



**Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers**  
**l'Association provinciale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec**

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## **QPAT Brief on Educational Success**

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**Presented as part of the Consultation on Educational Success  
conducted by Sébastien Proulx, Minister of Education, Leisure and  
Sport**

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## **Consultation on Educational Success**

Educational progress has acted as the single most important factor in democratizing society. The massive gains made over time by all members of society in terms of their literacy, general knowledge and ability to interact with each other have been driven most notably by the development of widespread public education programs and the progressive liberal view of broad learning for all members in a society, where education possesses its own intrinsic value and is valued by all.

Quebec's own leap forward in education came during the Quiet Revolution, when there was massive investment in a public education system that had been greatly lacking. Education was opened up to everyone in society in a way that had never been done before. This led to vast improvements in literacy, continued studies beyond elementary school, and a general broadening of everyone's understanding of the world around them. Public education allowed for the vision of equality of opportunity, with the need to continue to work for that vision.

The successes and bold vision of the changes to public education from the Quiet Revolution have lost ground in recent years and decades; an increasingly technocratic and utilitarian view of education has taken hold in Quebec, as in other parts of the world. Education is being reduced to what can be simplistically measured without questioning the value of what is measured; the system is told to improve graduation rates without asking what value the various diplomas have, to improve the employability of individuals without thinking about how and where they fit in the system that exists and to do this while encouraging part of the population to separate itself from the rest in a parallel, but far from equal, system.

Fifty years after the Parent Report and twenty years after the Estates General, Quebecers are being asked again what they think needs to be done for educational success. This consultation covers many topics but is focused on specific means rather than an overall vision of what education should be. Before examining the individual topics, it is important to establish an overall vision of education first, and then evaluate the relevance or meaning of the individual measures that are proposed rather than examining small pieces without seeing the whole first.

## **A Liberal Education for all Members of Society**

The primary role of education is one of socialization. Here we must understand that socialization does not only mean the ability to interact with other individuals in one's immediate circle. Rather, socialization refers to the ability to have an understanding of the

world and people near to and far from us, to understand things in both the natural and the human worlds.

Such a broad mission requires an equally broad view of the learning that needs to take place in schools. A liberal education that is equally accessible to everyone provides the basis for this learning. The learning happens in many different areas of study so that students are exposed to many different ideas. Through the study of these different areas and subjects, students develop a diversity of skills, a wide range of knowledge, work methods and a critical mind. This learning will allow individuals to grow and attain their greatest potential as capable, contributing citizens of a democratic society.

Liberal education in a democratic society also embodies the value of equality of opportunity, where all members of a society have the same chance to develop themselves to their greatest potential. It also meets the goal of socialization by fostering this learning in a community-based school, where a student shares space and experiences with the other students from his or her area and is able to learn from what makes them both similar and different. Competition between schools is eschewed in order to focus on the learning of all students.

Ultimately, a liberal education is centred on broad, general learning and is not constrained to narrow, utilitarian functions. Specifically, it is not concerned with the need to produce workers; this is training and not education. Education seeks to develop well-informed and well-rounded citizens who are able to be life-long learners.

## **Area of Intervention 1: All students achieving their full potential**

### **Intervention starting in early childhood**

Early childhood intervention can have a positive impact on the long-term learning and educational success of individuals, particularly for students who come from socio-economically disadvantaged areas. This requires, however, the implementation of a range of measures, some of which lie outside the education system, specifically in the health care and social services networks and in the day-care system.

By the time students enter school, they have spent the first years of their lives being shaped by factors that will have an effect on their future learning. Support and stimulation during these early years give them the best opportunities to learn and be successful in school. When they are about to enter school or pre-school, it is important that the receiving school have the tools

it needs to ensure a smooth integration with the receipt of all the services necessary. Consequently, we recommend the following:

