

GUIDE TO THE EDUCATION OF YOUR CHILD WITH A DISABILITY

HANDBOOK
FOR PARENTS



OFFICE DES PERSONNES
HANDICAPÉES DU QUÉBEC

pooling
our strengths

**GUIDE TO THE
EDUCATION OF
YOUR CHILD WITH
A DISABILITY**

**HANDBOOK
FOR PARENTS**

This publication was written by the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec.

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The document can be viewed on the website of the
Office des personnes handicapées du Québec at
www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca/publications

**This document is available in
adapted media formats upon request.**

Please note that the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec and its representatives assume no responsibility for the content of the tools offered by the organizations referred to in this guide. Should you be dissatisfied, we recommend that you contact the organization concerned. Furthermore, distribution of this guide falls within the Office's duty to provide information pursuant to the *Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration* [CQLR, c. E-20.1] and its content must not be understood and interpreted as legal advice. References to legislation have no official value, only the texts published in the *Gazette officielle du Québec* having force of law.

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FOREWORD

The Office des personnes handicapées du Québec feels that education must be inclusive, meaning it must take student diversity into account. With the required adaptations and support, integration (regular classes in local schools, often referred to as mainstreaming) must be the first option of choice for educating students with disabilities.

However, the Office does not claim that all children with disabilities must be integrated. If, following an individualized evaluation of the child's needs and academic and social abilities and the drafting of an individualized education plan (IEP) foreseeing all reasonable adaptations that would make mainstreaming possible, it has been found that integration is not in the child's best interest, other forms of schooling may be considered in order to meet the child's needs. This also holds true if integration is an undue constraint or significantly undermines classmates' rights.

This orientation is in keeping with the spirit of the *Education Act*, the *Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to social, school and workplace integration* (hereinafter the Act), the Policy on Special Education and the rules and legal principles stemming from jurisprudence pertaining to educational integration.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CDPDJ	Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse
CPE	Centre de la petite enfance
EHDA	Élève handicapé ou en difficulté d'adaptation ou d'apprentissage
LEP	Loi sur l'enseignement privé
LIP	Loi sur l'instruction publique
MEES	Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur
MSSS	Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux
PFEQ	Programme de formation de l'école québécoise
TEVA	Transition école-vie active
UQO	Université du Québec en Outaouais

INTRODUCTION

This guide was designed to inform parents, support them in their process of considering available education options for their child, and guide them in their actions regarding the educational success and pathway of their child with a disability of preschool, elementary or secondary school age, whether he is in a regular class, a special class or a specialized school.

It provides information about the school community and actions to be undertaken regarding your child's education. It presents the choices and possibilities available to parents, describes the steps to take, and prepares them for the role they will have to play. It also proposes resources and references that could prove useful to them in the process they are undertaking.

To view the guide online or order a copy

The Guide to the Education of Your Child with a Disability can be viewed at or printed from the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec website at

www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca

To order a free copy, call

1 800 567-1465

or email

publication@ophq.gouv.qc.ca

To comment on the guide

You can comment on the guide or notify us of any change by calling the reception, information and referral staff at **1 800 567-1465** or by sending an email to aide@ophq.gouv.qc.ca.

Please note: When the masculine form is used, it is intended to be gender inclusive.

THE OFFICE'S DIRECT PUBLIC SERVICES

The **Office des personnes handicapées du Québec** is responsible for informing, advising, assisting and representing people with disabilities, their family and their caregivers. Under section 26 of the Act, at the request of persons with disabilities, it may represent and assist them in their dealings with departments, public agencies, municipalities, school boards, educational institutions, institutions and insurance companies, in particular in order to ensure the exercise of their rights. These organizations must cooperate with the Office in the exercise of its functions [section 26.4].

The Office's services cover all areas of the educational, occupational and social lives of people with disabilities, regardless of the type of impairment. More specifically, its direct public services consist of:

- > receiving requests for information about measures, programs and services that foster school, workplace and social integration of people with disabilities;
- > providing the appropriate information;
- > identifying the barriers encountered by people with disabilities;
- > where necessary, referring a person to the organization that can best meet his or her needs and ensuring follow-up;
- > on request, advising and assisting people with disabilities, their families and their caregivers in order to help them define their needs and obtain the necessary services;
- > assisting and/or representing people with disabilities in dealings with the responsible authorities in the context of one or more intervention plans;
- > assisting people with disabilities, their families and caregivers in dealings with service providers and, if necessary, making representations on their behalf;
- > coordinating, as needed, the service program of a person with disabilities.

For services or assistance

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GUIDES AND TOOLS PRODUCED BY THE OFFICE

The Office has produced other guides and tools that you might find useful. We encourage you to read them as needed.

Family Support Guide for the parents of a child or of adult with a disability – Parts One and Two

This two-part guide is intended as a tool to help the parents of a child or an adult with a disability determine their family support needs (e.g. psychosocial support, childcare or supervision and respite) and identify the resources that may meet these needs.

Part One is entitled *Identifying Your Needs* and Part Two, *Resources*. Part Two indicates the organizational names and contact information for the resources that offer family support services, depending on the region and type of service concerned.

Guide des mesures fiscales provinciales et fédérales à l'intention des personnes handicapées, de leur famille et de leurs proches

This guide puts information on provincial and federal tax measures at your fingertips. The measures are divided into five sections: non-refundable tax credits, refundable tax credits, tax deductions, tax exemptions and rebates, and other special measures for people with disabilities.

A fact sheet for each measure provides a description of the measure, the eligibility requirements, how to claim the measure and any conditions that may apply (in French only).

Guide to Programs for People with Disabilities, Their Families and Caregivers

The purpose of this guide is to facilitate access to information on Québec programs for people with disabilities, their families and caregivers. It presents programs related to income support, home support, housing, employment, technical aids, childcare services, education and transportation, as well as recreation, sports, culture and community living. It also covers the main compensation plans in Québec for people with disabilities.

A fact sheet on each program contains a description of the program, the main eligibility requirements, the available assistance and the application procedure, as well as useful links for additional information.

These guides are updated regularly and can be viewed on the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec website at www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca/publications. To order a copy, call **1 800 567-1465**, or email publication@ophq.gouv.qc.ca.

To order a free copy of these guides

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Website: www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca/commanderguides

***On s'élève! – Outils de sensibilisation
au potentiel des jeunes handicapés***

This activity kit is a tool for raising awareness of the potential of young people with disabilities. It is intended as a way of countering preconceptions about young people with disabilities and people with disabilities in general. It is written with teaching staff in mind, especially at the elementary and Cycle One secondary level. It can also be useful for other members of the school community (in French only).

This kit can be viewed online at and printed from the following address:

www.ophq.gouv.qc.ca/onseleve.

GENERAL INFORMATION

>>> DEFINITION OF A “HANDICAPPED PERSON”

Paragraph *g* of section 1 of the Act defines a person with a disability as follows:

A person with a deficiency causing a significant and persistent disability, who is liable to encounter barriers in performing everyday activities.

>>> DEFINITION OF A “HANDICAPPED STUDENT”

According to section 1 of the *Education Act*, a handicapped student is considered as such if he or she corresponds to the definition in paragraph *g* of section 1 of the Act.

The *Education Act* is found at:
www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/l-13.3.

A handicapped child within the meaning of the Act is considered a handicapped student or a student with a social maladjustment or learning disability (often called a “special needs student”) within the school system. The student should be evaluated based on certain specific criteria established by the Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur (MEES).

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

>>> SCHOOL INTEGRATION (MAINSTREAMING)

Mainstreaming of students with a disability may be defined as their physical and social integration in an ordinary class within a local school. They therefore have access to the same premises and are part of the same group as the other children, who do not necessarily have impairments or specific difficulties.

Mainstreaming, provided it is in your child's best interests, may hold certain advantages for him, including:

- > enabling him to be in a school environment that is as inclusive as possible;
- > consideration of his differences and special needs;
- > enabling him to attend the same school as siblings and friends;
- > fostering his stimulation through his peers and other students in the group;
- > making the other children aware not only of your child's special needs, but also of his abilities and aptitudes;
- > fostering tolerance and acceptance of differences within the school environment;
- > fostering your child's self-esteem;
- > fostering his motivation at school;
- > preparing him to live within society.

Starting school is an important event for you and your child. It is perfectly normal to have certain apprehensions and fears at this stage. As parents, you benefit from being informed about your child's educational pathway because important decisions will have to be made to enable your child to deal successfully with this milestone.

There is a great deal of information on the subject. We suggest that you become familiar with it and talk about it with the people you know or parents who have had similar experiences with their children.

One of these sources of information is the document entitled *Lignes directrices pour l'intégration scolaire des élèves handicapés ou en difficulté d'adaptation ou d'apprentissage* (in French only) at:

www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/dpse/adaptation_serv_compl/LignesDirectricesIntScolElevesHand_1.pdf

and the Policy on Special Education at:

www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/dpse/adaptation_serv_compl/polite00A.pdf.

We suggest that both parents discuss their expectations regarding their child's school integration. What do you want for your child? Consider his strengths and needs and the services available at school.

To help you with this thought process, you can use the document entitled *Portrait of My Child* (Appendix I of this guide). It contains a checklist of questions that you can refer to in order to validate whether your choices or the proposals presented to you continue to match your goals.

There are several schooling options. No matter what your choice, it must be made in your child's interest. Every child is unique and any decision concerning him must take his specificities into account.

Mainstreaming is not always the option chosen. Many children with disabilities receive their education in special classes or specialized schools.

The Office will respect your decision and support you no matter the educational environment chosen.

DO YOU KNOW THAT...

...an Office adviser can assist with the process of finding the right educational environment for your child?

>>> QUÉBEC'S EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR PRESCHOOL-, ELEMENTARY- AND SECONDARY-AGE CHILDREN

The Office encourages you, as parents, to commit actively to your children's success in school throughout their education. It is important that you assert their needs and be part of the decisions that concern them. To do this, it is useful to acquaint yourself with how the school system is organized so that you know who to contact or the bodies in which you can become involved.

Québec's school system is governed by the *Education Act*. This system is based on three structures, namely, schools, school boards and MEES.

