

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT



We have a world-class education system that is a source of pride for Quebecers. With good reason. This modern and efficient school system has been developed in the last 40 years. We have excellent school facilities and competent and qualified staff, and we have chosen to make education democratic and accessible. This has resulted in our students being ranked among the best in the world in terms of success in certain basic subjects.

Despite this success, however, too many young people—especially those in disadvantaged areas—still leave school without a diploma. But we must ensure that as many of Québec's young people as possible complete their studies so that they can make a place for themselves in society. Dropping out of school is a tragedy for the student, for the parents and for Québec.

We can rejoice in the fact that the dropout rate has decreased continuously over the last 15 years, but we must not be satisfied with that. Québec needs all of its citizens. We need men and women with the competencies it takes to enter the fast-changing job market. We need individuals able to participate fully in the life of Québec society and in the building of tomorrow's society.

Over the last few years, the government of Québec has applied a series of measures to give all young people, starting with the youngest, the best possible chance to succeed at school. These measures include broader access to full-time kindergarten classes and a significant reduction in class size in preschool and Cycle One of elementary school, both intended to prevent difficulties that could lead to delays.

The new curriculum also aims to better prepare young people for life in society. This is why emphasis is placed on basic learning, student guidance and good work habits. Furthermore, each school must indicate in its success plan what it plans to do to ensure that as many students as possible succeed in school.

The NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS pilot project, which has been under way in six secondary schools in Québec since September 2001, shows that schools can take action and improve the situation against great odds, provided that the schools feel they are being supported.

Today, it is time to take a giant step forward to help our young people in disadvantaged areas to succeed. The Government of Québec will be investing \$125 million over the next five years to apply the NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS intervention strategy to foster the success of secondary school students in disadvantaged areas. This major effort to provide better support to parents and schools is designed to foster success for all students and guarantee equal opportunities. This unprecedented initiative will involve nearly 200 schools whose students come from the most disadvantaged areas, that is, the schools in the 8th, 9th and 10th decile ranks according to the school population map prepared by the Ministère de l'Éducation.

The government's role is crucial, but all of society must become involved for the goals of this ambitious project to be achieved. This is why all the players in local and regional communities must establish a social contract concerning student success. I therefore ask parents and socioeconomic partners to join with the school system and the government of Québec. Together, we can and must take action to ensure success for our young people. After all, it is our society's future that is at stake.

SYLVAIN SIMARD



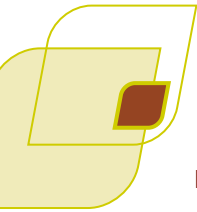


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BASIS OF THE INTERVENTION

SUCCEEDING: A CHALLENGE!

Success at school is essential for young Quebecers. Acquiring competencies and obtaining qualifications allow them to enter the job market and participate in the development of a modern Québec. Student success is thus essential to both individuals and society.

Québec schools, teachers and programs of study lead most young people to success. One example is the fact that 13-year-old Quebecers performed better than students from all other Canadian provinces in one of the mathematics examinations conducted in 2001 under the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP). In the second examination, our students came in second, close behind young Albertans. These results are consistent with those in other international evaluations, including the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which in 2000 rated 15-year-old Quebecers second in mathematics and fourth in reading among students from the 32 most industrialized countries.

Despite this success, too many young people leave the school system without a diploma or qualifications and, thus, without the competencies required to integrate into the work world and into society.



DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL

Different factors make young people vulnerable and may lead them to drop out of school:

- **school-related** factors: frequent grade repetition or failure, weak academic skills (reading, writing, language) or social skills (non-participation in activities, difficult relationships with adults, feeling left out), lack of motivation, absenteeism, etc.
- **personal** factors: drug dependence, delinquency, early pregnancy, etc.
- **family-related** factors: insufficient support or unstable family units, parents' low educational level, low valuing of school, mistrust of public institutions (including schools)
- **social** factors: isolation, inadequate housing, inadequate nutrition, sickness, lack of knowledge about the region's culture and services in the neighbourhood, recent immigration under difficult circumstances, etc.
- **economic** factors: parents who are unemployed or have low incomes, young people who work part-time for more than 14 hours a week, etc.