1. **Pre-natal and post-natal care must be promoted with early access to health and social services in English** – Early childhood nutrition and health care can have positive effects on later development. Consequently these services and the identification of those who may need them are important. The reality is that it is difficult to obtain these services in English, particularly as one gets further from Montreal. The places that offer these services, such as CLSCs, must be able to offer them in English to those who need them.
2. **The prior assessments from daycare must be recognized and made available to the receiving elementary school** – If a child has already had an assessment done during their time in daycare regarding specific needs or conditions, this information needs to be made available to the elementary school and recognized by it in order to ensure an immediate transition of necessary services. The more that these assessments are made available, the earlier the school can put in place appropriate measures.
3. **There needs to be a clear transmission of knowledge regarding students coming into the education system** – even when there is no assessment regarding a child who is about to enter school, there may be information that is relevant to the receiving school, such as observations from the daycare educators or general reports from the daycare regarding the child’s stay. This information needs to be shared with the receiving school. Mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure this transmission of information.
4. **The assessment and identification of students must happen very quickly once they are in school** – if there are delays in assessing and identifying students, this will lead to delays in providing services to them, which means that learning delays will accumulate thereby making it harder for the student to progress through school. There must be a recognition that an assessment can be carried out as early as kindergarten. In addition professional resources must be accessible to all English schools. There are significant challenges in finding these resources in English, sometimes even in Montreal; these challenges have been amplified by the budgetary cutbacks of recent years.
5. **The implementation of full-time 4-year-old kindergarten in socio-economically disadvantaged areas should continue with appropriate conditions** – there is significant evidence that quality early childhood education programs can have long-term positive effects on educational and life outcomes. However, to ensure that it is effective, the full-time 4-year-old kindergarten program must have the proper conditions in place:
  - a. Outreach needs to be made to the parents of children in socio-economically disadvantaged situations, perhaps through the CLSC network or services offered by the *Ministère de la Famille*, so that they are aware of the programs and aware of the potential benefits. In order to promote complementary services, the public CPE network should be expanded with proper financing to ensure that

- there is a greater harmonization of developmental learning among Quebec's pre-school children, something which private daycares cannot typically do;
- b. Students with special needs must be identified and the appropriate interventions must take place as quickly as possible to ensure a better integration of the student and a better impact on his or her learning (see point 4 above);
  - c. Professional development opportunities in English for teachers who request it need to be available to account for the fact that the program has been expanded and that some teachers who received the initial professional development are no longer teaching the course;
  - d. Maximum class sizes need to be reduced to allow for more interaction between teachers and students.
6. **The benefit, relevance and feasibility of expanding 4-year-old kindergarten to all students, not just ones from socio-economically disadvantaged areas, should be examined** – there may be benefits to expanding 4-year-old kindergarten to everyone, but this needs to be carefully considered before acting upon it.
7. **More human resources, particularly teachers and resource teachers, need to be added to the system** – the successful implementation of measures on early childhood intervention will require more people to work with these children. With respect to schools, this means teachers in particular. However, other resources, both in schools and in daycares are also needed; the effect of recent cutbacks in these areas must be reversed.

## **A response adapted to students with specific needs**

When talking about students with specific needs, the MEES consultation document refers to students with special needs and also asks about how to adapt to the needs of “gifted” students. It is interesting to note that there is no thought given to the average student. This kind of distinction and omission means that we will fail to serve everyone's needs. In fact, if the system sought to serve needs of all students, it would act very differently from what it does now.

Government policies have fostered a destructive competition between schools to attract students. This competition has resulted in a “beggar-thy-neighbour” approach, where some schools are trying to attract the best students, others are trying to attract the “best of the rest” and some schools are just trying to attract enough students to stay open. Subsidies to private schools are the first culprit; private schools can select their students and then receive a subsidy that is in theory 60% of the transfer that would be given to public schools, but is in effect closer

to 75% for high schools<sup>1</sup>. This money and these students are lost to the public system. The effective amount of money is so large that there is an incentive for private schools to try to keep siphoning off the strongest students. This loss of students hits the public sector hard; the natural leaders and role models among the students are lost and the positive impact they could have on the rest of the student body with them. In addition, their parents, who tend to be more involved and interested in school activities and school life, are also lost to the private sector. This makes it harder for public education to be valued when the message that is sent by the government is that it is willing to spend significant taxpayer dollars on private schools that choose their students. A school system that values a broad liberal education for everyone should ensure that all types of students are present in a school, particularly as the presence of stronger students will have a positive impact on all students and involve more parents.

