



Wednesday, January 17, 2018

Me. Geneviève Dugré
Secretary General
Lester B. Pearson School Board
1925 Brookdale Avenue
Dorval, QC H9P 2Y7

Subject: Evaluation of Student Learning Consultation

Dear Me. Dugré,

In regard to Evaluation of Student Learning Consultation, the Special Needs Advisory Committee (SNAC) is pleased to have the opportunity to provide input.

SNAC believes that it is important to remember that evaluation is not an end in itself. Students do not only learn in order to be evaluated: they are evaluated so that they can learn more effectively.

Our policy needs to reinforce the importance of differentiated evaluation and assessment. It is not enough to simply recognize that students learn in different ways, and possess their own unique gifts; with that recognition comes a responsibility to ensure that students are taught and evaluated using tools and means that are appropriate for them. Additionally, ensuring that evaluation and assessment reflect the student's needs, is fundamental to ensuring that they are given the opportunity to be successful. *With the diversity of the students in today's classrooms, it is imperative that schools and teachers get the support that they need to ensure that this is not just a "theoretical" practice, but something that is happening in every school and in every classroom.*

Quality evaluation means ensuring that certain students are not placed at an undue advantage or disadvantage.

Specific Suggestions

Page 3: Introduction

Suggestion: Include in this section that the policy applies to all students:

“The policy concerns all students, regardless of their specific needs or their abilities; including students with handicaps, at-risk students, and students in difficulty.”

Page 5 :

Point #10 reads: *“Teachers must exercise flexible pedagogy to support student learning. The same flexibility must extend to assessment and evaluation practices.”*

Suggestion: Change the above noted sentence to make the message stronger and more direct:

“As students have different abilities and learning styles, taking into account these differences requires that teachers use flexible pedagogy whereby students develop the required competencies but in different ways, and the methods used to evaluate learning must be adjusted accordingly.”

Page 14:

In iii Youth Sector the last line reads: “Students may stay in the Youth Sector until the end of the school year in which they become eighteen years old (twenty-one years old for certain categories of “handicapped” students)

Suggestion: Please specify what the "certain categories of handicapped students" are.

Page 18: School and Centre Administration Category

Point # 5 reads: *“To present, annually, the current school calendar to the Governing Board, indicating when and how parents / guardians will be regularly informed about student progress.”*

Suggestion: Section 29.2 of the Basic School Regulation stipulates that: *“At least once a month, information is provided to the parents of a minor in the following cases:(1) the student’s results put him or her at risk of not obtaining the pass mark for the programs of studies or, for a child in preschool education, when the child’s progress indicates that he or she will not be ready to proceed to the first grade of elementary school at the beginning of the following school year;(2) the student’s behaviour does not comply with the school’s rules of conduct;(3) an individualized education plan providing for the information was prepared for the student.”*

Page 18 cont.:

How these communications will be done should also be presented to governing boards. Therefore, change Point #5 to include reporting for students on Individualized Education Plans.

“To present, annually, the current school calendar to the Governing Board, indicating when and how parents / guardians will be regularly informed about student progress; including the distribution of and reporting on a student’s Individualized Education Plan where applicable.”

Mention of SMART Goals:

For students on a modified program, the team needs to collaborate in the setting of SMART goals on the student’s IEP. The term SMART goals is widely used and refers to goals that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, use **A**ction words, are **R**ealistic and **T**ime limited.

General Feedback

Specific ideas that are important for this policy to **support**:

- The reduction/elimination of uniform exams at the board/school level, where possible.
- Giving teachers the flexibility to truly evaluate student learning through a vast array of means/tools
- Reinforce the principle that ALL students should be given the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge/competency through a means that is appropriate for them.
- Reinforcing the principle that even though a student may demonstrate their knowledge or acquirement of a competency in a way that is different from their peers, it does not mean that they are in some way “less than” and/or that they should not be given the opportunity to do so.
- Keeping focus on development of competencies, and not on being able to “pass the test”

Examples of some issues parents can face: differentiated evaluation can make a difference for those kids who may not “fit in the box”

- Child who struggles with language, failing on a history test or science test, not because he does not understand the topic covered, but because he does not understand the language used in the questions.
- Child failing or doing poorly in Science because the only means of evaluation is a written test, in which the child is too anxious to complete. (Anxious because he does not understand what all the words mean. Anxious because he does not know how to spell the words that he wants to write. Anxious because he knows he always does poorly on these types of tests)
- Child being put on a modified program for English, because they regularly forget to punctuate their sentences or because they regularly make spelling mistakes.
- Child doing poorly in Math or being put on a modified program for Math, because they do poorly on word problems. They struggle to understand the language used in math problem solving when presented in the written format. They can however, solve situational problems, when presented in video format (so the child can see the problem visually).
- Getting others to accept that “leveling the playing field” does not have to equate to “lowering expectations”. Understanding that how a child learns, is an integral part of understanding how to best assess their knowledge.
- Having to ask teachers, “but what does he really need to know for this competency”? Looking past simply being able to pass a specific test and focusing more on what needs to be learned. Understanding that simply telling students to review their notes, will not necessarily result in a clear expectation of what they need to know. For some, it will simply lead to them memorizing what is in their notes.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this consultation.

Respectfully,

Jennifer DiMarco - Chair
Special Needs Advisory Committee, 2017-2018