SCHOOLS

Schools have a vital mission—to impart knowledge to students, foster their social development and give them qualifications. To do this, schools must, in keeping with the principle of equality of opportunity, enable students to undertake and achieve success in a course of study. Schools are managed by a governing board and must hold an annual general assembly of parents, as provided for in the *Education Act*.

Governing board

The governing board analyzes the situation prevailing at the school, principally the needs of the students, the challenges tied to student success and the characteristics and expectations of the community served by the school. Based on this analysis and taking into account the strategic plan of the school board, the governing board must adopt, oversee the implementation of and periodically evaluate the school's educational project (*Education Act*, section 74).

Each of these steps is carried out in cooperation with the people with a stake in the school and student success. To that end, the governing board fosters the participation of students, parents, teachers, other school staff members and community and school board representatives (*Education Act*, section 74). It is composed of parents and staff members (*Education Act*, section 42).

Each year, the governing board must inform the parents and the community served by the school of the services provided by the school and report on the level of quality of such services (*Education Act*, section 83).

It is responsible for approving the programming of educational activities, proposed by the principal, which entail changes in the students' regular time of arrival and departure or which require the students to leave school premises (*Education Act*, section 87).

Furthermore, at the request of the governing board of a school, a school board must provide childcare for preschool and elementary school students, in the manner agreed with the governing board, on the school premises or, if the school does not have suitable premises, on other premises (*Education Act*, section 256).

The governing board is responsible for approving the school's success plan, and any updated version of the plan, proposed by the principal (*Education Act*, section 75).

The governing board is responsible for approving the **anti-bullying and anti-violence plan**, and any updated version of the plan is proposed by the principal (*Education Act*, section 75.1).

The main purpose of the plan must be to prevent and stop all forms of bullying and violence targeting a student, a teacher or any other school staff member. For example, it must include an analysis of the school's situation, prevention measures, procedures for registering a complaint concerning an act of bullying or violence and the measures to encourage parent collaboration. It is reviewed each year and updated if necessary.

DO YOU KNOW THAT...

... **bullying means any repeated direct or indirect behaviour, comment, act or gesture, whether deliberate or not, including in cyberspace, which occurs in a context where there is a power imbalance between the persons concerned and which causes distress and injures, hurts, oppresses, intimidates or ostracizes** (subparagraph 1.1 of section 13 of the *Education Act*)?

Annual general assembly of parents

The annual general assembly of parents is obligatory and must be held in the month of September. The chairperson of the governing board or the principal determines when the assembly will be held and informs the parents. This assembly is important because it is one of the only occasions where the parents of the children at the school have the opportunity to meet one another (*Education Act*, section 47). The governing board members are also elected at this assembly.

For information about the assembly, have a look through your child's school bag or on the school's website.

SCHOOL BOARDS

School boards comprise public schools as well as vocational and adult education centres and are responsible for the division of material, human and financial resources throughout their territory.

Every school board must adopt a **policy for the organization of educational services for students with a handicap or with social maladjustments or learning disabilities**. This policy must respect MEES's orientations in this regard.

The policy must include the following:

- > methods for evaluating the needs and capacities of handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities, with the participation of the parents of the student as well as the student, if he has the ability to do so;
- > methods for integrating these students into regular classes and school activities;
- > methods for grouping these students in specialized classes or schools;
- > methods for preparing and evaluating individualized education plans.

Your school board can provide a copy of the policy.

Council of commissioners (*Education Act*, section 143)

Every school board is administered by a council of commissioners composed of eight to 18 elected citizens. A school board's territory is divided into many sectors, each of which is represented by a commissioner. The council of commissioners is composed of the following:

- > three commissioners or, if the number of commissioners is greater than 10, four commissioners representing the parents' committee, at least one of whom is chosen from among the following groups:
 - representatives of elementary schools;
 - representatives of secondary schools;
 - parents of special needs students;
- > to qualify for the position of co-opted commissioner, the candidate must live within the territory of the school board and none of the disqualifying situations provided for in section 21 of the *Act respecting school elections* [C. E-2.3] (*Education Act*, section 143.0.1) must apply to him;
- > a commissioner who is active in the sports or health sector who is elected with a view to promoting consideration of healthy lifestyles in school board decisions. This commissioner does not have the right to vote (*Education Act*, section 148);
- > if all the members of the council of commissioners mentioned thus far deem it appropriate, there may also be a commissioner from groups most representative of the region's social, cultural, business, labour, health and sports sectors. This commissioner does not have the right to vote (*Education Act*, section 148), nor does the director general of the school board, who attends the meetings of the council of commissioners (*Education Act*, section 144).

Among other things, the council of commissioners approves the budget allocated for services to special needs students.

The 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 that the council of commissioners reconsider such a decision (*Education Act*, section 9).

PARENTS' COMMITTEE

Under the *Education Act*, school boards are obliged to form a parents' committee. (*Education Act*, section 189)

The functions of the parents' committee are (*Education Act*, section 192):

- > to promote parents' participation in the activities of the school board and, for such purpose, designate parents who take part in the various committees established by the school board;
- > to give advice on any matter conducive to the most efficient operation possible of the school board;
- > to inform the school board of the needs of parents as identified by the school representatives and by the representative of the advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities;
- > to give its opinion to the school board on any matter the latter is required to submit to it.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SERVICES FOR HANDICAPPED STUDENTS AND STUDENTS WITH SOCIAL MALADJUSTMENTS AND LEARNING DISABILITIES (*Education Act*, section 185)

School boards must form an advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities (often called the special needs advisory committee within the English school system).

This committee may be of particular interest to you, as it can offer its opinion regarding the services given to the students concerned, and more specifically on (*Education Act*, section 187):

- > the school board's commitment-to-success plan;
- > the distribution of student services among schools;
- > the admission requirements for students in the schools;
- > the school calendar;
- > school childcare services;
- > allocation of financial resources;
- > the school board's by-law concerning the complaint examination procedure.

The committee is composed of:

- > the parents of special needs students, designated by the parents' committee;
- > representatives of the teachers;
- > members of the non-teaching professional staff and support staff, designated by the associations which represent them in their dealings with the school board and elected from among the people who provide services to the students concerned;
- > representatives of bodies which provide services to special needs students, designated by the council of commissioners;
- > a school principal designated by the director general.

You can join the governing board, parents' committee or special needs advisory committee. The members are elected at the beginning of the school year when the annual general assembly of parents is held.

**You may attend the meetings of these committees.
Your child's school can provide you with information about these meetings.**

RESOURCE ALLOCATION COMMITTEE (*Education Act*, sections 193.2 and 193.3)

School boards must establish a resource allocation committee which must set up a consultation process with a view to establishing objectives and principles governing the annual allocation of revenues. In addition to student services, the committee may also submit the distribution of other professional services to the consultation process. At the conclusion of the consultation process, it must submit its recommendations to the council of commissioners.

The resource allocation committee is composed of no more than 15 members, including the director general of the school board, who is responsible for its direction. The majority of the members must be school or centre principals, with at least one principal from the following:

- > a school providing preschool education or elementary education;
- > a school providing secondary education;
- > a vocational centre or an adult education centre.

The person responsible for educational services for special needs students must also be on the committee.

MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION ET DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR (MEES)

The functions of MEES include adopting measures designed to contribute to the training and development of individuals, and ensuring the development of educational institutions and overseeing the quality of the educational services provided by those institutions.

MEES develops policies relating to the fields within its jurisdiction and proposes them to the government. It plays an important role concerning the education of children with disabilities.

For example, the purpose of the **Policy on Special Education** is to help special needs students succeed in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications. The basic orientation that must guide any intervention in the area of special education and that must bring all partners together is defined as follows:

To help students with handicaps or social maladjustments or learning disabilities succeed in terms of knowledge, social development and qualifications, by accepting that educational success has different meanings depending on the abilities and needs of different students, and by adopting methods that favour their success and provide recognition for it.

The policy is accompanied by an **action plan** that consists of concrete measures for intervening regarding special needs students.

All students must follow the **Québec Education Program** (QEP). This program aims to allow Québec schools to help students succeed in their personal, educational and career plans. Designed to provide a common-core basic education, the program hinges on the development of competencies by students, with the goal of using knowledge effectively in carrying out tasks and real-life activities. The QEP enables schools to help students deal with social change and participate actively in their learning.

You can find information about the QEP at:

www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/contenus-communs/teachers/quebec-education-program/

There are **educational programs adapted to students with moderate to severe intellectual impairments or a profound intellectual impairment**. These programs are designed specifically to meet such students' needs. They are not mandatory. Program choice must be based on the student's needs and abilities within the framework of the individualized education plan.

You can find information about these programs at:

www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/parents-and-guardians/programs-of-study

Codes

Codes are administrative information used by MEES to determine the funding allocated to each school board.

IMPORTANT!

Work is underway to review the funding method for services delivered by school boards to special needs students. This could mean that codes will be replaced by another formula.

NOTE THAT:

- > Currently, the budget allocated to a school board based on codes is granted for all special needs students within that school board. As a result, this overall budget does not contain predetermined amounts to meet the individual needs of every child separately.
- > Your child may receive services even if he has not been assigned a code. For example, a child who has behavioural difficulties but is not coded may receive complementary services.
- > Even if a code has been assigned to your child, it does not necessarily mean that he will be in a special class or specialized school (for more information about special classes and specialized schools, see the Typical Educational Pathway section).

Not all students with disabilities are assigned a code. Three conditions, defined by MEES, must be present in order to assign a code to a student:

1. First, a diagnosis must be made by qualified personnel. The diagnosis defines the nature of the disability or the disorder;
2. Next, the disabilities and limitations must hinder or prevent the student from learning the content of the QEP or developing autonomy and achieving social integration. For example, their perceptual, motor and communication skills are very limited, requiring individualized methods of evaluation and stimulation or the use of a technical aid;
3. Finally, support measures must be taken to reduce the inconveniences due to a disability or disorder, in order to enable the students to function at school despite their disabilities or limitations. For example, the teaching staff observes that a student has social skills that are underdeveloped and that he runs the risk of presenting inappropriate social behaviour.

In order to assign a code to your child, the school board's special education department puts together a file based on the child's situation. The file contains the diagnostic evaluation and conclusions drawn by a professional, the limitations or disabilities as well as the examples of the academic difficulties generally observed by the teaching staff regarding learning and the student's ability to function at school.