In response to the growth in private school enrollment, a number of English sector public schools are trying to compete with them and have gotten into the selection game in an attempt to keep students in their schools. They select students based on entrance tests or through the use of selective programs, and some schools act as virtual private schools within the public system, further skimming students from among the strongest. These students are more likely to attend school outside of their community in order to have access to these programs. This leaves a smaller body of students for the remaining schools or regular programs, who then struggle to remain viable and to not be seen as “bad” schools. Frequently these selective schools also charge extra fees to parents in order for the students to be enrolled in the school or program, such as fees for IB programs or *Sports études* programs. The end result is one where students whose parents can afford tuition and other fees and who have academic strength can deselect themselves from the rest of society, leaving everyone, including themselves, poorer for it.

The other element of government policy that promotes this harmful competition is the results-based management approach that has been implemented in recent years. The imposition of artificial graduation targets has caused schools and school boards to become obsessed with finding ways to meet these targets. This has only further encouraged schools to try to develop selective or so-called magnet programs so that they can “improve” their graduation rate by trying, yet again, to skim the best students from one another to make it easier to meet their targets. In addition, the drive to meet targets fostered by the competitive mindset leads to other questionable pedagogical practices that have the effect of watering down or reducing the actual learning of students.

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<sup>1</sup> Champoux-Lesage, Pauline, Claire Lapointe, Marcel Leblanc et Diane Provencher, *Rapport du comité d'experts sur le financement, l'administration, la gestion et la gouvernance scolaire* : Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2014, p.128.

This competition becomes a vicious cycle that creates winners and losers before students have even finished schooling; as pointed out by the *Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation*, the Quebec education system is the most inequitable in Canada when comparing the learning gap between students from socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged areas<sup>2</sup>. This is anathema to the purpose of a liberal public education, which is to give the greatest equality of opportunity possible for all. The cycle of competition must be broken in order to better meet the needs of all students, whether they are gifted, average, or have special needs. In order to do this:

1. The MEES must abolish all subsidies to private schools and use public funds to support the public system only;
2. The MEES must eliminate the use of the results-based management approach, most specifically its use and imposition of targets;
3. The MEES must promote the development of community schools and eliminate incentives for competition between schools.

As for the proposal in the consultation document that private schools be mandated to take in a certain proportion of special needs students, there is no point. Experience has clearly shown that private schools engage in selection; they would do the same with special needs students. They would take those whose parents have means to support and pay for private services and the easier cases to manage, leaving, once again, the rest to the public sector with even fewer resources but still with all the students with the most serious needs. If the government truly wishes to eliminate the inequity in what private schools are doing, it should simply stop funding them.

With respect to special needs students, there is work that needs to be done in this area in order to provide better support and better direct services to them. These are the steps that need to be taken:

1. **The sums of money that have been cut from the system in recent years must be reinvested to increase the support services available in the public sector** – The cuts to education applied over a number of years by successive governments have led to school boards reducing direct services to students in classrooms and schools. These sums must be put back into the system simply to restore the situation to what it was some years ago. Over many years, there has been a dramatic reduction in the services that are available in many schools. There was a time when schools had psychologists, school nurses, librarians and other such resources that could help students. In many schools,

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<sup>2</sup> Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *Rapport sur l'état et les besoins de l'éducation 2014-2016 : Remettre le cap sur l'équité*. Gouvernement du Québec, 2016, pages 52-55.

these resources are no longer there. This has had a negative impact on students by reducing the services that are available to them.

2. **More resources need to be given to the English sector given its reality** – English school boards engage in nearly 100% integration and inclusion of special needs students. In addition, the French immersion programs in the English sector have led to the creation over time of de-facto streaming where a much higher proportion of special needs students are part of non-immersion or lower level immersion classes. To further complicate matters, the difficulties and challenges caused by this degree of integration and inclusion and the implementation of immersion programs vary from school board to school board and even from school to school. In this context, the English sector needs considerably more resources than what currently exists.
3. **There needs to be a longitudinal evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the integration of special needs students** – This evaluation is necessary as QPAT members perceive that the current approach of nearly 100% integration does not work everywhere; there are insufficient and often inadequate services provided currently and closed classrooms could have a beneficial impact on the students as compared to the current situation. Integration of students may be more successful in certain circumstances, but the situation that exists in English boards is so extreme that it must be properly evaluated. This degree of integration and inclusion creates situations where there is an excessive constraint on many teachers and students.
4. **The process to identify special needs students and the validation process must be simplified** – Currently, it can take many months for these two steps to be completed. These are months that the students in question do not receive the services they need since those giving the services have to expend considerable energy on the identification and validation processes first. Learning delays accumulate with these students, with the end result being that they fall further behind other students and their ability to keep up and continue learning is compromised.
5. **The category-based funding for special needs students needs to be maintained** – If funding for special needs students were no longer given by category, it would become harder to ensure that the resources were allocated to the students based on their needs.
6. **Research and analysis on why boys drop out of school needs to be carried out** – The proportion of boys that drop out of school is substantially higher than the proportion of girls that do. While some work has been done in this area, it is important to look at all the possible reasons why there is such a difference. The reasons are likely to vary depending on a range of factors such as differences between urban and rural areas, youth employment possibilities and socio-economic status. All of the reasons that emerge may provide guidance for policymakers.

