MANAGEMENT OF INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT PRACTICES
in Secondary Schools

Administrators

Québec

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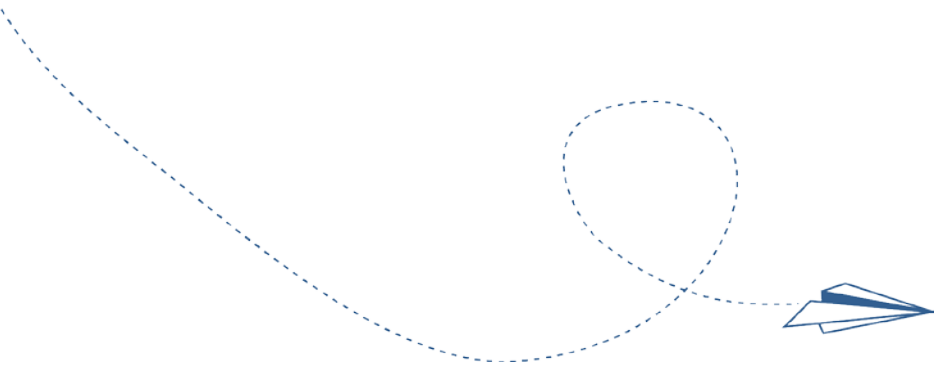


1 The administrator's role

School and school board administrators can take on management practices. The administrator's role is to make sure that the individualized support program being applied is based on a shared vision, to implement the program and to evaluate it in context.

2 Management practices in educational support programs

2.1 Fostering a shared vision

Many experts agree that there is a direct link between the effectiveness of educational support programs and the view of learning shared by the school administrators, teachers and parents. It is important that all these stakeholders agree on the idea that learning leads to the security and socialization of young people and their sense of belonging at school. If the school administration, teachers and parents do not share this collective vision, the implementation of an educational support program can prove difficult.

2.2 Working with a multidisciplinary team

Some researchers suggest that a multidisciplinary team should be responsible for developing, implementing and even evaluating an educational support program. The team should include researchers, developers and communication agents. The communication agents might be responsible for developing a collective vision. They might also inform target groups, such as the school team, the parents and the unions, of the existence and aims of the program as well as explain how it could work with the school programs already in place.

✓ Define priorities

It seems important that the support program be perceived as an added value to the educational institution. One of the crucial steps in developing an educational support program is defining the need the program seeks to fulfill. Educational support programs have many purposes. For some researchers, before implementing a program, it is important to determine the main need, or at least a small set of needs the program could fulfill. A clear definition of needs will affect the target student profile, as well as the structure, content, educational approach and expectations for the program.

✓ Mobilize those involved

The involvement of resource teachers in developing the educational support program could contribute to its successful implementation and to its impact. Studies have shown that some teachers are bound to resist the implementation of

educational support programs. These teachers may be reluctant to follow a program that has been imposed on them without having had any input in its development. It is best that these programs be designed, first and foremost, by those who will be involved in using them.

Furthermore, it is important to involve teachers' unions in developing and implementing these programs. To this end, the program development team must be prepared to answer some questions:

- Will this practice be an integral part of the resource teacher's task?
- Will these duties be taken into account in a fair manner?
- Will this practice mean less time for subject-specific instruction for the students?
- Will resource teachers volunteer for the program or will it be imposed upon them by the administration?
- Will the resource teacher's preparation time be counted?
- Will resource teachers receive training for this new task? Will they be supervised, and by whom?
- Has the administration committed to providing the human and financial resources required for the program to work?
- Will the administration evaluate this new task, and if so, how?
- Will the program itself be evaluated?

✓ Plan carefully

Providing human and financial resources is essential to the success of an educational support program. In addition to the time that resource teachers can devote to the program, administrators must provide resources for initial training (pre-match), training during intervention and supervision. Furthermore, a budget should be set aside for the following:

- holding social activities, special events and conferences
- buying intervention guides, videos, reference documents, magazines and software
- renting or reserving work spaces for personalized follow-up
- designing Web sites for sharing expertise between teachers and for ongoing discussions with students