The file is then forwarded to MEES for approval.

There are twelve codes based on student impairment:
Code 14: Severe behavioural disorder;
Code 23: Profound intellectual impairment;
Code 24: Moderate to severe intellectual impairment;
Code 33: Mild motor impairment;
Code 33: Organic impairment;
Code 34: Language disorder;
Code 36: Severe motor impairment;
Code 42: Visual impairment;
Code 44: Hearing impairment;
Code 50: Pervasive developmental disorder;
Code 53: Psychopathological disorder;
Code 99: Code 99 is assigned exceptionally to a student under certain conditions.

For more information, see *Organization of Educational Services for At-Risk Students and Students with Handicaps, Social Maladjustments or Learning Difficulties* at:
www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/dpse/adaptation_serv_compl/19-7065-A.pdf

By adding up all the codes received from a given school board, MEES determines the bridge funding that will be added to the basic budget in response to special needs for the students in the school board's territory.

The organization of educational services for students with disabilities must be based on an individualized approach, in other words, in response to the needs and abilities of each student, whether or not he has been assigned a code.

>>> EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

The educational services offered to students include preschool education services, elementary and secondary instructional services, student services and special services. Preschool and secondary services are governed by the *Basic School Regulation for Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Education*¹ (hereinafter Basic School Regulation).

The Basic School Regulation for Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Education is found at:
<http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/showdoc/cr/l-13.3,%20r.%208>

1 Basic School Regulation for Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Education, CQLR, c. I-13.3, r. 8.

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

Preschool education is intended for five-year-olds as well as four-year-olds who have a disability or who are from low-income areas. Its goal is to promote the overall development of children through the acquisition of attitudes and competencies that will facilitate their success as students and as individuals. Among other things, it enables proper development of motor, social and emotional skills as well as the students' understanding of the world around them and their ability to communicate. At the end of preschool, they transition into elementary school.

ELEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

The purpose of elementary instructional services is to promote the overall development of students and their integration into society through basic learning, which will contribute to the progressive development of their autonomy and prepare them for the level of learning required in secondary school (*Basic School Regulation*, section 2).

By means of these services, students gain knowledge, abilities and social skills that will be useful to them throughout their education.

SECONDARY INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

The goal of secondary instructional services is to further the overall development of students, foster their social integration and help them determine personal and career goals. The services complement and reinforce the basic education received by students so that they may obtain a Secondary School Diploma or other occupational qualifications and, where applicable, pursue postsecondary studies (*Basic School Regulation*, section 2).

Among other things, they enable students to develop their social and occupational identity.

Before your child's secondary studies are completed, you must work with him and the teaching staff to prepare him for the transition to postsecondary studies or active life.

It is important that you work with your child and the teaching staff to prepare him for the transition to postsecondary studies or active life.

STUDENT SERVICES

The purpose of student services (*Basic School Regulation*, sections 3 to 5) is to help students progress in their various types of learning. Offered to all students, their purpose is to provide the students with an optimal learning environment in order to ensure their success. These services are offered alongside preschool, elementary and secondary instructional services and are subsumed under four general programs:

- > support services designed to provide students with conditions that are conducive to learning;
- > counselling services designed to help students throughout their studies, with their academic and career choices, and with any difficulties they encounter;
- > student life services designed to foster students' autonomy and sense of responsibility, their moral and spiritual dimensions, their interpersonal relationships, as well as their feeling of belonging to the school and the community;
- > 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 .

These programs consist of various services that can be offered to students, such as:

- > services designed to promote student participation in school life;
- > services designed to educate students about their rights and responsibilities;
- > sports, cultural and social activities;
- > services in spiritual care and guidance and community involvement;
- > support services for the use of the documentary resources of the school library;
- > academic and career counselling and information;
- > psychological services;
- > psychoeducational services;
- > special education services;
- > remedial education services;
- > speech therapy services;
- > health and social services.

In addition to the services offered under these programs, students can also receive occupational therapy.

SPECIAL SERVICES

Special services are designed for students who, because of particular circumstances, require intake services and services providing assistance in learning French or home or hospital instruction (*Basic School Regulation*, section 6).

Home or hospital instruction is designed for students who are unable to attend school because they require specialized health care or social services. The purpose of home or hospital instruction is to allow students who are unable to attend school to achieve the objectives of the programs of studies (*Basic School Regulation*, section 8).

AGREEMENT BETWEEN MEES AND THE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SERVICES SOCIAUX (MSSS)

In 2003, MEES and MSSS entered into an agreement to ensure greater coordination and complementarity of the services offered by the education system and the health and social services network. The agreement fosters collaboration among the partners of these government departments. It enables better coordination of the services offered to young people and their families. It incites those who work with the young people concerned to exchange useful knowledge, information or resources in order to meet their needs.

This agreement covers all dimensions that foster young people's optimal development and encompasses the themes of health and well-being, prevention, rehabilitation, adaptation and family support as themes. The agreement concerns children age five to 18, young people with disabilities (within the meaning of the Act) age four to 21, as well as four-year-olds who live in a low-income area. These students are provided services as part of preschool education and elementary and secondary education in the public and private school system.

>>> COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

In accordance with the *Education Act*, children must attend school until age 16 or until the end of a school year in which they obtain a diploma awarded by the Minister, whichever occurs first (*Education Act*, section 14).

Children are allowed to attend school until 18 years of age, or 21 years of age in the case of a person with a disability within the meaning of the Act (*Education Act*, section 1).

Exemptions

Under section 15 of the *Education Act*, the following children are exempt from compulsory school attendance:

- > a student excused by the school board by reason of illness or for the purpose of receiving medical treatment or care required by his state of health;
- > a student excused by the school board, at the request of his parents and after consultation with the advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities established under section 185, by reason of a physical or mental handicap which prevents him from attending school;
- > a student expelled from school by the school board pursuant to section 242²;
- > a student who receives home schooling and benefits from an educational experience which, according to an evaluation made by or for the school board, is equivalent to what is provided at school;
- > attends a private educational institution governed by the *Act respecting private education*³ or an institution whose instructional program is the subject of an international agreement within the meaning of the *Act respecting the Ministère des Relations internationales*⁴ which provides all or part of the educational services provided for by the *Education Act*;
- > attends a vocational training centre or receives instruction in an enterprise that meets the conditions determined by the Minister in a regulation under paragraph 7 of section 111 of the *Act respecting private education*.

Unless they are exempt, children age 6 to 16 must attend school. If they are absent and they have not been excused from attending, a report could be made to the director of youth protection. The school principal must make a report after notifying the parents in writing (*Education Act*, section 18).

School boards may, at the request of the parents of a student, exempt him from compulsory school attendance for one or more periods totalling not more than six weeks in any school year, to allow him to carry out urgent work.

The school calendar for students consists of the equivalent of a maximum of 200 days, **at least 180 of which must be devoted to educational services.**

² *Education Act*, section 242: A school board may, at the request of the principal and for just and sufficient cause, and after giving the student and his parents an opportunity to be heard, enroll him in another school or expel him from its schools; in the latter case, it shall inform the director of youth protection.

³ *Act respecting private education*, CQLR, c. E-9.1.

⁴ *Act respecting the Ministère des Relations internationales*, CQLR, c. M-25.1.1.

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

Preschool education for four- or five-year-olds is not obligatory, however, it prepares them for school.

Any child with a disability or living in a low-income area, who reaches the age of 4 before October 1 of the current school year and whose parents have made an application, is admitted to preschool education (*Basic School Regulation*, section 12).

Not all schools offer preschool for four-year-olds. You can contact your local school to find out if it offers this service.

For a student with a disability and a student living in a low-income area admitted to **four-year-old preschool**, the week consists of a **minimum of 11 hours and 45 minutes** devoted to educational services, unless the school board, to the extent and the conditions determined by the Minister, grants them an exemption (*Basic School Regulation*, section 17).

The *Basic School Regulation for Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Education* is found at:

<http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/showdoc/cr/l-13.3,%20r.%208>

A student enrolled in **preschool for five-year-olds** is entitled to receive a **minimum of 23 hours and 30 minutes** devoted to educational services (*Basic School Regulation*, section 17).

All students have a minimum of 50 minutes for lunch every day, in addition to the prescribed time for educational services. Elementary students also have recess in the morning and in the afternoon, in addition to the prescribed time (*Basic School Regulation*, section 17).

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

A child who reaches the age of 6 before October 1 of the current school year must be admitted to elementary education. As of that age, school attendance is compulsory (*Basic School Regulation*, section 12).

For **elementary education** students, the week contains a **minimum of 25 hours** devoted to educational services (*Basic School Regulation*, section 17).

For elementary education, the school principal may, exceptionally, in a student's interest, allow the student to remain in the same class for a second year if, from the student's individualized education plan, it is evident that such a measure is, among possible measures, most likely to facilitate the student's academic progress (*Basic School Regulation*, section 13.1).

SECONDARY EDUCATION

For the secondary education student, the week consists of a **minimum of 25 hours** devoted to educational services. The student also has a minimum of 50 minutes for lunch and 5 minutes between each teaching period, in addition to the prescribed time (*Basic School Regulation*, section 18).

>>> **ROLE OF THE VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL TEAM**

There are numerous members of the school team, each with his own crucial and often complementary role, who work to support student success.

A list of the various staff and a brief description of their respective roles follows:

As parents, you may be called on to cooperate with certain members of the school team, depending on your child's needs. So that you are familiar with the assistance available for your child and to understand his learning environment, it is important that you be familiar with these roles. These people may be present when the child's individualized education plan is being drafted.

Some services are not necessarily available in all schools.

DO YOU KNOW THAT...

...you can be accompanied or supported by an integration adviser from the Office for meetings about drafting your child's individualized education plan?

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

The school administration manages the school's human, material and financial resources. They have a significant influence on school life in general. Among other things, they support and advise their teaching and non-teaching staff and anyone else who works within their school. In addition, they support the governing board. These administrators are obliged to organize meetings concerning the individualized education plans of students with disabilities. They must establish sound collaboration between the school, parents and the community.

CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Classroom teachers play a very important role. Among other things, they ensure that a good relationship develops with students and establish an environment conducive to the students' integration. They are attentive to the difficulties students are experiencing and keep parents informed about their children's progress. They adapt their teaching practices and, at times, their evaluation methods. They apply the measures set out in the students' individualized education plans.