## Guidance throughout schooling

Providing guidance to students regarding their educational pathways can have a positive impact on their motivation and on continuing their education. This attention to guidance will require that in-school resources are available to students and that a broader range of programs is offered to keep education more meaningful to all students. Guidance must also prioritize the needs and interests of the students, not the needs of businesses or economic sectors. More specifically to the MEES consultation, QPAT responds as follows:

1. **Individuals must have opportunities and be motivated to pursue their learning both before and after the age of 18 through an increased range of program offerings** – It is desirable for students to continue their formal learning to age 18 and beyond. However, it is not clear that compulsory schooling until age 18 in and of itself will improve learning outcomes. Rather, there must be a greater number of pathways and alternative and vocational options with resources to support and guide students in order to incite and encourage them to continue their studies. Such measures are needed even for students under the age of 16. For example, the alternative school system that exists in some school boards in the English sector seems to have promoted perseverance in many students over the years.
2. **Students must be able to transfer from one path of learning to another relatively easily without the undue pressure of having to make precipitous career decisions** – The true aim of the education system is, as indicated previously, to promote a liberal education for all. The ability to move between pathways of learning will support this aim by allowing students the greatest possibilities to continue their learning and develop further as democratic citizens. Too much emphasis is placed on education as being the tool for entering the job market as quickly as possible. Education should allow students to learn and discover new ideas without undue time pressures; this flexibility will allow more individuals to find out how they can best contribute to their own development and that of society.
3. **Resources will need to be added to provide guidance to students during their school years** – In order to help students navigate effectively through the different programs and options that are available, more resources, such as properly qualified guidance counselors, will need to be added. It is not possible to place even more expectations on the teachers in schools to do this as it is not their area of expertise.
4. **The transfer of information regarding students from one level to another must be ensured** – When students move from one level to another, notably from elementary to high school, information about the student is often not received or incomplete. This information sometimes has to do with matters regarding special needs students, at other times it may be information about a student's environment or reality. This

information is essential to the school or program that will now receive the student in order to help him or her as best possible. When this information is missing, it limits the receiving school's ability to help the student.

5. **Multi-disciplinary teams should not be created** – This notion is simply impractical. Teachers have been part of an ever growing number of committees that impinge on their time with even more expectations added all the time. There have been many new demands of teachers and their time in recent years. Their time is already stretched too thinly and this would only add to that burden. The problem is particularly acute in small schools, where there is already a limited pool of people from whom to draw for all the other work that goes on in the school. Such a committee would only add to this burden.

## **Quality of teaching and pedagogical practices**

The consultation on educational success leaves us with the impression that others may think that teachers are not well prepared or capable enough to perform their jobs professionally. QPAT categorically rejects any such notions. Teachers are well prepared to undertake their professional responsibilities. However, no amount of preparation or professional development will address the real issues that affect teaching and learning. Consequently, if the MEES truly wishes to support the teaching act, it must look at the issues around teaching. Specifically, the MEES must recognize the following:

