scheduling
Behavior intervention plans
IEP preparation
Alternative programming

Homework Clubs
Academic assessment tools
Board level interventions: consultations and visits
Specialized teaching materials (ie technology)
In-service Training
Professional Development
Parent information sessions
Crisis intervention procedures
Suicide Intervention Team
Home Tuition services

THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)

A. Legal Requirement

Section 96.14 of the Education Act governs the development, implementation and evaluation of a student's IEP.

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 individualised education plan adapted to the needs of the student. The plan must be consistent with the school board's policy concerning the organisation of services for handicapped students 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.

B. Contents of the IEP

The following elements should be included:

- Nominative information
- The student's profile
- The participants
- The student's strengths (literacy, numeracy, social/emotional)
- The objectives and competencies written as measurable goals
- The strategies to be used to achieve the goals
- The support services needed by the student
- The types of adaptations or interventions recommended
- The manner in which the academic expectations for the student have been modified (if applicable)
- The dates and signators of the plan (student, teacher, parent(s), principal)

C. Evaluation and Monitoring of the IEP:

The principal shall see to the implementation and periodical evaluation of the individual education plan and inform the student's parents on a regular basis (E.A., s. 96.14).

- At least once a year the IEP must be reviewed formally with the student's parents but the IEP may be revisited at any time. Any revision made to the IEP will be dated, signed and given to the parent. Specific issues and queries about a student's IEP should first be addressed to the student's teacher.
- Updates on student progress will be provided monthly (Basic School Regulation for Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Education, July 2000, 29.2). These updates may be in the form of a written report, a phone call, a parent/ teacher meeting or any other format mutually agreed upon.
- The Western Québec School Board will continue to monitor the identification, validation and IEPs of all students.

STUDENT FILES

According to the *Act Respecting Access to Documents Held by Public Bodies and the Protection of Personal Information,* parents are entitled to access information contained in their child's confidential file**.** In conformity with the Law, parents wishing to access this file must make a written request to the Secretary General of the School Board.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality of information must be respected for all students. With regard to the student with special needs, it is important that information be shared judiciously with the staff members concerned with each student. The Western Québec School Board must advise all persons involved with students in our school system of the rules concerning confidentiality.

MECHANISMS FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE APPLICATION OF THE POLICY

- Issues should be addressed, as they arise, with the parties most likely to be able to solve the problem.

- When issues cannot be resolved between student, teacher, and parent the principal will assume responsibility in accordance with the Education Act.

- All other problems raised by the application of the policy must first be sent to the principal of the school concerned who must attempt to find appropriate solutions with the assistance, **when** necessary, of a resource person from the school board.

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 (E.A., s. 9).

DEFINITIONS

In order to promote a clear understanding of the Special Education Policy of the Western Québec School Board, the following definitions are included:

Adaptation:

The term is used to define changes to the format, instructional strategies and/or assessment procedures (special exam conditions) that do not alter the regular expectations of the curriculum. Students follow a regular academic pathway leading to an academic diploma.

Ad Hoc Committee:

A committee established in conformity with article 8-9.06 of the teachers' collective agreement. Each Ad Hoc committee is composed of a representative of the school administration, the teacher or teachers concerned, and a school board professional. Representatives from external agencies and support personnel, may be invited to participate. The parents will be invited to participate, and the student when appropriate, in the meeting or series of meetings. Whether or not the parents attend, they will be informed of any decisions that may be taken.

A priori weighting:

As per the teachers' collective agreement, students with some 'handicape' codes will be weighted so that they are counted as equivalent to 2-4 students in the overall class enrolment thereby reducing the class size.

Assessment:

Refers to the measurement of the learning and performance of students. Different types of assessment instruments include standardized achievement and aptitude tests, standardized behavior rating scales, developmental screening tests, observation instruments, performance tasks, and authentic assessments. Parental permission is required for assessments by school board Psychologists and Speech Language Pathologists.

Case Conference:

A team meeting which may include in-school personnel and administration, school board professionals and professionals from outside agencies. At these meetings information is shared, strategies are explored and recommendations discussed.

Coding:

The process by which a 'handicape' student is recognized and validated with the MEES.

Collective Agreements:

Collective agreements for employees of the Western Quebec School Board.

Complementary Services Parity Committee (CSPC)

This committee is comprised of 5 representatives of the teachers' union and 5 representatives of the WQSB management team and senior administration to determine the allocation of special education resources to the schools.

Differentiated Instruction:

Teaching strategies and Evaluation Situations that have been adapted to meet the needs of the students' individual differences which provide the most favourable conditions for learning in the regular classroom setting.

Home Tuition:

In exceptional cases, when a student is unable to attend school for an extended period of time due to illness, a specific handicap, or severe behaviour difficulties, educational services may be provided at home, a re-adaptive facility or other school board location on a temporary, part–time basis.