SPECIALIZED TEACHERS

These teachers usually specialize in a single subject, such as art, music, English or physical education. They should be sensitive to students' needs and adapt their interventions accordingly. To ensure consistency regarding a student's learning and behaviours, they are in contact with the student's classroom teacher. They inform parents about their child's progress, mainly in the context of report card meetings.

RESOURCE TEACHERS

Resource teachers screen, identify and evaluate learning difficulties or disabilities. They provide support for the teaching staff, parents and the other school team members. They plan interventions and educational activities to help students experiencing difficulties. They work with students individually or in small groups. Sometimes they work directly in the classroom.

PSYCHOEDUCATORS

Psychoeducators work with students with maladjustments or behavioural disorders. To assist these students and their teachers, they screen, evaluate and provide support. They work with students individually or in small groups. They may also go into the classroom to observe or moderate activities with a view to developing the students' social skills.

PSYCHOLOGY STAFF

The psychology staff carry out screening, prevention and evaluation of problems related to learning, motivation, behaviour or students' general development. They work with the school team, parents and school partners to respond adequately to student needs.

SPEECH THERAPISTS

Speech therapists specialize in human communication. They evaluate and treat language impairments by teaching students means and strategies to improve their communication. They organize individual or group meetings aimed at helping these students. They also help students who were born deaf, who became deaf, or who are hearing-impaired.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

Occupational therapists specialize in student development. They screen for particular difficulties that affect students' ability to function in class and analyze the causes. These difficulties may consist of problems with coordination and dexterity in writing, with recognizing letters due to visual impairment, with recognizing shapes, or with the actions required for carrying out tasks. They intervene to help students develop their skills and meet the requirements of everyday school life.

SPECIAL EDUCATION TECHNICIANS

Special education technicians, also called special educators, act regarding special needs students. They help them develop skills that foster their integration into the group. They may be with the children in the classroom, help them with daily tasks and intervene in the case of behavioural problems or crisis. If they work in the classroom, they work closely with the classroom teacher.

ATTENDANTS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Attendants assist students with disabilities with their daily tasks at school. Among other things, they help them get from point A to point B, attend to their hygiene and ensure their well-being and safety. They are aware of the students' needs and inform the other members of the school team.

VISUAL LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Visual language interpreters work mainly with students who were born deaf, who became deaf or who are hearing-impaired. They are present in the classroom and help the students with everyday tasks. Their role is to convey these students' messages to the other students through speech or to transmit information from the other students to the students with auditory impairments by means of sign language.

SCHOOL CHILDCARE SERVICE COORDINATORS

The school childcare service coordinator has an important role to play in school childcare operations. Among other things, the coordinator sees to it that operating rules are known and followed and coordinates human, financial and material resources. Coordinators work with the school administration, inform parents about any particularity concerning their child, and enroll the students.

GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS

Guidance counsellors act mostly at the secondary level. They help students choose the career or learning profile suitable for their aptitudes, tastes and interests.

Guidance counsellors can be important resources as your child transitions from school life to active life.

EDUCATION CONSULTANTS

Education consultants inform and support school team members concerning the evaluation of learning, class management and teaching methods.

SPECIAL EDUCATION CONSULTANTS

Special education consultants act as resource persons for parents and the members of the school team. They coordinate all the services offered to students with disabilities.

Appendix III features a grid that might be useful to you for drawing up a list of all the members of the school team and education partners involved in your child's education, and their contact information.

Regional expertise

In some Québec regions, resource persons from regional support and expertise services in special education (specialized according to various client populations) form a team mandated to support the region's school boards and schools in matters of special education. They offer support and training regarding special needs interventions. They do not work directly with students and their parents but instead with school board personnel.

To find out whether such expertise exists in your region, contact your school board.

>>> RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

To guide and support your children in their education, it is important that you know their rights and yours. It is also useful to have an idea of certain duties and obligations of the teaching staff, the school administration and the school board.

Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms

According to the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms⁵ (hereinafter the Charter):

Every person has a right to full and equal recognition and exercise of his human rights and freedoms, without distinction, exclusion or preference based on race, colour, sex, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, a handicap or the use of any means to palliate a handicap.

Discrimination exists where such a distinction, exclusion or preference has the effect of nullifying or impairing such right. (Charter, section 10)

Every person has a right, to the extent and according to the standards provided for by law, to free public education. (Charter, section 40)

STUDENTS' RIGHTS

According to the *Education Act*, every child is entitled:

- > to preschool education as of age 4 and elementary and secondary instructional services until age 21, if he is recognized as being a “handicapped student” (*Education Act*, section 1 and *Basic School Regulation*, section 12);
- > to other educational services, student services and special educational services offered by the school board (*Education Act*, section 1);
- > to participate in the planning of his individualized education plan, if he is able to do so (*Education Act*, section 96.14);
- > that every decision that concerns him be made in his best interest (*Education Act*, sections 64, 71, 96.12, 96.18, etc.).

PARENTS' RIGHTS

Parents have the right:

- > to choose, every year, the school that best reflects their preference from among the schools of the school board whose jurisdiction the student comes under that provide services to which the student is entitled (*Education Act*, sections 4 and 239);

⁵ *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, CQLR, c. C-12.

- > to request the revision of a decision concerning their child (*Education Act*, section 9);
- > to be informed about their child's school experience (*Basic School Regulation*, section 29);
- > to participate in the planning, implementation and periodical evaluation of the school's educational project (*Education Act*, section 36.1);
- > to consult all the personal files concerning their child and cause the rectification of inaccurate or incomplete information (*Civil Code of Québec*, sections 38 to 40, *Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and the Protection of personal information*, sections 83 and 94);
- > to be members of the governing board of the school that their child attends if they are not members of the school staff of that school (*Education Act*, section 42);
- > to be informed annually by the governing board of the services provided by the school and of their level of quality (*Education Act*, section 83);
- > to participate in the planning of their child's individualized education plan (*Education Act*, section 96.14);
- > if they are members of the advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities, to designate another representative as a substitute to attend and vote at meetings of the parents' committee when they are unable to be present (*Education Act*, section 189);
- > to be consulted when a school board intends to enter into an agreement with another school board for the organization of services offered to the student (*Education Act*, section 213);
- > to be heard by the school board before their child is enrolled in another school or expelled from his school (*Education Act*, section 242).

RIGHTS OF SEPARATED PARENTS

Even if custody is entrusted to one of the parents, the other parent continues to have parental authority. This includes the right to supervise the education of the child and participate in decisions made in this regard, unless, of course, the court rules otherwise. Should there be a problem, either of the parents may refer to the Superior Court (*Civil Code of Québec*, sections 604 and 605).

TEACHERS' OBLIGATIONS

According to the section 22 of the *Education Act*, teachers are obliged to:

- > contribute to the intellectual and overall personal development of each student entrusted to their care;
- > take part in instilling into each student entrusted to their care a desire to learn;
- > take the appropriate means to foster respect for human rights in their students;
- > act in a just and impartial manner in their dealings with their students;
- > take the necessary measures to promote the quality of written and spoken language;
- > take the appropriate measures to attain and maintain a high level of professionalism;
- > collaborate in the training of future teachers and in the mentoring of newly qualified teachers;
- > comply with the educational project of the school.

TEACHERS' RIGHTS

According to section 19 of the *Education Act*, teachers have the right to:

- > govern the conduct of each group of students entrusted to their care;
- > select methods of instruction corresponding to the requirements and objectives fixed for each group or for each student entrusted to their care;
- > to select the means of evaluating the progress of students entrusted to their care.

PRINCIPAL'S OBLIGATIONS

According to the *Education Act* (section 96.14), school principals:

- > establish an individualized education plan adapted to the needs of the student, with the assistance of the parents of a handicapped student or a student with a social maladjustment or learning disability, the staff providing services to the student and the student himself, unless the student is unable to do so;
- > see to the implementation and periodical evaluation of the individualized education plan and inform the parents on a regular basis;
- > inform parents about the possibility of recourse to the school board's complaint examination procedure if the parent or student is not satisfied.

SCHOOL BOARD'S OBLIGATIONS

According to the *Education Act*, school boards are obliged to:

- > establish an advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities (*Education Act*, section 185);
- > establish a commitment-to-success plan, which must include the context in which it acts, particularly the needs of its schools, the main challenges it faces, as well as the characteristics and expectations of the community it serves, the directions and objectives chosen, the results targeted over the period covered by the plan, the indicators, mostly province-wide, used to measure the achievement of objectives, a statement of its objectives as to the level and quality of the services offered and any other objective determined by the Minister (*Education Act*, section 209.1).

In preparing its strategic plan, the school board consults the parents' committee, the special needs advisory committee, the governing board, the teaching staff and other staff members, as well as the students.

The parents' committee is consulted about the commitment-to-success plan and may make recommendations as to its content (*Education Act*, section 209.1):

- > ensure the consistency of the orientations and objectives of their schools' educational projects with the commitment-to-success plan and compliance with the coordination arrangements prescribed by the Minister (*Education Act*, section 209.2);
- > to facilitate the implementation of the educational project of each school (*Education Act*, section 218);

- > after consulting with the parents' committee, establish, by by-law, a procedure for the examination of complaints related to its functions (*Education Act*, section 220.2);
- > adapt the educational services provided to a handicapped student or a student with a social maladjustment or a learning disability according to the student's needs, after an evaluation of the student's abilities (*Education Act*, section 234);
- > adopt, after consultation with the advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities, a policy concerning the organization of educational services for handicapped students or students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities (*Education Act*, section 235).

After consulting with the parents' committee, every school board must establish, by by-law, a procedure for the examination of complaints made by students or their parents (*Education Act*, section 220.2).

School boards must be authorized by parents to:

- > have their child evaluated by the professional staff;
- > have a member of the professional staff intervene regarding their child;
- > share personal files concerning their child with another institution that is not within the school board's purview, except in the cases prescribed by law (*Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and the Protection of personal information*, sections 53 and 59⁶).