1. **More resource teachers are needed to work with special needs students** – Teacher training programs should prepare all student teachers for a diverse classroom and the different kinds of special needs students that they may have, but this will not compensate for the difficulties that exist in current classrooms. As we have shown previously, the degree of integration and inclusion means that the level of diversity in classrooms is simply too large. Regular classroom teachers simply have too many diverging needs in the same class; this has made teaching so complex that no amount of training or professional development will overcome the problems that exist. More specialized resource teachers are needed to make sure that the special needs students have specific help, which will in turn help all students, both those with and without special needs.
2. **Data must be used carefully to inform practice, not determine it** – Data can be useful, but it can also be misleading, poorly analyzed, and misused. Currently, data collection has exceeded all reasonable bounds; it is being driven by the results-based management approach, currently embodied in the Partnership Agreements (PA) and the Management and Educational Success Agreements (MESA) that focuses on targets. This approach

leads to a focus on tests, a loss of teaching time and competition between schools. All of these are damaging to the system's ability to provide a broad education for everyone. The data collected is not always necessary and not always analyzed by individuals who even understand what it means and what its limitations are. Consequently, the focus on it must be removed as well as the results-based management approach behind it.

3. **Research regarding teaching and learning should be used to stimulate professional debate and reflection in practitioners, not to dictate a particular approach** – Teaching is not a formula. Yet, much of the drive of educational research and the adoption of purportedly research-based “best practices” often seek to reduce teaching to a formula. All research is limited by the context in which it is done and it is particularly difficult in education to truly account for all the variables that may apply in a given situation. This limits the ability to apply the results of research as is to any group or any individual student. Consequently, research should inspire, not impose.
4. **Policy decisions require research that offers a variety of analyses** – The point made above is repeated here: educational research is complex with many variables that are not easily extricated from one another. Consequently, policy decisions should be made based on broader analyses of certain questions, such as the research on why boys drop out of school, which we have recommended previously.
5. **The primary role of principals must be to provide pedagogical support to teachers and students** – The trend of recent years is for school principals to be paper-pushing managers who spend their time counting dollars and filling out forms and are pulled out frequently of their schools for managerial responsibilities; they have become increasingly distant from classroom realities and are now viewed primarily as managers rather than educators, both by the boards and, often, by themselves. This trend has to stop; a school that has a principal who can focus on how to help teachers and students is a school that has a better focus on learning, which will be better for all students.

The consultation also talks about recognizing the role and professionalism of teachers, yet it does not recommend anything that leads to recognition. In order to actually recognize the professionalism of teachers, QPAT recommends the following:

1. **The professional autonomy of teachers must be recognized by:**
  - a. **Giving teachers more flexibility and creativity with respect to curriculum**
  - b. **Respecting their choice with respect to pedagogy and evaluation**
  - c. **Not imposing methods, approaches, training that do not match their needs**
  - d. **Allowing for a lighter workload to improve collaboration**

- e. **Giving better control over workload and organizing their work, notably on pedagogical days**
- f. **Accounting for their opinions before any decision that may affect the teaching act**
- g. **Allowing more time to be part of school life decisions**
- h. **Better involving teachers in the development of policy decisions, both at a school and a school board level**

Teachers have had their professional autonomy increasingly constrained over recent years by actions taken by their school boards in response to ministerial policy and directives. School boards have imposed a considerable amount of training sessions on pedagogical days, usually without asking teachers about whether it was training that they felt they needed or was relevant. They have also imposed many practices that have directly affected a teacher's ability to manage his or her classroom, notably by imposing numerous time-consuming evaluations and tests. In the process, they have taken away time from teachers, particularly on the aforementioned pedagogical days, to discuss and collaborate with each other, to engage in professional development with each other and to plan. Further, teachers have had so many extra expectations placed upon them, notably of an administrative nature such as extra committees or more reports to fill out, that there is inadequate time for them to properly consider the matters that will affect their classroom or school life. Teachers need to be freed from these encumbrances in order to have the time to engage properly in meaningful consultations and discussions.

2. **The concept of a professional order or similar structure should be abandoned** – A college of teachers is not necessary since all the protective functions are already in place in the law; the minister has the power to remove licenses and the student ombudsman already exists. Further, teachers have indicated overwhelmingly in the past that they do not want it and the *Office des professions du Québec* has already indicated that it should not be put in place.<sup>3</sup> The existence of such a structure does not confer professional status or prestige; that is a question of the attitudes and values that are fostered within a society. Rather, a professional order would only be an unnecessary new level of bureaucracy.

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<sup>3</sup> L'Office des professions du Québec, *Avis de l'Office des professions du Québec sur l'opportunité de constituer un ordre professionnel des enseignantes et des enseignants* : Gouvernement du Québec, 2002, pp.65-66.