STUDENT SUCCESS IN DISADVANTAGED AREAS

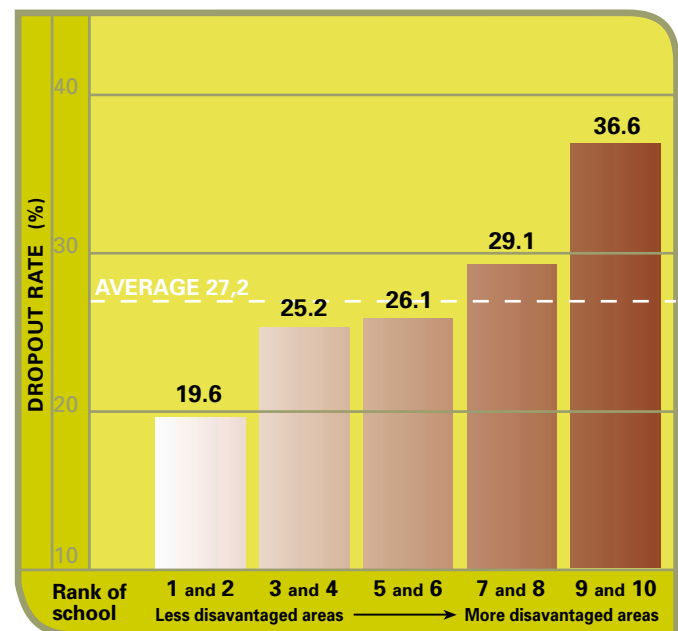
In socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, these factors have a greater negative impact, especially since several of them may be present at the same time, combining their effects.

Young people living in disadvantaged areas are at a greater risk of failing at school and experiencing social or behavioural difficulties. Interventions aimed at improving student success are more complex in these areas.

Thus, in the 2000-2001 school year, 27.2 per cent of young people (17 951) attending schools in Québec school boards left school without a diploma. However, the most disadvantaged areas had the highest dropout rate (36.6 per cent), as shown in the following table.

The 1998 school population map prepared by the Ministère in 1998 was used to classify schools in decile ranks according to an index based on the proportion of students from disadvantaged areas. This index is expressly intended to reflect the situation in schools. It consists of two elements: one indicates whether a student's mother has received a secondary school diploma (counting for 2/3 of the value), and the other whether the parents are employed (counting for 1/3 of the value).

Dropout rate according to socioeconomic milieu (2000-2001)



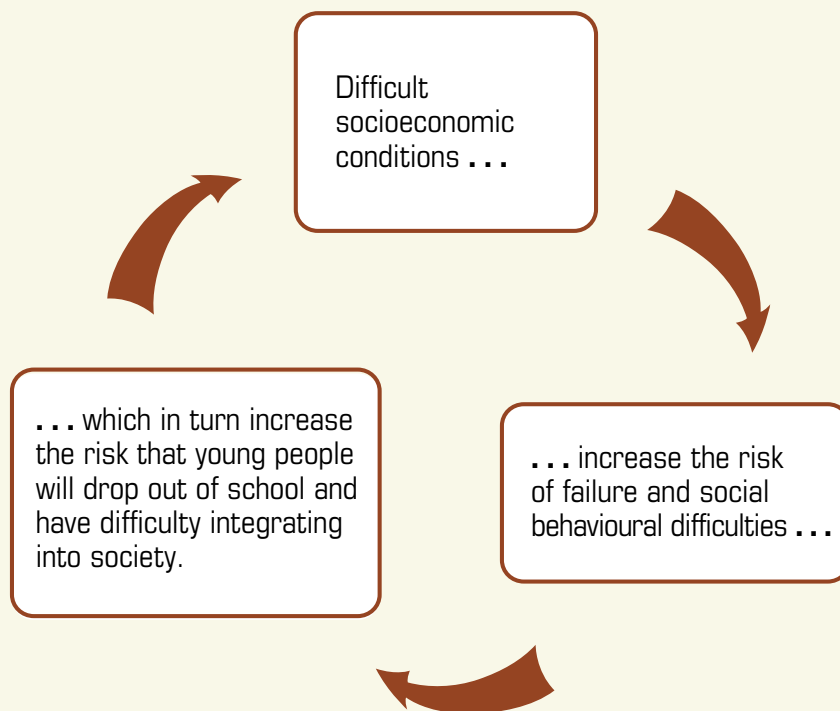
Source: Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec
Direction des statistiques et études quantitatives



It is likely, then, that young people living under disadvantaged social and economic conditions will have greater difficulty than other students in the “job of being a student,” as they face greater obstacles to success. This is why action must be taken in disadvantaged areas, where it has been noted that difficult socioeconomic conditions are more likely to lead students to drop out of school.