RIGHTS OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

School boards have the right to:

- > enter into an agreement, for the provision of educational services at the preschool level and instructional services at the elementary and secondary level, with another school board or an educational institution governed by the *Act respecting private education* or an educational body in Canada which provides educational services equivalent to those referred to in the Act (*Education Act*, section 213);
- > enter into an agreement with another school board, a body or a person for the provision of student services and special education services or for any purposes other than the provision of educational services at the preschool level and elementary and secondary instructional services (*Education Act*, section 213);
- > require from their educational institutions any information or document it considers necessary for the exercise of its functions and powers, on the date and in the form it specifies (*Education Act*, section 218.1);
- > ensure that the *Basic School Regulation* established by the Government is implemented in accordance with the gradual implementation procedure established by the Department (*Education Act*, section 222);
- > ensure that the programs of studies established by the Department are implemented (*Education Act*, section 222.1).

6 *Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and the Protection of personal information*, CQLR, c. A-2.1.

>>> ADAPTED MATERIAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES

There is a government measure to assist students at the preschool, elementary and secondary level. It consists of resources managed by the school board or the private institution attended by your child. It enables school boards and private institutions to provide the material and technological resources your child needs at home or in school for pursuing his studies. They may be:

- > a hand helper device, e.g. a pointer;
- > a visual aid, e.g. a large-print keyboard;
- > a desktop or laptop computer;
- > an assistive communication device;
- > repair or replacement of an assistive device.

Your child may also have access to adapted material and technical resources at school through a financial assistance measure from the government.

Feel free to talk to the school administration.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To qualify for these resources, students must meet certain requirements established by MEES, notably:

- > have a recognized functional impairment;
- > need special material or technological resources to pursue their studies;
- > be considered full-time students by the educational institution or receive at least 20 hours of instruction per month at the preschool, elementary or secondary level, excluding vocational training and adult education;
- > live in Québec;
- > be a Canadian citizen or have permanent resident status.

To qualify, applicants must not receive financial assistance for the same need under any other program or from any other organization.

>>> SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Your school board determines whether transportation for your child at the beginning and end of classes each school day must be adapted. For this reason, it is important to, at the time of enrollment, inform the school administration that your child has a disability.

Generally, school boards provide adapted transportation to children if they cannot use regular transportation because of their impairments. Transportation may be by adapted bus or taxi, depending on the degree of the child's mobility and the transportation choices made by the school board. In some cases, a companion may be needed. This service is subject to certain conditions. Apart from these services, school boards may also pay an amount directly to students to cover all or part of their transportation costs (*Education Act*, section 299). When this happens, parents must take their child to and from school themselves or find someone else to do it.

Student transportation provided by a school board before the beginning of classes and after the end of classes each day is free of charge. Where the transportation is provided under a contract with a public transit authority or with the holder of a bus transport permit, within the meaning of government regulation, the school board may claim from a student that portion of the cost of the transportation pass which corresponds to service in addition to service before the beginning of classes and after the end of classes each day (*Education Act*, section 292).

If parents choose a school within a school board outside their catchment area, their school board is not obliged to cover the cost of school transportation unless it has an agreement with the parents and their school board (*Education Act*, section 4).

The school board that organizes noon-hour transportation to allow students to have lunch at home may claim the cost for this service from those who choose to use that service (*Education Act*, section 292).

School transportation budgetary rules include a measure enabling school boards to acquire equipment and accessories costing more than \$1,000 required for the transportation of students with disabilities. This allowance is subject to the financial resources available.

For more information, see your school board's website or contact MEES's customer services by phone at 1 866 747-6626.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

The *Education Act* provides that school boards establish an advisory committee on transportation (*Education Act*, section 188). You can obtain information from this committee or contact it if you disagree with a decision about your child's school transportation.

If you are dissatisfied with the school transportation offered to your child, you can contact the following in the following order until you are satisfied with the outcome:

- 1. the school administration;**
- 2. the person in charge of transportation at the school board;**
- 3. the advisory committee on transportation;**
- 4. the review committee.**

>>> SCHOOL CHILDCARE SERVICES

As a rule, school childcare services are intended for the students enrolled in that school. The services may also accept students from another school or students with disabilities educated at a specialized private school under an agreement.

At the beginning of the school year, the school will give you a document describing the childcare service's operating rules.

It is important that you ask school childcare staff, as well as the school administration and the teaching staff, to inform you of any situation involving your child or any behaviour requiring special attention so that your child is provided with the best possible services in class.

To facilitate the integration of special needs students within school childcare services, *Intégration sociale des enfants handicapés en milieu de garde* provides customized support and advice on site. It travels to most regions of Québec.

More information is available at: www.isehmq.org (in French only).

SUPPLEMENTARY ALLOWANCE

MEES determines the amount of and issues a supplementary allowance to school childcare services that accept special needs students. The amount of the allowance varies according to the student's attendance and code.

SCHEDULE

School childcare services are offered to all students every teaching day of the school calendar. They have access to the service outside of class hours (morning, noon hour, where applicable and after school). In general, school childcare services are open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

In low-income neighbourhoods, school childcare services **may** be open to all students mornings and afternoons if the school offers preschool to 4-year-olds. School childcare services may also be open all day, especially during pedagogical days, March break and on storm days.

SCHOOL CHILDCARE FEES

School childcare services must be self-financed using government allowances and parents' financial contribution. Parents' financial contribution for a child who attends part-time must never exceed the fixed amount per childcare day for a child with regular enrollment. On school days, this contribution generally covers a maximum of five hours of childcare, including the homework period. On pedagogical days, the contribution covers a maximum of 10 hours of childcare.

Parents may be required to make a reasonable additional contribution for extra hours, based on actual supplementary costs incurred. This would be the case should the child attend childcare for a period exceeding five hours on a normal school day or more than 10 hours on a pedagogical day.

The maximum parental contribution does not cover the cost of providing food. Where applicable, additional fees may be charged for meals and school snacks. Special activities, such as educational and recreational outings on pedagogical days, may also require an additional contribution. However, in all cases, the additional contribution must be reasonable, taking into account the actual costs of the activities.

>>> **HOMEWORK ASSISTANCE**

At the elementary and secondary level, many teachers give their students homework and assignments to do after class hours. Usually, the homework and assignments complement what was seen in class.

It is hoped that at the elementary level in particular, someone will help students with homework and assignments. This person's role consists of supervising, encouraging or helping students when they encounter difficulties. Often the parents play this role.

Many schools provide homework assistance after class hours. There are also organizations that offer homework assistance, e.g. Alloprof.

At the beginning of the school year, ask your child's teacher or the school administration about available homework assistance.

**Feel free to get help with your needs and those of your child at homework time.
Certain resources are available at school or within your community.**

DO YOU KNOW THAT...

- ...cégep or university students also offer homework assistance?**
- ...secondary students in the international program sometimes have a few hours to offer as part of a volunteer project?**

>>> **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

There are various activities in which your child can participate outside of class hours, namely, extracurricular activities. For example, he could participate in sports, artistic, cultural, musical or scientific activities, depending on his abilities, aptitudes and interests.

Extracurricular activities can have a positive impact on your child, including:

- > facilitating his social integration;
- > developing his sense of belonging to the school;
- > fostering the development of friendships;
- > enabling him to develop values, qualities and aptitudes;
- > becoming a source of motivation for him;
- > enabling him to experience success;
- > fostering his self-confidence and self-esteem;
- > enabling him to change his routine, relax or expend energy.

**At enrollment,
find out about the
extracurricular
activities offered at
your child's school.**

>>> SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

During their schooling, children go through important transitions to which they must adapt every step of the way (e.g. the passage from preschool to elementary school and from elementary to secondary school). Adapting to these transitions might be more difficult for children with special needs. These transitions must be planned ahead of time in order to help make the child's school integration more successful.

Here are the possible school transitions:

- > the transition from early childhood to preschool;
- > the transition from preschool to elementary school;
- > the transition from elementary to secondary school;
- > the transition from secondary to postsecondary school or to active life.

GENERAL ADVICE FOR MAKING TRANSITIONS SMOOTHER

Here are some tips to help your child, and you as parents, to make the most of each school transition:

Define your expectations

- > Analyze your child's strengths, abilities and needs.
- > If they can do so, ask your child to define his strengths, abilities and needs.
- > Think about the idea of mainstreaming and the various schooling options offered.
- > Think about the environment that would best meet your child's needs (the school, schooling options and your schedule).

You can use the *Portrait of My Child document* (Appendix I of this guide) to identify your child's strengths, abilities and needs.

Plan the transitions

- > Get information about your child's new environment.
- > From the start, plan the actions and steps that will need to be taken.

Prepare your child

- > Ask him how he feels about this stage in his life.
- > Reassure your child as needed.
- > Describe the process of his arrival into this new environment.
- > Have your child visit the environment that he will be entering.
- > If your child will be going to a school, introduce him to the school administration, the teaching staff and the non-teaching professional staff.

Talk with the people who will be working with your child

- > Discuss your child's transition into this new environment with the school staff as well as with the partners that offer services to your child (e.g. childcare services, rehabilitation centre or community organization);
- > Request meetings to prepare your child's transition.

TRANSITION FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD TO PRESCHOOL

The transition from early childhood to preschool is a major milestone in the life of a child. It marks the beginning of school and of his journey through school. It is important that the transition be smooth. A well-planned transition, the participation of the various partners and proper monitoring of your child will make integration within this new environment easier for him.

It is recommended that you begin to gather information from the following people about your child's schooling as soon as he turns three:

- > anyone likely to work with your child, such as childcare or rehabilitation services;
- > the local school administration, the special education consultant or the school board's special needs advisory committee.

We suggest that you put together a file concerning your child that includes, for example, information about his strengths, tastes and habits. The school staff will better understand his needs as a result. This will contribute to providing him with services better tailored to his needs and to fostering better family-school cooperation.

If your child attended childcare before he began school, you could ask the childcare service to use the tool entitled *Portrait de l'enfant en vue de sa fréquentation scolaire : les interventions gagnantes en services de garde* « La passerelle » produced by UQO. The tool will provide a portrait of your child's abilities after attending childcare and the challenges to be addressed.

Preschool education (four- and five-year-olds) is not compulsory. This means that you can choose not to have your child enrolled. In such a case, it is important that you take steps to ensure the continuity of childcare services for your child.

You can use the document entitled *Portrait of My Child* (Appendix I of this guide) to help you identify your child's strengths, needs and interests or the model proposed by Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO) at: w3.uqo.ca/transition/carte (in French only).