## **Area of intervention 2: A favourable context for student learning, personal development and success**

### **Importance of literacy and numeracy**

The promotion of literacy and numeracy at all levels of education is undoubtedly important, however it is equally important to ensure that the educational experience of students remain broad. We must not fall into the trap of promoting these elements to such an extent that other elements of the curriculum are sacrificed, such as the arts, physical education and other exploratory subjects; a number of jurisdictions have narrowed their curriculum considerably to promote language learning and mathematics at the expense of other subjects. This reduces the scope of broader learning for students. Literacy and numeracy must be important throughout the curriculum and also throughout the various sectors (youth sector, adult education, vocational education).

QPAT makes the following specific recommendations regarding literacy and numeracy:

- 1. The reality of the English sector requires a disproportionately greater quantity of resources to support students in both languages** – The long existence and expansion of French immersion programs has meant that English schools have valued the learning of both English and French for many years. The English system has promoted bilingual literacy for many decades. This is something that has been generally successful at producing bilingual students, but it comes at a cost that is higher than a system that is focused on one language. For example, there needs to be a wide range of reading materials in two languages that needs to be provided to the students. This difference in needs and costs should be accounted for.
- 2. A diversity of books and reading materials must be made available to account for differences among students** – In order to promote literacy, an interest in reading needs to be fostered with particular efforts made to reach those who have little interest in it, who are often those who have the greatest difficulty with it. In order to try to reach all students, reading materials that take into account the ages of students, their interests and their existing capabilities must be accessible to encourage them to read.
- 3. Adult education needs a maximum class size and human resources to support special needs students** – The reality of adult education is that an increasingly large number of students enroll in a program because they are young students who have been unsuccessful in the youth sector, frequently with learning difficulties. They then go from the youth system, where there has been a control to the number of students in a class

as well as the possibility of obtaining services for their special needs, to the adult sector, where neither of these exists, but their difficulties still do. They still need to be in groups where there is a limit to the number of students so that the teacher can work to meet their needs. There is also the need for more resources, notably for the creation of supporting teachers in adult education, to help these students.

4. **Funding must be increased for youth sector alternative schools and programs** – In many cases, adult education is treated, in effect, as an alternative school for those who are 16 years old. This is not really the intent of adult education. In fact, many students could have had their interest in school and learning better stimulated at an earlier age through the availability of other programs or school structures. Using adult education may be too late for them or may lead to lost learning time while waiting to be eligible for adult education.

## **Competencies in demand in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the growing presence of digital technology**

It is easy to overstate the importance and usefulness of new technologies in classrooms and schools. While it is clear that new technology is constantly being made available, there is also no shortage of individuals who see an opportunity to promote each new technology, often for their own interest, and insist that it will somehow be absolutely essential for the new learning of the future. Then, a few years later, after many dollars and many work hours spent on acquiring and using this technology, it either becomes obsolete or proves to be far less useful or significant than originally thought.

Clearly, the use of new technology in classrooms will continue to be a reality. However, given that the classic pencil and a piece of paper also constitute technology that can be effective for learning, there are three essential elements that must guide a philosophy regarding the use of technology in classrooms and schools.

First, it needs to be stated and understood clearly that the human interaction of the student-teacher relationship is the centre of the educational process; technology cannot replace this. As we have stated previously, the heart of the school experience is all the aspects of socialization that take place. Technology cannot replace these relationships nor replace this experience. In fact, an overreliance on technology can create distance between people rather than connections.

Second, new technologies can be useful tools, but they cannot be the end; too much attention on the technologies and trying to use them interferes with the overall purpose of education. In trying to justify the use of the technology, the packaging of teaching and learning may look

pretty but the package is largely empty. There are many bright lights and noises, but not much meaningful learning.

Third, in support to the previous two guiding notions, there is a need for ongoing critical reflection about the appropriate and effective use of technology in education. It is too easy for obsolescence to happen quickly after large sums of money have been invested. It is also too easy for flavour of the month ideas to come and go. In order to avoid these issues, there needs to be a coherent and impartial analysis as to the real impact of a technology on learning before we rush to try to use it.