Identification:

The process by which a student with learning, behaviour and/or social-emotional difficulties is identified with the school/school board.

Inclusion:

Inclusion refers to the philosophy and practice of ensuring that a student's special needs are respected, planned for and validated in the class in which they have been integrated. Inclusion involves reducing exclusion by restructuring the learning environment, policies and practices so that they respond to, accept and embrace the diversity of students' needs. Inclusion does not imply that the student is expected to or is capable of achieving the academic or social goals of the class into which he is placed.

Individualized Educational Plan (IEP):

Any student who has been formally identified or coded must, by law, have an IEP. The IEP must be adapted to the needs of the student and must target goals and strategies required to help the student succeed. It is a process designed for each student with special needs based on the assessments on file and teacher evaluation of the abilities and needs of that student. The IEP is a living document to support students in achieving their stated goals and includes effective teaching strategies. The student's progress is evaluated periodically throughout the year and communicated to the parents. The IEP is developed by the team involved with the student (including the parent and student). It is implemented and evaluated by school personnel.

Individualized Service Intervention Plan: (PSI)

An individualized plan, written by a health or social services agency, for services for a student with special needs.

Integration:

Refers to the placement of a student with special needs into regular classes or groups and into regular school activities in accordance with the needs determined in a student's IEP.

MEES:

Ministère de l'Éducation, et de l'enseignement supérieur

Modification:

This term refers to substantial changes to the complexity of the expectation of the curriculum. Students follow a modified academic pathway leading to a Work Oriented Training Pathway (WOTP) leading to a WOTP certificate.

Parent:

The word "parent" means the person having parental authority or, unless that person objects, the person having custody de facto of the student. (E.A., s. 13(2))

Professional:

Complementary Services personnel having specialized training: ie Speech and Language Pathologist, Consultant for Students with Special Needs, Guidance Counsellor, Psychologist.

Program:

A pathway established by an IEP, in concurrence with MEES guidelines, which will meet a student's special needs. ie regular academic, modified academic, lifeskills pathway, or program for students with a profound intellectual impairment.

Resource Teacher:

A qualified teacher with specialized certification, specialized training, or relevant experience in working with students with special needs.

Students: "at risk"

Students at the pre-school, elementary and secondary levels who present certain vulnerability factors. This may affect their learning or behavior such that they may be at risk, of falling behind either academically or socially, unless there is timely intervention. These students are not formally identified or coded and do not require an IEP.

Students 'en difficulté' (EDAA)

Students with learning, behavior and/or social emotional difficulties whose difficulties have not been overcome by remedial measures. These students are formally identified at the school and school board level and require an IEP.

Students: handicapé (EHDAA)

Students with a diagnosis of a disability or disorder from a qualified professional whose limitations hinder or prevent the students from learning the content of the QEP or developing autonomy and achieving social integration. Support measures must be taken to reduce the disadvantages created by the disability or disorder in order to enable the student to function at school. These students are formally coded and validated with the MEES and they require an IEP.

School Administrator:

The school principal or his/her representative.

School-Level Special Education Committee:

An in-school committee organized in accordance with article 8-9.05 of the Teacher's Collective Agreement.

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC):

The committee defined in Section 185 of the Education Act. This working committee is comprised of 11 parents of students with special needs (selected by the Parent Committee), 1 teacher representative, 1 non-teaching staff representative, 1 support staff representative, 1 school administrator, and up to 2 representatives of organizations which provide services to students with special needs.

Service:

Service is defined as intervention (including differentiation) and/or evaluation. Service includes assistance given to address a student's academic, physical, behavioral, or social emotional needs.

Support Personnel:

Individuals working with students with special needs in the schools. These may be Attendants to the Handicapped or Special Education Technicians.

Teacher:

Every person employed by the school board whose occupation is to teach students in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act (Revised Statutes of Quebec, c. I-13-3).

WOTP:

The Work-Oriented Training Path (WOTP) consists of both academic and practical training in the workplace in both the 3 year Pre Work program and 1-year Semi-Skilled program. Students who are 15 years or older are eligible to register in the WOTP and receive a MEES certificate upon completion.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Policy is based, in particular, on the following documents:

- Education Act (E.A.), Revised Statutes of Quebec. c.1-13.3.
- Ministère de 1'éducation, Students with Handicaps, Social Maladjustments or Learning Difficulties: Definitions, Direction de 1'adaptation scolaire et des services complémentaires, 2000.
- Quebec Education Program, current edition.
- Ministère de 1'Éducation, Basic School Regulation for Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Education, July 2000.
- Complementary Educational Services: Essential to Success, DASSC, 2002
- The teachers' collective agreement in force.
- Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, Revised Statutes of Quebec. c. C-12.
- Act to Secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration. (E-20.1, 2004)
- Act respecting Access to Documents held by Public Bodies and the Protection of Personal Information, Revised Statutes of Quebec., c. A-2.1
- Civil Code of Québec.