

Template for Briefs

Toward a Policy on Educational Success

Instructions

The Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports would like to hear the innovative ideas you have for creating tomorrow's school. To assist you in preparing your brief, you can refer to the consultation document or its summary, which presents the following three broad areas of intervention:

1. All students achieving their full potential
2. A favourable context for student learning, personal development and success
3. Mobilization of partners and stakeholders in support of educational success

This template provides for a text of up to 10 to 12 pages in length, using the Times New Roman 12-point font. If you wish, your brief may include appendices and they will not be counted in the maximum number of pages. You do not need to complete every section.

Please submit your brief by November 14, 2016.

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The Leadership Committee for English Education in Québec (LCEEQ) is a collaborative professional learning community established for the purpose of promoting educational leadership in response to the needs of the English Educational Community of Québec. The Committee is comprised of thirty-one members appointed by the organizations which they represent:

- The Directors General of the English School Boards (ADGESBQ/ADGCSAQ)
- Representatives of the nine public English School Boards
- Special Status School Board representatives (Cree, Littoral)
- Independent School Associations' Table (ISAT)
- Administrators of Complementary Educational Services (ACES)
- Provincial Organization of Continuing Education Directors English (PROCEDE)
- Association of Administrators of English Schools of Québec (AAESQ/AEAQ)
- Québec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT/APEQ)
- Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation du Québec (FPPE)
- English Colleges Steering Committee (Cégep)
- English Universities of Québec

The LCEEQ appreciates the opportunity to consult on *A Policy of Educational Success* and will provide feedback on the specific questions presented in this response template. In general, we commend the initiative taken by Minister Proulx. However, we find that the proposal is very broad and vague in terms of concrete measures to ensure success for all students. We note, in particular, the lack of detail related to the financial means necessary to accomplish many of the objectives. We understand that this is a consultation and that an eventual policy will likely provide an indication of the additional human and financial resources to be made available, but it would have been more reassuring to see some indication of such from the outset.

The LCEEQ is pleased to see that many of the recommendations proposed in the consultation document are already well in place within the English-speaking Education Community. We believe that our proven experiences have much to offer and express our willingness to collaborate with the Minister in achieving the objectives of the proposed plan.

Broad area of intervention I:

All students achieving their full potential

All students achieving their full potential is at the heart of the mission of schools and educational childcare services. Several different strategies and interventions will be needed in the coming years to enable students to achieve their full potential. To provide food for thought about this first broad area of intervention, four specific areas are proposed:

Specific area 1: Intervention starting in early childhood

- ❖ It is difficult to argue the premise that early intervention offers anything but a better chance at long-term success for all students. There have been well-documented programmes in many jurisdictions for a number of years. There is research to indicate that although initial academic progress is evident, by mid-elementary school these benefits of early entrance to school are no longer an advantage for the majority of students.
- ❖ At present classes for four-year-olds with selected profiles are gradually being implemented. What consideration has been given to other models of early intervention?
- ❖ A strong belief that early intervention is pivotal, and that K4 is the best way to offer the service, would mean that such classes should be available to all. If there continues to be services offered to selected students, then a better mechanism must be applied as the use of postal codes is not a reliable measure of need. School Boards are in a better position to identify and respond to their community and should be afforded the flexibility and required resources to provide services to those students the School Board has identified are in greatest need.
- ❖ The implementation of a play/exploration based pre-school programme, the heart of the Quebec curriculum, is essential to long-term success. Currently there is far too much evidence of a “push-down” curriculum where more and more emphasis is placed on the acquisition of academic skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy. It is critical to understand that expecting four and five-year-olds to master skills which are not developmentally appropriate can result in short-term frustration and long-term detrimental effects. The argument that educational institutions are simply responding to the demands of parents is unacceptable. The Ministry of Education must ensure that appropriate programmes are offered at all levels within the educational system.

- ❖ The structure and class size of the current services within the CPE network and recognized K4 classes is different. Schools offering K4 classes must be provided with the necessary human resources.

Specific area 2: A response adapted to students with specific needs

- ❖ There needs to be a better mechanism to identify and support students with special needs. The current identification and validation process is cumbersome, requiring excessive bureaucracy to justify the additional funds. The Ministry uses diagnostic criteria which are often out of date with current professional practices. Time spent by non-teaching professionals to identify and code students would be better used for direct intervention. Additional supports may be available to those experiencing difficulty, but little consideration is given to individuals for whom the curriculum is not sufficiently challenging. The energy must be on providing direct intervention to students at all points in the teaching/learning spectrum.
- ❖ We must ensure the availability of professional development for all school personnel working with students with special needs, based on the needs expressed by the personnel. It is essential that the latest research and best practices are examined continually, analysed, and implemented in an appropriate manner.
- ❖ Significant budget compressions in recent years have resulted in a reduction of services in schools which in turn places more responsibility on the classroom teacher to address very diverse needs. The impact of the recent reorganization of services in the Ministry of Health and Social Services has placed a greater and unrealistic set of demands on schools to meet the needs of students who cannot access adequate health and social services in English.
- ❖ The English Educational Community has had success with including students with special needs. Consideration of some of these successful delivery models should be examined to better serve the province as a whole.