In addition to the overall view that we have outlined above, there are practical everyday concerns that need to be addressed when it comes to the use of technology in schools:

1. **Teachers must be able to determine whether to use a technology or not** – Only teachers know what will be useful to them in their classrooms to help them teach. New technologies should not place stress on them nor take time that will detract from the teaching act. They should also not be imposed. Failure to follow this precept will lead to technology that is not fully used or understood and will negatively impact the interaction between teacher and students.
2. **More funding is needed to allow school boards to provide appropriate technical and professional support for use of technology in the classroom and for the upkeep of the technology** – When new technologies are adopted, they need to be maintained and teachers will need assistance in understanding how to use them. The resources need to be in place and available in a timely manner, otherwise the technology will not be well used.
3. **Adequate support must be available given the various technical issues with the use of technology** – Too often, seemingly simple things like a wi-fi router that is not working can impede the proper use of technology. If one has to wait for many days until the problem is fixed, this results in lost time. There needs to be enough support to deal with such issues, which should not be the responsibility of teachers.

One final note: it seems to us that coding is far too specific a topic to include in a general school program as required content. It is not clear that this will be a broad need for everyone. It could be offered as an optional or exploratory course, in keeping with our previous recommendations about having different programs available to students.

## **Adequate preparation for the transition to the labour market or higher education**

As stated previously, the primary role of education is to provide the broadest learning possible to all students. It is important to ensure that the education remains about meeting the learning needs of the students. The learning interest of the student and the business interest of a company may overlap, as they do in vocational education, but the learning interest of the student must take priority. Given this, QPAT recommends the following:

- 1. The mandate of vocational education must be to provide the general education in a vocation** – We have two concerns in particular. First, the vocational education sector is coming under increasing pressure to generate revenues to be used in the youth sector. The cutbacks in funding over the last number of years have exacerbated this situation. This means that centres have to admit students and offer them instructional services with this pressure, which takes away from their focus on providing the instruction. Second, there is pressure in some programs to tailor the content of the program to suit the needs of a specific business or employer. This would lead to training that is excessively specialized. The training in the vocation should remain general so that students have a good overall understanding of it. Otherwise, their skill set will be too specific and they will not have job mobility. Consequently, the learning of the programs must remain that of a general education.
- 2. Vocational education needs a promotional campaign and more flexibility with respect to other learning paths** – One of the challenges with vocational education, perhaps more so in the English community, is to create a positive image of the programs. There is an emphasis on higher education and an expectation that students will continue through Cegep and university and complete studies in higher education, whereas vocational education is often perceived as poor choice or choice of last resort. Positive awareness campaigns about the relevance of these programs and the satisfaction that students can draw from them need to be developed and distributed in English. Another challenge of vocational education is how to offer paths to other educational opportunities, notably in cegep or university, for those students who complete their vocational education program or for those who complete a portion of the vocational studies and then wish to continue their studies elsewhere. Such paths and transitions need to be made available to students. Finally, there need to be more attestation mechanisms that recognize previous learning.
- 3. Training in vocational programs must be performed by teachers, not mentors** – Mentorship can be a useful tool for helping someone integrate into a new work

environment, but the actual training in vocational education must remain the purview of the teachers in the school board to ensure that all students receive the same level of instruction as opposed to instruction that will vary greatly from workplace to workplace. In response to the question in the consultation, if companies wish to provide guarantees of employment for graduates, they are certainly free to do so, but they should not become more involved in vocational education training.

4. **A consultation mechanism needs to be in place to consult vocational education teachers about programs in their field** – Teachers in specialized areas need to be consulted in a clear, consistent, and meaningful way about the programs they teach to ensure that their expertise is taken into account in any changes or additions to the programs.
5. **The government must look for trades or skills that will be needed in the future and develop programs in a timely manner** – When new trades are identified, the new programs must be developed quickly enough to ensure that students do not miss out on opportunities in a field that is of interest to them because the program does not exist.
6. **Resources for special needs students in vocational education must be made available** – A number of students in vocational education have learning difficulties or special needs. They need support for these in order to ensure the best possible learning experience for themselves.
7. **More exploratory subjects and options are needed in high school to expose students to different options and paths before they attend vocational education** – Over the years, fewer and fewer optional and exploratory courses have been available in high schools to expose students to different areas of learning. Physical spaces for woodworking, metalwork and car repair, for example, exist less and less. However, before sending students to vocational education, they should have the chance to at least see what some different areas are about. As such, more of these options, not fewer, should be available for them to explore.
8. **The specific inclusion of entrepreneurialism within the curriculum does not fit in with a liberal education** – Entrepreneurialism is a trait, not a curricular element. Developing business people is not the purpose of a general education. Those who are entrepreneurial are those who have received a broad education and are therefore capable of seeing where there is a need or a want, not those who have missed out or had too narrow an education. It is not something that is taught. If the reference to entrepreneurialism really means developing certain introductory business courses, these could be offered as optional or exploratory types of courses.