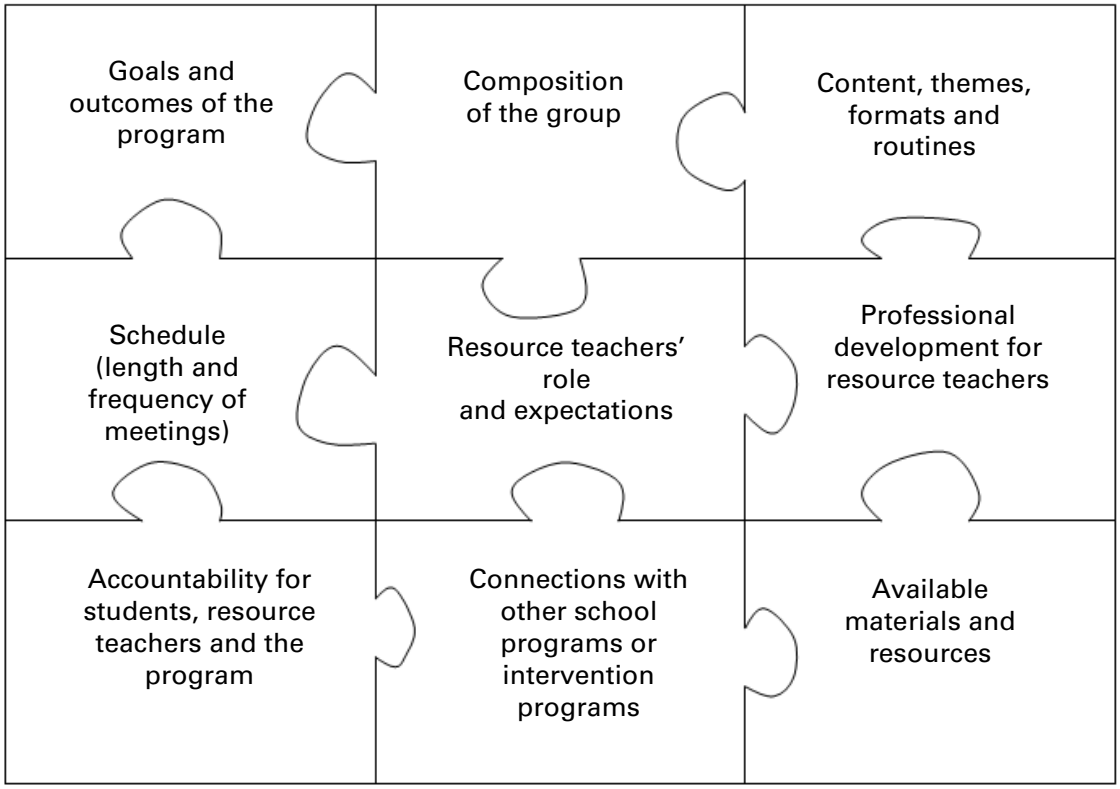
2.3 Model educational support program

The model[1] presented below shows the nine essential components of an educational support, or advisory, program:

- goals and outcomes of the program
- composition of the group
- content, themes, formats and routines
- schedule (length and frequency of meetings)
- resource teachers' role and expectations
- professional development for resource teachers
- accountability for students, resource teachers and the program
- connections with other school programs or intervention programs
- available materials and resources

Presented as a puzzle, this model can be used as a guide and checklist for anyone who has to design and develop educational support programs. This model presents all the elements required to build a coherent program and illustrates the connections between them.

Model for an advisory program (Poliner and Miller Lieber, 2004)



[1] Adapted from Rachel A. Poliner and Carol Miller Lieber, *The Advisory Guide*: *Designing and Implementing Effective Advisory Programs in Secondary Schools* (Cambridge, MA: Educators for Social Responsibility, 2004).

3 Management practices in mentoring

A mentoring relationship is a one-on-one relationship in which a volunteer provides support to a student with the aim of responding to the student's developmental needs. The mentor can be a teacher, an older student or a volunteer from the school or the community.

3.1 Basing programs on research

Mentoring programs based on theory developed through research and its findings could have a greater impact on the development of at-risk students.

Several studies have been conducted on how mentoring can enrich student development. One of these studies shows that empathy, collaboration and mutual agreements can lead students to identify with their mentor, to think harder about themselves and the world, and to trust others. Students are also better able to adapt to life's challenges and difficulties.

3.2 Following up on established programs

Programs that have been systematically followed up by the institutions where they were established seem to have a greater impact on student development.

Promising management practices

✓ Regarding **the vision of the program:**

- Develop programs using theory based on research and its findings
- Specify the philosophy underlying the program
- Specify the aims of the program
- Clearly describe the population targeted by the program
- Clearly describe the profile mentors should have
- Specify the nature, type and structure of the mentoring offered

✓ Regarding **the implementation and evaluation of the program:**

- Develop a financial plan that specifies sources of funding, expenses, investments and criteria for profitability
- Plan to promote the program, e.g. determine means for increasing its visibility, inform students and parents, inform members of the institution and the community
- Systematically follow up on the implementation of the program
- Evaluate the conditions for implementing the program and the program itself
- Verify whether the participants are satisfied
- Evaluate the short- and long-term effects of the program on students, mentors and the school

4 Conclusion

Recommendations by researchers who study management practices aim to encourage administrators to use research studies to develop a vision of the educational support programs to be implemented. This vision is what will allow administrators to provide the necessary impetus to implement the program, to promote it and to find sustainable funding for it. Researchers recommend that school administrators, teachers and parents also hold a shared vision of learning. A multidisciplinary team could be responsible for developing, implementing and even evaluating the programs.

In the area of mentorship, the administrator's aims and decisions must be in harmony with the mentoring practices. Otherwise, mentorship will not be very beneficial to the people for whom it is intended.

Reference

Larose, Simon. *Les pratiques éducationnelles exemplaires en matière d'accompagnement individualisé au secondaire: Une analyse commentée des recherches des vingt dernières années.* Québec City: Université Laval, Groupe de recherche sur l'inadaptation psychosociale chez l'enfant (GRIP), 2011.

The full research report is available in French at the following address:

www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/recherche/accompagnement.

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