The UQO document is available at:
w3.uqo.ca/transition/carte/materiel/SG_frequentation_scolaire_passerelle.pdf
(in French only)

In some regions, the various networks concerned have joined forces to introduce mechanisms for transitioning from childcare to school for children with special needs. Transition documents to be filled out by childcare services and parents are available. Feel free to ask the people who work with your child about these documents.

>>> SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Every year, the registration period usually begins at the end of the month of January and continues into the month of February. **Registration must occur before the March 1 preceding the beginning of your child's school year.**

As parents, you have the right to choose the school that you feel best meets your expectations and your child's needs.

Check your local newspapers or your school board's website for information about registration dates.

Every school has its own educational project that reflects its educational values and orientations. Some schools have special educational projects, e.g. geared towards the arts, music or sports.

However, the school board has the right to refuse your choice. It will base its decision on how its services are organized as well as on its registration requirements. For example, there may be accessibility constraints if a student requires a wheelchair.

Your child must be registered at your local public school, even if you want him to attend another public school. It may be otherwise if your local public school is unable to provide the services and adaptations required by your child given his needs, capacities and impairments.

However, if you choose a private school for your child, you must contact that school administration to find out how to register.

MEES's website has a tool to help you locate a school near you. Go to:
www.education.gouv.qc.ca/trouver-une-ecole/
(in French only)

When your child is enrolled, you must provide certain mandatory documents. It is important that you ask the school administration about which ones are needed.

MEETING WITH THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

If the school administration do not know your child, inform them about your child's diagnosis and special needs. It is possible, and even advisable, that the meetings to prepare for your child's transition take place during the registration process. Ask for an appointment with the school administration as soon as possible.

You may be asked to sign a form authorizing access to information about your child.

When having your child enrolled, remember to get information about:

- school transportation;
- childcare services;
- extracurricular activities;
- homework assistance.

You can ask that the person in charge of the school childcare service and the teaching staff be present during these meetings.

At this meeting, it is very useful to:

- > describe your child's strengths, abilities and needs;
- > communicate and explain your expectations and your choices concerning his educational pathway;
- > inform the administration that the child is assisted by other resources;
- > get information on the steps that the school will take following the meeting.

In order to prepare for this meeting, you may use the *Portrait of My Child* document (Appendix I of this guide).

>>> SCHOOLING OPTIONS BASED ON HOW A CHILD IS CODED

Before the start of the school year, the school board undertakes a personalized evaluation of the needs and abilities of your child and makes a decision as to his coding. In so doing, the school board makes sure that the services offered to the child are the most appropriate for his situation. This classification determines the type of class or school in which the child will learn. The main schooling options are a regular class, a special class with integration into a regular class, a special class in a regular school or a specialized school.

Schools boards must choose mainstream classes, with the required adaptations and support, as the first option for educating your child if this is in your child's best interest, that is, if it will facilitate his learning and social integration. On the other hand, if mainstreaming is not in your child's best interest, is an undue constraint or significantly undermines classmates' rights, school boards may then consider other possibilities. The code will therefore determine the group into which the child is to be placed.

REGULAR CLASS

In regular classes, students with disabilities receive full-time instruction within the school. They are part of the same group as other children of their age who do not necessarily have any impairments or specific difficulties.

The teaching staff should be sensitive to these students' needs and use the means indicated in their individualized education plan. The teaching staff can, for example, use differentiated instruction, offer the appropriate amount of help or adapt the child's work or evaluation.

Students may receive the complementary educational services they need, in special education, psychoeducation or speech pathology, for example.

In addition, students may be assigned a special education technician or an attendant to assist them with certain tasks or to help them get from one place to another, if need be. These measures allow the student to obtain the required help while being part of a regular class.

SPECIAL CLASS INTEGRATED INTO A REGULAR CLASS

This option allows the student to be taught in both a regular class and a special class, also called an adapted or resource class. The time spent in each class is determined based on the student's needs. For example, the student might learn basic subjects such as mathematics and French in a special class and all other subjects in a regular class.

SPECIAL CLASS IN A REGULAR SCHOOL

A special class in a regular school may be in a child's best interest. These various types of classes are designed for students with special needs. Some of these classes may group students with an intellectual impairment, a behavioural disorder or an autism spectrum disorder.

SPECIALIZED SCHOOL

There are also specialized schools where all the students who attend have special needs. The classes and services within these schools are organized based on the type of disability of the students admitted.

Your child's needs may change over time. He may be in a special class at the moment, but might be part of a regular class some day. By the same token, if mainstreaming becomes unsuitable for him, he may be referred to another environment that better meets his needs.

OTHER SCHOOLING OPTIONS

A school board may not have the resources required to admit children with disabilities and to meet their needs on its territory. In such a case, the school board can enter into an inter-board agreement. This means that the school board makes an agreement with another school board, organization or a person capable of offering these children the services they need for successful schooling.

Children can also be schooled at a centre, a hospital or at home if they are sick over a long period. These options are only considered as a last resort. Most students can be schooled in an ordinary class, a special class or a specialized school.

Regular or specialized private schools are another possibility. They are found mainly in the Greater Québec and Montréal area and you can expect tuition fees to be higher.

THINK ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S CLASS PLACEMENT

When you have been informed of the decision concerning your child's class placement, take time to think about it. You are not obliged to agree with the decision. Ask to visit the proposed school or class to see what the advantages and disadvantages may be. This way you will have a better idea of the environment.

Certain questions may also help you determine whether the placement satisfies your expectations and is suitable for your child's needs:

No matter what the schooling format

- > Is the proposed school in my neighbourhood or elsewhere?
- > What are the reasons for the decision?
- > Do I agree with the school's educational project?
- > What about school transportation?
- > What about school childcare services?
- > What reactions can I expect from my child?
- > What is the potential impact of this decision on my child's development?
- > Is the decision in my child's best interest?

If the decision involves mainstreaming

- > What assistance or services were recommended for my child?
- > Will these services be available at the beginning of the school year and will they be sufficient for my child to be educated, socialized and thrive as other students do?
- > What is the attitude of the teaching staff concerning the integration of my child within their classroom?
- > Do the teaching staff need specific training or information?

If the decision is to place my child in a special class

- > How many students are in the class?
- > What are their needs?
- > What approach do the teaching staff use?
- > What services will my child be offered and will they be sufficient?
- > Will there be times when my child will be in a regular class?

After this process, you may disagree with the class placement decision. If this is the case, see the section entitled **Your Recourse if You Disagree with a Decision**.

Whatever is proposed, try to determine the potential impact on your child's learning and socialization as well as on family life.

If the decision is to place my child in a specialized school

- > Which specialized school is being proposed?
- > What other choices are being proposed?
- > What services will my child be offered and will they be sufficient?

If the decision involves another option

- > What option is being proposed?
- > Why is this option being proposed?
- > Are their provisions for a return to a regular school or class?
- > If so, what is being done with a view to integration?
- > What reactions can I expect from my child?
- > What is the potential impact of this decision on my child's development?

>>> DRAFTING AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN

The individualized education plan is a document that serves to define a student's strengths and needs as well as describe the means that will be put in place to help the student in school. The information it contains shapes the interventions used with the student. It is a reference tool for parents and for the school's teaching and non-teaching staff. It is used in every school in Québec with students with disabilities or learning or behavioural problems.

CONTENT OF AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN

- > General information:
 - student's name and date of birth;
 - name of the school and the class attended;
 - date of the meeting;
 - the names of the people present and their functions.
- > Description of the child's abilities and needs in the following areas:
 - instructional (learning, subject areas);
 - social and emotional (relationships and interaction with others);
 - physical (vision, hearing, memory, language, gross and fine motor skills);
 - behavioural (autonomy, respect for rules and authority).

Your child's individualized education plan is important because it fosters his success in school. No matter the schooling format chosen, you will be called on to participate in drafting and following up on it.

For more information, see the template at:
http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/dpse/adaptation_serv_compl/PlanIntervention_Objectifs_a.pdf
and the reference framework at:
www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DGFJ/das/soutienetacc/pdf/19-7053A.pdf,
proposed by MEES.

- > Description of the student's needs. Everyone who attends the individualized education plan meeting works to define the student's priority needs.
- > Objectives to attain. To be effective, the objectives must be precise and measurable.
- > Preferred means. Concrete means are suggested for achieving the predetermined objectives.

NOTE THAT:

To be applied, the adaptations approved for the student must be indicated in the individualized education plan.

- > People in charge of objectives and implementation of means. For each objective to attain and means to be put in place, a person is assigned responsibility. This person could be a parent, teacher or someone who works with the student.
- > Timetable. The individualized education plan must include a timetable for achievement of the objectives.
- > Evaluation of results. This phase enables observed outcomes to be noted progressively.

Signing of the individualized education plan by parents is not mandatory.

School staff may apply the plan without parents' consent.

For more information, see the document produced by the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (CDPDJ) entitled *La signature par les parents du plan d'intervention en milieu scolaire*, at:

www.cdpedj.qc.ca/Publications/Signature_parents_plan_intervention.pdf (in French only).

PARTICIPANTS IN DRAFTING AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN

The school principal, with the help of the parents of the special needs student, the staff who provide the student with services, or the student himself unless he is unable to do so, establishes an individualized education plan adapted to the student's needs. The plan must be consistent with the school board's policy concerning the organization of services for students with handicaps and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities and in keeping with the abilities and needs of the student as evaluated by the school board before the student's placement and enrollment at the school (*Education Act*, section 96.14).

The teaching staff of the student as well as the people who work with him may attend the drafting meeting. Other partners involved with the child may also attend (e.g. a community organization or a private speech therapist hired by the parents).

The school administration cannot deny the right of parents to be accompanied by an integration adviser from the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec, who may also make representations pursuant to section 26 of the Act. Note that school authorities are obliged to cooperate with Office representatives (section 26.4).

If you would like to be accompanied in drafting your child's individualized education plan:

Office des personnes handicapées du Québec

Phone: 1 800 567-1465

TTY: 1 800 567-1477

Email: aide@ophq.gouv.qc.ca

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN MEETING

You may be invited to participate at one or several of the meetings concerning your child's individualized education plan.