9. **The development of an optional economics course would be useful for a liberal education program, but a required course in financial education is not feasible –** An optional economics program that gives students a broad perspective on the economic functioning of the world would be an asset. A required course in personal finance, however, is too narrow. It is also virtually impossible to fit as a required course in the program in the English sector; schools typically allocate more time for French than the recommended 100 hours per year at the secondary level and other courses already are squeezed for time as a consequence.

### **A school that is inclusive and strengthened by diversity**

The elements in this section of the consultation refer mostly to the problems of integrating people who are new to Quebec into French schools. Since the Charter of the French Language does not generally allow for immigrants to attend English schools, the questions in the consultation do not particularly affect them. If ever the possibility to receive new foreign students into English schools ever expanded, this would be welcome. QPAT thinks that it is important to promote diversity in all of our schools and support the integration of new students.

### **Fueling learning: Feeding our Students**

Area two of the consultation is subtitled “A favourable context for student learning, personal development and success”. In our view, an action that would promote this favourable context is to ensure that all students are well fed so that they are able to learn, which will give them a better chance at personal development and success. Simply put, students that are well fed are students that are better able to focus on their learning and have more energy. QPAT recommends that the government fully fund a breakfast and lunch program for all students in public schools. All students should receive their meals at no cost so as to ensure that there is no stigma attached to those who currently have to ask for vouchers. It will allow for all students to be well fed and ready to learn.

## **Area of intervention 3: Mobilization of partners and stakeholders in support of educational success**

### **Parental involvement**

Parental involvement with their child's schooling is an important element in the child's learning. When parents value learning and school and transmit these values to their children, their children are more likely to have a positive experience in the educational system. As such, promoting and stimulating the involvement of parents can have a positive impact on educational outcomes for students.

There has been a high level of parental involvement in the English school system. Sometimes this has been through official structures such as the governing board or the parents' participation organization, but it has also been through informal networks and contributions to the school. The school is often seen not only as a school but an institution that belongs to a community, which can help promote a sense of belonging.

Having said this, it must be clear that the primary role of parents is to support their child in their learning through positive modeling and reinforcement while clearly respecting the role and the expertise of the teachers and other staff in the school. The promotion of parental involvement must make clear that there are boundaries that need to be respected; unfortunately, while most involved parents understand their role well, there is a portion that seeks to interfere in the normal work of the school or the class.

### **Support from partners in the community**

Complementary support from other partners in the community is welcome. Schools are often local or regional institutions that act as points of convergence for partners and associations connected to the community which can help bring the community together. However, the support offered by partners should never be used to replace the roles and responsibilities that are fulfilled by public education and should not be used as a reason to reduce funding.

## **Conclusion**

When the consultation on educational success was launched, it was stated that this consultation was meant to improve our system and make education a priority. We certainly agree that education must be a priority.

However, if education is truly a priority it must be an education that is of high and equal quality for all students. It must be public and shared by all Quebeckers and provide equality of opportunity in their learning.

If education is truly a priority, these values will be supported with the necessary public funds for public education. The cuts that successive governments imposed over the last number of years must not only stop, but the money must be put back and then increased.

If education is truly a priority, the government will take actions that promote the same quality education for all students and will break the cycle of competition between schools. This cycle is fostered by subsidizing private schools and by allowing the creation of selective schools. This competition damages equality of opportunity; hence, the cycle must be broken by eliminating subsidies and by allowing schools to reflect the diversity of their community.

If education is truly a priority, the use of mandated targets will be eliminated and the focus will be put on a liberal education that allows students to be as open as they can be on the world. Education will also value the efforts that teachers put into the very human interaction that education is, and genuinely respect their professionalism rather than impose methods, ideas and structures.

We have made these points, and many specific recommendations, in this brief. If we are to take the next step forward for our education system, we need to incorporate these values and actions.