Specific area 3: Guidance throughout schooling

- ❖ Multidisciplinary teams already exist in many schools within the English Educational Community and function effectively. These teams consider the needs of all students, particularly those at risk or considered special needs. It is important that schools have access to non-teaching professionals who can be available to meet with teachers. In outlying regions, many of these professionals must focus on identifying needs and conducting assessments which limits the time they can participate in multidisciplinary meetings. These meetings also add to the workload of all personnel, so other obligations should be reduced.
- ❖ What is the impact of extending the compulsory school age on the current Cégep system?
- ❖ The involvement of parents is critical. There are many demands made on schools to help youth determine their career path, but the home has an important role to play in this process. Educational institutions can assist parents in this responsibility but should not be expected to assume it.
- ❖ There is a strong perception that a Vocational path is less desirable than one which leads to a University degree. How do we change the negative stigma of the trades? Many students who otherwise drop out of school would benefit from these programmes and would address a serious need in the workforce in Quebec. More active promotion of the value of these programmes is suggested.

Specific area 4: Quality of teaching and pedagogical practices

- ❖ Students in teacher training at the University sometimes discover well into their programme that teaching is not the best career path for them. It would be advantageous to offer an exploration course at Cégep to permit potential teacher candidates to experience the profession in a supervised manner before making a four-year commitment to a course of study for which they may not be well suited.
- ❖ It is essential that teachers are provided with appropriate training and have opportunities for ongoing professional development in their language of instruction. At present, sessions for English speaking teachers of K4 classes are only available in French.

- ❖ The teaching profession needs to be valued more. There has been an erosion of the importance of teachers in the eye of the public. Simply completing schooling does not make one an expert in pedagogy. Teaching is a science and an art requiring specific talents and abilities. We need to celebrate teachers and value the contribution they make to society.

Recommendations

- ❖ The English Educational Community already has many of the elements proposed in place. It is essential to understand that “one size does not fit all” and that we cannot be too prescriptive in our approach. Nor can we lose sight that educators are charged with a big responsibility, to intervene in the lives of our students during their most formative years. There needs to be a built-in flexibility so that local English-speaking communities can address a unique set of needs (e.g. rural versus urban settings, larger school population versus smaller ones, expansive geographical catchment areas to serve....). There needs to be sufficient financial and human resources made available to provide equitable, quality services to all students in the province.

Broad area of intervention II:
A favourable context for student learning,
personal development and success

All students achieving their full potential must also be understood as a function of a large number of competencies that represent countless possibilities and ways of succeeding, throughout their schooling and on the labour market. A more solid foundation in reading, writing and mathematics will enable them to develop competencies in a variety of fields, opening up more choices to them.

Specific area 1: Importance of literacy and numeracy

- ❖ There is no argument that literacy and numeracy proficiency is essential, but it must be recognized that for the English Educational Community such proficiency is required in two languages. Quality instruction in English is important to the community, but it is expected that our graduates be proficient in both languages so that our youth will be able to participate in and contribute to life in Quebec. Our schools have a proven success rate in this regard. We must safeguard the right for our students to learn in both languages.
- ❖ Given the need to meet the requirements of two curricula, one in English and one in French, it is essential that young students in particular are exposed to developmentally- appropriate activities and that content is not “pushed-down”. It is equally important that one understands that skills learned in one language are transferable to the other. English schools need flexibility within the Basic School Regulation (BSR) in order to address the demands of a dual curriculum.
- ❖ We acknowledge the importance of literacy and numeracy, but not at the expense of other subject matter which our students need to experience to have a well-rounded educational experience. Over the years we have seen the reduction in the Arts and Music, for example, which is unacceptable. It is important that we offer a wide range of quality programmes that address the needs and interests of a diverse student population.
- ❖ Budget compressions have resulted in a decline in essential services. Although the Ministry professes to support literacy development, librarian services have become close to extinct in English-speaking schools, or spread so thinly that they lose effectiveness. A literate society demands that we have the means to gather resources and guide students in critical thinking and digital literacy, thus it is vital to have specialists who can help teachers with this task.

