

## Responses to Issues / Concerns Raised during Consultation on the Special Needs Policy

### 1. What is the difference between an Ad Hoc and Resource Team?

**An Ad Hoc Team** is one mandated by the Collective Agreement which states from article 8-9.05: *“Within fifteen (15) working days of receiving the teacher’s report, the school principal shall set up an ad hoc committee to ensure that the case is studied and that the progress of a student with a handicap or a social maladjustment or a learning disability is monitored. The committee shall be made up of a representative of the school administration, the teacher or teachers concerned and, at the committee’s request, a professional.....”*

**A Resource Team** is a problem solving team designed to give teachers a forum with colleagues to seek solutions for students in their classroom. A team which combines both the elements of an Ad Hoc and Resource team is one which best meets the needs of a school in a comprehensive and efficient way.

### 2. Why is education of students who are “gifted” not part of the Policy on Special Needs?

Education of students who are “gifted” is not given by the Ministry of Education as part of the mandate of the Policy on Special Needs. Gifted education is addressed by the Quebec Education Plan and Curriculum Reform.

### 3. Why are all students who are considered at risk by the teacher not on the school list of students “At Risk”?

Specific guidelines for being identified as “At Risk” are established by the Ministry of Education (MEQ) and are available at each school and from Student Services. A student cannot be identified as “At Risk” unless their profile complies with the MEQ guidelines and they continue to experience difficulty after having received support and adaptations and modifications to their program. The MEQ requests that these students also have an I.E.P. prior to identification. In other words, formal identification does not preclude recognizing learning difficulties and planning intervention. e.g. early literacy intervention.

### 4. Why is the I.E.P. not done prior to a student’s entry into the class?

The I.E.P. is developed by the staff involved with the student and the parents. The classroom teacher is an integral part of the I.E.P. development and must have time to get to know the student prior to development of the I.E.P.

*The Education Act states, “...the plan must be in keeping with the ability and needs of the student as evaluated by the School Board before the student’s placement and enrollment in the school”.* This means that the background information related to the student’s ability and needs is to be gathered prior to the student’s entry to assist with the development of the I.E.P. within 35 days.

**5. If an I.E.P. is developed, are increased resources automatic?**

The plan can have a variety of interventions without necessarily increasing resources. Increased resources are not automatic. The MEQ requires that an I.E.P. be developed for any student who is having difficulty. The student can be formally identified if he/she continues to have difficulty in spite of the I.E.P. interventions and if the profile matches the criteria established by the MEQ for a particular classification. It is a plan to help increase a student's opportunity for success.

**6. How is allocation of "aide time" determined?**

Aide time is given as a total number of hours to each school depending on the needs of students who are identified in the "Handicapped" category. The number of aide hours assigned are not determined by the type of handicap. Government funding for students with "Handicaps" is used not only for aide time but also for professional support such as psychologists, speech and occupational therapists, consultants, etc. The principal and resource team are responsible for deploying the hours in the school. While students "At Risk" do not generate any funding for aide time, they may benefit from the extra support in the classroom.

**7. What constitutes support?**

Support is assistance ranging from direct or indirect human resource assistance to accommodations or modifications to the student's program or instructional strategies.

**8. Is there a link between providing support and formal identification of a student as being "At Risk" or "Handicapped?"**

The mandate given to the Board by the MEQ is to meet the needs of all students, whether or not they are formally identified. As soon as a student experiences difficulties, preventive measures, and interventions such as early literary intervention, planning rooms, differentiated instruction, etc. should be implemented, providing support long before a student is formally identified. Formal identification is more of a clerical exercise, done as a means for the Board obtaining funding from the Ministry of Education to provide support services.

**9. What is the role of professional development in addressing support for student with special needs?**

Ongoing professional development provides teachers, pedagogical support staff, and other Board educators with information, instructional strategies, and other areas related to the successful inclusion of students with special needs.

