



May 29, 2013

Ms. Marie Malavoy
Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport
600 rue Fullum, 10e étage
Montréal (Québec)
H2K 4L1

Subject: Budgetary Concerns Relating to the Education of Students with Special Needs

Dear Ms. Malavoy,

On behalf of the Special Needs Advisory Committee of the Lester B. Pearson School Board, as well as on behalf of the almost 3000 families of students with special needs throughout our territory, we would like to express our concerns regarding the increasing budgetary compressions that are being enforced on School Boards throughout Québec.

We are particularly concerned about the effects of these budgetary compressions on our growing population of students with Special Needs.

As we endeavor to support the increasing demands of educating our students with Special Needs to achieve their personal best, graduate, and ultimately contribute as citizens of Québec, we must request that the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport consider the following suggestions to guide priority allocation of funds, as well as to reduce the associated bureaucracy which school boards must follow to obtain these funds from MELS.

1. **Increased funding for professionals.** The increase of students with complex special needs in recent years (e.g., autism) means that more professionals with specialized training are required to meet the growing needs. More occupational therapists, psychologists, speech and language therapists are needed.
2. **Increased funding to support inclusive education.** Although the MELS policy suggests the regular classroom is the preferred learning environment for students with special needs and many school board promote an inclusive philosophy, there has been no significant financial incentive to support boards who seek to increase their integration rate. Successful inclusion requires leadership and continuous professional development; current funding falls short in making inclusion a priority.
3. **Increased special education funding to support the hiring and professional development of paraprofessionals** such as attendants, aides, and technicians. The per capita allocation given to

school boards for students with handicaps should be increased, as salary costs and other expenses have not been indexed for several years. This means that as funding remains static, it costs school boards more to have these services in place and results in diminished resources available to students.

4. **Less bureaucracy** regarding administrative exercises such as the validation of funding requests for students with special needs (EHDA) and the technology grants available to schools. More and more, professionals are required to become involved in these activities, filling in forms and writing or requesting reports, which reduces the amount of time they are able to spend in direct service at the school level. Professionals are needed in schools, so they can fulfill their duties: observing classrooms, consulting with teachers and assisting students. It is critical we find more efficient ways of accounting for the financing that is requested and received.
5. **Targeted funds for teacher professional development.** Research shows that teachers require ongoing support to improve their teaching strategies, particularly when working with students with special needs. School boards need to have dedicated funds available to continue in-service training for teachers.
6. **Targeted funds to support parents** in their role as partners in the education of their children. In order to have a truly collaborative process, parents require support as well as information about their child's special needs. Resource centers and workshops could help to increase parent awareness of their child's needs as well as the types of services that will help them progress socially and academically. School boards cannot be expected to take on this responsibility without adequate funding to support parents.

Thank you in advance for your serious consideration of these suggestions.

Respectfully,

Sandra Buckingham

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