A first meeting is usually held in September or October. Other meetings may also be held during the school year. The purpose of these meetings is to review the objectives and means indicated in the plan. **It is important to schedule the next meeting.**

BEFORE THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN MEETING

It is important to be well prepared for the individualized education plan meeting. Major decisions will be made about your child's education experience, decisions that could have a significant impact on his success in school.

- > **Put together a file on your child's situation.** Prepare a file which contains the childcare service's evaluation files, report cards, medical reports, the diagnosis and any other relevant information about your child.
- > **Develop a portrait of your child.** This information will be useful when presenting your child and his special needs to the people who will be working with him. It will help to better define which of his needs are a priority and to choose effective means for helping him.
- > **Determine your expectations.** It is important to know what you want for your child. It is just as important that, at the meeting concerning the individualized education plan, you convey your expectations to the school, the teaching staff and the people who will be working with your child.

You can use the *Portrait of My Child* document (Appendix I of this guide). It will help you put together a picture of your child for the individualized education plan.

INTERVENTION PLAN MEETING

- > **Attend the meetings.** As parents, you have the primary responsibility for your child's education. Your attendance at meetings to draft the individualized education plan is crucial. Your child should also attend if he can.
- > **Play an active role.** It is crucial that you share your knowledge about your child and give your opinion about his needs and the preferred means of helping him.
- > **Ask questions.** It is important that you have a clear understanding of your child's situation at school and of what will be established to help him. Everyone involved in the individualized education plan has a common goal— that of having the student progress. You should never hesitate to ask questions.

Once the individualized education plan has been produced, ask the school administration or the people who work with your child for regular updates on your child's progress. Feel free to request meetings to have the intervention plan modified or adjusted.

You have the right to ask for a copy of your child's intervention plan in order to keep track of actions undertaken at school. You can add a copy of the intervention plan to your child's file.

SUPPORT TO BE PROVIDED TO SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS⁷

Support for special needs students involves differentiation, pedagogical flexibility, adaptations or modification of anticipated outcomes in connection with QEP requirements.

The aim of **pedagogical flexibility** is to allow all students to perform the activities proposed in the classroom, and to progress with their learning in line with QEP requirements for their group class level. Pedagogical flexibility should be applied in all subjects as a means of promoting educational success.

Adaptations included in an individualized education plan process are designed to help students acquire and demonstrate the same learning as other students. The fact that they are stipulated in the plan also ensures that learning will be monitored.

A **modification** is included in the individualized education plan as a means of helping students progress to the best of their ability towards the learning set out in the QEP for the academic level of their classroom group. A modification involves reducing anticipated outcomes in connection with QEP requirements. Consequently, it may be useful to consider adaptations first.

It is important for students and their parents to be fully aware of the impacts such decisions may have on the student's educational pathway. Since the student is evaluated using modified expectations, a distinctive indicator will also be used to denote the fact that anticipated outcomes in connection with QEP requirements have been modified for the student, and the student's results will not be included when calculating the group average for the subject. At the secondary level, the student will not obtain credits for the subject in question, even if only one of the competencies was modified. This means that because of this modification, your child may not be awarded a Secondary School Diploma.

Appendix V features a table presenting the main differences between support in the form of pedagogical flexibility, adaptation and modification.

⁷ Québec (2014), *Information Document. Pedagogical Flexibility, Adaptations and Modifications for Special Needs Students*, Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 10 p.

>>> COMMUNICATION WITH THE TEACHING STAFF

Whether your child is in a regular class or a special class, communication with his teaching staff is very important. In general, the teacher is the person who spends the most time with him and is responsible for him at school. Sound collaboration must be established from the beginning of the school year.

Bear in mind that the key to collaboration with the teaching staff is communication.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

It is important that you participate in the meeting at the beginning of the school year. Your presence will show your child that you are interested and committed. In addition, you will learn more about the content of the curriculum, teaching methods, teaching staff expectations and class management and rules. You can ask questions or request details as needed.

If it has not already been done, ask for an individual meeting with your child's teacher to discuss your child's needs. During this meeting, together you can decide on a means of communication.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

It is important to keep in touch with the teaching staff in order to know how your child is progressing. This information can be exchanged via the school agenda, a communication notebook or by phone or email.

Teachers have their individual preferences regarding the means of communication with parents. Some use a code, for example, colours or symbols, or a reward system that is adapted to your child's needs. The means of communication may also inform you about how the day has gone.

For this means to be effective, you and the teacher will benefit if it is used regularly or when important information must be conveyed. This will make it possible to ensure that there is follow-up between the school and home and vice-versa.

Collaboration with the teaching staff is essential, but it is important to set aside time to talk to them about your child.

REPORT CARD

Report cards are a tool for communication between the school and parents. They enable you to keep track of your child's progress, especially concerning learning. If your child is capable of it, take the time to look at the report card together and discuss improvements, difficulties and challenges that await him.

Report card distribution often involves a meeting with the teaching staff. This meeting is important because it enables you to know more about your child's learning and behaviour.

Report cards and the meetings they involve should not be the only means of communication with the teaching staff. Interaction with parents should be more frequent when a student has special needs.

>>> SCHOOL-TO-ACTIVE-LIFE TRANSITION

The end of schooling and the passage to adult life poses special challenges for young people with disabilities. This transition to active life can be much easier if it is planned. This is the purpose of the school-to-active-life transition (TEVA) process.

This process is aimed at:

- > Helping the young person define his life plans;
- > Enabling parents to think about the vision of the future projected for him;
- > Foster the social and vocational integration of the young person within the community.

It enables the young person to:

- > Maximize his autonomy and development;
- > Develop a better understanding of his interests;
- > Be aware of the organizations and services available at the end of schooling in order to ensure continuity of services as he transitions to adult life.

Generally, as of age 16, or when they begin work exposure programs if these are a part of their educational pathway, students will be asked to identify their life plans and set goals to achieve them. Experience shows that the earlier this progress begins in the life of a student, the more effective and feasible the planning is. The school and community partners accompany these young people in this process and help them achieve their goals.

To begin a TEVA process for your child, you can discuss it with the school administration or with the personnel of a health and services institution, e.g. the rehabilitation centre where your child receives services.

As part of this process, the action by the school and the partners will mainly concern:

- > The social participation of these young people in the various spheres of their lives, e.g. work, esteem-building activities, further education, recreation, housing and transportation;
- > Preparation for adult life based on the young people's choice of community and changes in their social network at the end of their schooling.

**You can find TEVA tools, for example, “*La carte routière vers la vie adulte*” by the UQO at:
w3.uqo.ca/transition/tva/index.html
(in French only)**

RESOURCES

Throughout his life, your child will experience success but will also encounter difficulties that will involve you as parents. It is perfectly understandable that at times you feel ill-equipped to deal with the situations that arise. People or organizations can help you help your child on his educational pathway, including:

- > The school system;
- > Health and social services network workers;
- > The Office des personnes handicapées du Québec;
- > Organizations and associations for the parents of children with disabilities;
- > Private sector professionals.

If you need to be accompanied in helping your child on his educational pathway:

Office des personnes handicapées du Québec

Phone: 1 800 567-1465

TTY: 1 800 567-1477

Email: aide@ophq.gouv.qc.ca

YOUR RECOURSE IF YOU DISAGREE WITH A DECISION

It may happen that you disagree with a decision concerning your child, e.g. class placement or individualized education plan.

SUGGESTED ACTION

1. If the action or decision that you disapprove of concerns the teaching staff or some other school worker, go directly to that person. Explain what it is that you disagree with and tell the person why.
2. If the situation does not improve, or the decision does not concern the teaching staff or a school worker, approach the school administration. Explain your point of view and defend it.
3. Following this, you may contact your school board's special needs consultant or one of the following committees: parents' committee, special needs advisory committee and the advisory committee on transportation.

Bear in mind that Office des personnes handicapées du Québec advisors can accompany you throughout the process.

The special needs advisory committee is involved in any question concerning students with disabilities or with social maladjustments or learning disabilities. It may provide you with invaluable assistance.

Ask your school board for the contact information for the special needs advisory committee.

4. If the preceding steps are not satisfactory, contact the secretary general of the school board. Under the *Education Act*, you are allowed to ask the council of commissioners to review a decision (*Education Act*, sections 9 to 12).
5. If you disagree with the decision of the council of commissioners, contact your school board's student ombudsman.

DO YOU KNOW THAT...

...school boards have a complaint examination procedure? Have a look at it.

Within 30 days after a complaint is referred, the student ombudsman must give the council of commissioners an opinion on the merits of the complaint and recommend any appropriate corrective measures (*Education Act*, section 220.2).

Ask your school board for the contact information for the student ombudsman.

If you have reason to believe that your child is a victim of discrimination due to a disability, you can contact the CDPDJ, which may, after investigating, file a complaint with the Human Rights Tribunal.

6. As a last resort, you may approach other tribunals on your own. However, this step may prove complex and costly.

DO YOU KNOW THAT...
...you can get advice or be accompanied by an Office integration adviser for this process?
...it is best to use the Office's services at the very beginning of the process so as to find solutions in your child's best interest with the people concerned?

APPENDIX I

PORTRAIT OF MY CHILD

To introduce your child to the administration of the school where you would like him to be educated, we suggest that you draw up a document that will let them get to know him as a person and not just as a diagnosis. To help you with this, please read the following by Jean-François Martin, the father of Karl, a student with Down's syndrome. It includes a series of questions to help you provide an overview of your child. Feel free to include photos of your child in different situations, e.g. with friends at his childcare service or while playing.

A WORKING DOCUMENT ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S PERSONALITY

By Jean-François Martin

Note: Reproduction of the text was authorized by Jean-François Martin.

When it came time to mainstream Karl, I felt that it might be helpful to have a short document explaining Down's syndrome while describing Karl's personality. I gave it some thought, and, after some time, I came up with a document that I feel will make a huge difference in Karl's file with the school board.

You don't have to be Shakespeare to write this type of document. Granted, identifying your child's characteristics will require some thought, but if you use the format I suggest for creating your working document, it will make the task easier for you. The important thing is to keep the document short and concise because the people at the school board will not be inclined to read a document that looks something like a university thesis.

It is important to remain honest and to not hide important information about your child, even if it could play against him in terms of mainstreaming. The school has to have an accurate portrait of your child in order to assess the support that the people involved in your child's schooling will need. It is likely that pretending that your child does not need diapers when it is not true will be a major misstep when the teacher is faced with an "accident" in class. Your credibility as a parent will be damaged and chances are that the teacher will not take kindly to you, and rightly so. Your child's integration will get off on the wrong foot.