(Some examples this past year)

- Intervention Planning for Developmental Behavioral Challenges
- L.I.N.K. (Elementary resource training)
- High School resource Network
- Reading Recovery / Intervention Intensive Training
- Family and School Support and Treatment Team lectures
- Soundprints
- Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) clinic

Kevin Baskerville – Students with Autism  
Intellikeys training  
Success Maker training  
3 professional days for Aides / Techs  
School based workshops

**10. What exactly are the preventative measures that teachers must implement before requesting additional assessment or assistance?**

**Training? Resources available?**

The QEP incorporates differentiated instruction and recognition of learning differences. Prior to requesting an assessment or assistance a teacher is encouraged to recognize the students' needs and facilitate their learning through classroom adaptations. This could include early literacy intervention, preferential seating, behavior charts, peer tutoring, extra time for assignment, communication book with home, etc. Following this, recommendations from the Resource/Ad Hoc Team are instrumental in planning and implementing strategies for the academic success of the student. The preventative measures can vary depending on the needs of the student, class, and school. Resources vary at each school, however each school is assigned a psychologist, speech and language pathologist (elementary), and consultative support. Staffing allocation includes provisions for Resource support. Professional development is ongoing throughout a teacher's career.

**11. Is there a higher percentage of students classified as “Handicapped” / “At Risk” enrolled in our Bilingual schools than in our Immersion schools?**

Families generally choose the elementary program that they feel meets the needs of their child. In addition, they tend to choose a school with which they are familiar. Often this school is in close proximity to the neighborhood in which they live. As a result, a school's student population generally reflects the general population/neighborhood that feeds into that particular school. While there continues to be more students with “special needs” in the bilingual schools, this is changing and a more equitable enrollment between Bilingual and Immersion schools of students with special needs is taking place. The goal and the “special needs” distribution trend is that all schools increasingly are able to meet individual needs, regardless of variation in programs.

**12. Do a significant number of students experiencing difficulty in Immersion Schools transfer to a Bilingual School?**

There is no data available that would support the notion that a “significant” number of students transfer to Bilingual schools because of experiencing difficulty. All schools are developing their expertise to meet the needs of the wide range of diverse learners that are presently in all of our schools.

Distribution of students with “special needs” tends to be a reflection of the community that is served by that particular school. However, variations do exist within our system. Every effort is being made to equitably distribute resources so that individual needs can be met at each of our schools. Understandably, some of our schools have had more experience with inclusive practices than other schools. The capacity to meet the individual needs of students exists within each of our schools at this time. Regardless, it is important to keep in mind that parents have the right to make a program choice.

**13. How does inclusion address a wide range of needs within a school?**

Inclusive schools develop flexible learning environments, collaboration, and a problem solving approach, and allow for individual paths for learning through an I.E.P.’s goals and objectives. Some students have special needs which require a balanced day of regular, modified, parallel, or individual curriculum. Different profiles of student strengths and needs require different types or changing levels of support. Students with special needs are members of regular classes and part of the school community. For some students with challenging needs, individual paths of learning and a meaningful balanced day may determine a schedule of both in-class time and individual activities within the school. Inclusion fosters maximum learning opportunities, appropriate behaviour, and acceptance of diversity for both regular students and those with disabilities.

**14. What can a school do when it is faced with a student, who demonstrates behaviors that make it difficult for him/her to function in the school environment?**

Some of our schools have students who present extremely challenging behaviour. Collaborative problem solving and planning needs to take place so that both the teachers, school, and family feel supported and all options are explored. The Resource/Ad Hoc Team is the school team where consultation and intervention planning should begin. School teams can explore a variety of avenues to address challenging situations. These include:

- Develop a thorough student/family profile
- Identify a case manager
- Initiate a family conference
- Improve home and school communication
- Develop a plan to address problematic behaviour which may include: adjustments to curriculum demands, limited class time, late start/early dismissal, assigning a mentor, behaviour contract, request for additional short term support from Student Services.
- Ensure that professionals, such as the school psychologist, consultants, and where available, Family School Support Treatment Team (F.S.S.T.T.) are involved.

In addition, the school team may decide to refer a student to an outside resource. These may include: Youth Protection, hospital day-treatment programs, secondary alternative program, family preservation programs, C.L.S.C., short-term home schooling.