Specific area 2: Competencies in demand in the 21st century and the growing presence of digital technology

- ❖ LCEEQ strongly supports the incorporation of technology in the classroom as evidenced by its upcoming Annual Conference. The February 2017 event will bring together seven hundred educators on the theme: *When Diversity and Technology in the Classroom Converge*.
- ❖ Funding must be adequate and must provide flexibility to be able to address the particular needs of the community. Targeted funding is problematic when it results in restrictions. A recent grant to purchase electronic boards was poorly received as the vast majority of our English schools had been investing in such for years previous to the specific grant. The English community could have better used these funds for other technology-related initiatives had it been granted the flexibility to do so.
- ❖ Funding must also be equitable. Rural and remote areas need to receive adequate resources to be able to deliver quality educational experiences. Smaller student populations often use online instruction as a means of teaching specific subjects, requiring additional infrastructure and reliable networks.
- ❖ As the technological demands, both pedagogical and administrative, increase, the existing infrastructure is more rapidly becoming inadequate, thereby requiring a financial infusion.
- ❖ It is essential to recognize that technology is a tool to enhance the classroom experience and not a goal on its own. Teachers need to be provided with ongoing professional development as innovations in technology occur constantly. Those expected to use the technology should be consulted as to whether they view the technology to be useful to them before money is spent on implementing it. There needs to be specific funding for professional development in this area if the potential of technology is to be realized.
- ❖ There needs to be an emphasis on digital citizenship and the development of critical thinking. An ever-growing dependency on the internet is dangerous if one does not cultivate the skills to discern true knowledge from information that is unreliable or incorrect. Students also need to be educated about proper cyber conduct so that they can maximize the use of technology as a learning tool.

Specific area 3: Adequate preparation for the transition to the labour market or higher education

- ❖ It is important that our graduates have “financial literacy”. Many citizens find themselves in serious debt as they are unaware of basic financial principles (e.g. credit card interest, budgeting). These are lessons that are important in a well-rounded education and should be a part of the Secondary School curriculum.
- ❖ Vocational training must be promoted and respected. The allocation of programme authorizations must be equitable. The English sector must have the means to offer a variety of programmes to meet the needs and interests of the students. Offering classes in English in French institutions does not necessarily satisfy this demand.

Specific area 4: A school that is inclusive and proud of its diversity

- ❖ The English Educational Community has always recognized and welcomed cultural diversity. Restrictions placed on access to an education in the English sector has clearly diminished the valuable contributions that minority groups can contribute to this rich heritage. A government that wishes to encourage inclusion and diversity is advised to review its policy regarding access to English education.

Recommendations

- ❖ One of the reasons that the English Educational Community has been so successful is strong leadership. To prosper and to improve on its already high success rate, the English Educational Community needs to have greater flexibility in the implementation of programmes to allow for creativity and innovation. This is particularly important given that the teaching/learning process is in two languages.

**Broad area of intervention III:
Mobilization of partners and stakeholders in support
of educational success**

The third area of intervention involves the environment outside the school. Educational success is a challenge that goes beyond school walls and the school system's responsibilities. It must be taken up collectively, with the involvement and cooperation of a number of stakeholders and partners.

Specific area 1: Parental involvement

- ❖ The English Educational Community has long recognized the importance of reaching out to the community and has a proven record of success in this regard. What is not needed is a series of imposed prescriptive measures as these could be detrimental to what already exist. Perhaps some of the success already in place could serve as a model for all educational institutions in the province.
- ❖ Despite this success, there is still a need to engage those hard-to-reach parents. It is essential for everyone to understand that education of all students is a joint responsibility and not the sole purview of the school system.

Specific area 2: Support from partners and the community

- ❖ It is important that we establish strong ties with business and industry as this creates the potential for valuable workplace opportunities for students. The school is in the best position to deliver quality instruction, while the workplace can provide students with valuable on-site experience.
- ❖ We must foster involvement and support of all educational partners with consideration given to English-speaking services whether they be family support, health related, or services for the handicapped to mention just a few. At present, services to the English community, particularly in rural and remote areas, are virtually non-existent.

- ❖ The network of Community Learning Centres that presently exist throughout the English schools in Quebec is a promising model through which to involve partners in the lives of learners. The CLC model is particularly vital in smaller communities where there are fewer services available to English-speaking Quebecers. The Ministry may wish to consider directly subsidizing such a model in remote communities around the province as a means of organizing partnerships that support and enhance the commendable work that schools do in the personal, social and academic development of students.

Recommendations

- ❖ The process of building relationships with community partners does not happen by chance and requires a strategic plan for success. These ventures require both financial and human resources for success. These additional resources must be made available.

Conclusion

The Leadership Committee for English Education in Quebec (LCEEQ) is pleased to present its position on this consultation. Even if some of the content in the *Consultative Document* is vague and lacks specific detail, we commend the initiative. Given the number of potential responses, it is interesting to consider how all the feedback collected will be analysed and synthesized. It is hoped that this initial process will lead to a revised policy proposal which will once again be open for dialogue.