To make the document more interesting, I have written it with Karl as the narrator. He introduces himself and discusses the points about which I want to provide information. If you want a copy of the document I put together for Karl or would like to see it, you can contact the Regroupement pour la trisomie 21 at www.trisomie.qc.ca (document in French only). Afterwards, all you will have left to do is to make it personal and, when you are finished, run it by someone outside the family.

This is the information the document should contain:

The child's personality traits

Here your child's qualities and shortcomings are indicated so that the people involved can have as accurate a picture as possible of him. To do this, feel free to talk to your friends, neighbours or family members and ask them to describe your child as they see him. This will allow you to have a portrait that is that much more accurate because, as parents, we tend to only see the good things! On the other hand, you do not have to use everything they say. Be careful to take the comments that are significant and leave the rest.

Knowledge acquired so far

Ask the following question: "What can my child do?" Can he remain concentrated during play? Get dressed without help? Recognize colours? All this information is important because it enables a brief assessment of the child's abilities. If your child receives services from a rehabilitation centre or attends a childcare service, ask the special educator for help completing this section. The annual evaluation that the special educator produces will provide you with extra information.

The child's means of communication

Communication is often problematic for many children. With some diagnoses, people sometimes tend to think that the children are non-verbal. This means that it is up to you to break down this prejudice by showing them the means used by your child to communicate. For example, if your child uses sign language, reassure the people who will be working with your child by telling them that they will be given a sign language manual or someone will give them tools to help them have a better grasp of this means of communication. Remind them of certain basic concepts of communication.

The time spent in a childcare service

This is one of the most important sections of the document. The years spent by your child in a childcare service will be instrumental in his admission to a regular class. One of the frequent arguments for refusing to admit a child into a regular class is his inability to function within a group. The point will be made that the teacher cannot take care of your child constantly, which means that your child will have to have a certain amount of autonomy within a group. In a childcare service, your child will have learned to function in a group and moreover, will have developed several social skills. It is therefore up to you to highlight this important information by including the annual reports from the childcare service or by asking for a short report from the childcare educator or the person in charge of the childcare service.

What you expect from the school

One of the fears of educators is to be unable to meet parents' expectations regarding their child's success in school. Your child may be able to complete the same program as the other children, but may not be able to either. You must spell out your expectations regarding what you want your child to learn academically and socially. Furthermore, the teachers must see these expectations as being realistic. The social and educational competencies that your child will be aiming for will be adapted to him. It is therefore crucial to mention them in this section so that everyone is on the same page.

Your child's support needs

Based on the section about your child's knowledge, you can try to imagine what your child's needs may be if he is to function properly within a regular class. Again, do not try to underplay your child's actual needs, but instead present reality as it is by describing all of the situations in which your child can function on his own.

Information about the diagnosis

Certain people may need information about your child's diagnosis. Remember that when you received your child's diagnosis, you needed to know more. It is important to meet this need to avoid creating or maintaining prejudices. This section may seem slightly more technical, but you can always make it less so by consulting books or websites of associations that represent people with this diagnosis. The important thing is to make sure that your document is not too long and that readers will be able to learn important tips that can be transferred to the classroom.

PORTRAIT OF MY CHILD

Name: _____

Strengths:

What is my child good at (sports, arts, working with his hands)?

Preferences:

What does my child like?

What does my child dislike?

Habits:

How are things at home (sleeping habits, eating habits, homework)?

Needs:

What helps my child?

Difficulties:

What does my child find difficult?

.....

Motor development:

How are my child's gross motor skills (running, walking)?

How are my child's fine motor skills (writing, tracing, cutting)?

Cognitive development:

What school subjects does my child find easy?

What school subjects does my child have difficulty with?

Communication:

How does my child respond to instructions?

How does my child express his emotions and needs?

How does my child express himself verbally?

Interaction with others:

How does my child relate to others?

What is my child's personality like (solitary, sociable, shy, etc.)?

Behaviour:

Does my child ever show aggressive or angry behaviours? When?

Is my child still or active? When?

Other information:

Here are my child's accomplishments:

APPENDIX II

CALENDAR FOR ACTIONS WITH A VIEW TO SCHOOLING MY CHILD

TO HELP YOU WITH THE PROCESS,
REFER TO THE SUGGESTED SECTIONS AND TOOLS IN PARENTHESES ()

<p>The year before my child begins school</p>	<p>I think about the question of mainstreaming my child. (School integration)</p> <p>I think about the question of the transition from childcare to preschool. (Transitions)</p> <p>I get information about the schools in my school board. (Schooling options)</p> <p>I choose the school that best meets my child's needs. (School enrollment)</p>	<p>Notes:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>In January and February before my child begins school</p>	<p>I hand in my application for the special needs allowance to the school administration.</p> <p>If my child is attending a childcare service, I ask for a detailed evaluation of his integration before school begins.</p> <p>I enroll my child at the local school (before March 1). (School enrollment)</p> <p>The school board evaluates my child. I make sure to participate. (Coding)</p> <p>I make sure that my child is registered for school transportation.</p>	<p>Notes:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>From March to May in the school year</p>	<p>I plan for my child's transition to preschool. (Transitions)</p> <p>I foresee means for facilitating my child's integration.</p> <p>I make the teaching staff aware of my child's special needs. (Portrait of My Child)</p> <p>In some school boards, the individualized education plan is drafted in April. (Individualized education plan)</p>	<p>Notes:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

**TO HELP YOU WITH THE PROCESS,
REFER TO THE SUGGESTED SECTIONS AND TOOLS IN PARENTHESES**

<p>From June to August (summer holiday)</p>	<p>I prepare my child to begin school. I motivate him. I prepare his brothers and sisters who already attend school. In August, I establish a routine to prepare my child for a school schedule. I make sure that everything is ready for the beginning of the school year (the transition, communication). <i>(Transitions)</i></p>	<p>Notes:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>In August before my child begins school</p>	<p>I inform the school administration that my child will be attending the school. I brief them on my child's strengths and needs. <i>(Portrait of My Child)</i> I get ready to draft my child's individualized education plan. <i>(Individualized education plan)</i> I make sure that the school administration will invite me to participate in the individualized education plan. I offer my collaboration. <i>(Contact information)</i> I pick out the committees which I would like to join. I take into account the fact that I can also be on the governing board. <i>(How the school system is organized)</i> I get the required school supplies for my child (the school provides a list of school supplies).</p>	<p>Notes:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>In September when my child begins school</p>	<p>I suggest that my child's individualized education plan be drawn-up within a reasonable time, if it has not already been done. <i>(Contact information)</i> I attend the annual general assembly of parents. <i>(How the school system is organized)</i> I attend the first parents' meeting with my child's teacher. <i>(Communication with the teacher)</i></p>	<p>Notes:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>During the school year</p>	<p>I regularly ask the school administration or other staff members about how my child is progressing. <i>(Contact information)</i> I request adjustments to the individualized education plan as needed. <i>(Individualized education plan)</i> <i>(Contact Information)</i></p>	<p>Notes:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

APPENDIX III

CONTACT INFORMATION OF THE STAFF AND PARTNERS INVOLVED IN MY CHILD'S SCHOOLING

	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
School administration			
Classroom teacher			
Specialized teacher Subject: _____			
Specialized teacher Subject: _____			
Resource teacher			

	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
Psychoeducator			
Psychologist			
Speech therapist			
Occupational therapist			
Special education technician			
Attendant for students with disabilities			
Visual language interpreter			
Childcare service coordinator			

	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
Guidance counsellor			
Education consultant			
Special education consultant			
Chairperson, special needs advisory committee			
Chairperson, parents' committee			
Chairperson, governing board			
Person in charge of school transportation			
Rehabilitation centre worker			

	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
<p>Integration advisor, Office des personnes handicapées du Québec</p>			
<p>Association of parents of children with disabilities:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>Association of parents of children with disabilities:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>Association of parents of children with disabilities:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			

APPENDIX IV

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN

Logo

Organization Location

*Éducation,
Loisir et Sport*
Québec

Individualized Education Plan

<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <small>Student's first name and family name</small>	<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <small>Permanent code</small>	<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> years old <small>Age on September 30</small>	<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> - <input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <small>School year</small>
<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <small>Father</small>	<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <small>Mother</small>	<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <small>Guardian</small>	<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <small>Title</small>
<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <small>Group</small>	<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <small>Type of path</small>	<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <small>Cycle year/Cycle</small>	<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <small>Year of attending school</small>

<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> - <input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> - <input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <small>Date opened</small>	<input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> - <input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> - <input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <small>Date closed</small>	<small>Revision-evaluation date</small> <input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> - <input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> - <input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
		<small>Next meeting date</small> <input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> - <input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/> - <input style="width: 95%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

Abilities

Needs

Objective

Date - -

Expiration - -

Types of intervention Means Means-adaptation Means-modification

Identification of means

Person Responsible

Comments

Signatures

Student

Teacher

Father

Teacher

Mother

Guardian - Title

Principal

Date

Host

Date

APPENDIX V FLEXIBILITY, ADAPTATION AND MODIFICATIONS

The following table is taken from the information document entitled *Pedagogical Flexibility, Adaptations and Modifications for Special Needs Students*, produced in 2014 by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SUPPORT IN THE FORM OF PEDAGOGICAL FLEXIBILITY, ADAPTATION AND MODIFICATION

Pedagogical flexibility	Adaptation	Modification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Allows the student to acquire and demonstrate the same learning as the other students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Allows the student to acquire and demonstrate the same learning as the other students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Allows the student to acquire and demonstrate the learning identified in the individualized education plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Meets a need that arises occasionally, or works in conjunction with an adaptation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Meets a need that arises in several different contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implemented in exceptional cases, to allow the student to progress in a different way than other Québec students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Planned by the teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Planned jointly as part of the individualized education plan process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Planned jointly as part of the individualized education plan process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implemented for a specific teaching period or for a specific number of activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implemented in the subjects for which the adaptation is needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implemented in the subjects for which the modification is needed
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Denoted by a distinctive indicator in the report card

Office des personnes
handicapées

Québec 