Specialists have identified a “dropout cycle” linking difficult socioeconomic conditions to the risk of failure and to dropping out of school. The following figure illustrates this cycle.

**The dropout cycle:
relationship between dropping out of school and difficult socioeconomic conditions**



SCHOOLS CAN EFFECT CHANGE: CREATION OF AN EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

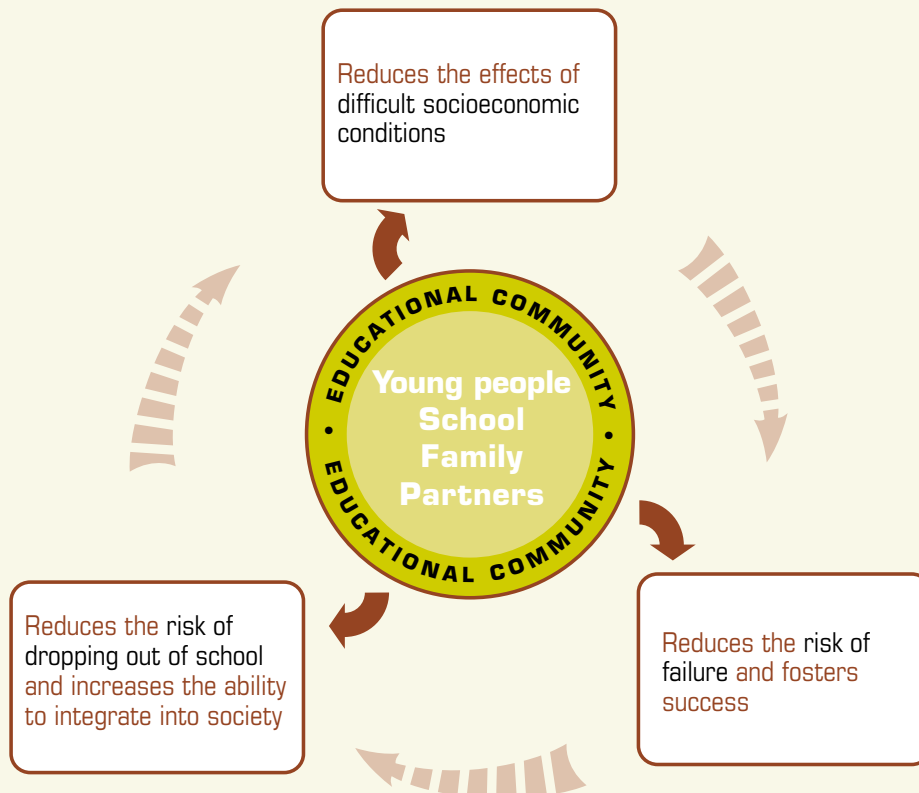
Schools are essential to the success of all young people, especially those in disadvantaged areas.

Schools that firmly believe in young people's ability to progress and succeed are able to break the dropout cycle and, in a sense, counter the effects of difficult socioeconomic conditions.

One of the main conditions for reaching this objective is the creation of an "educational community" with students at its centre. The Conseil supérieur de l'éducation describes this educational community as "a school that involves all its stakeholders, including those in the surrounding community, and relies on the sharing of responsibility and the quality of the relationships it builds to fulfill its educational mission."¹ In other words, all interested persons (young people, teachers and other professionals, parents, school administrators and community members) must rally to foster student success.

The school and the educational community know the needs of students (e.g. learning, health, safety, supervision) and of the community (e.g. safe school atmosphere, sports facilities, cooperation with families). They can ensure that certain conditions prevail and effective actions are taken (e.g. adapted school organization and interventions, stable classes, increased contact with families, etc.), and that these actions have a specific duration (e.g. before, during and after regular class hours throughout the school year) and are coherent and coordinated with all players. In this way, the educational community can establish mechanisms that will protect young people against the negative effects of their socioeconomic conditions. The students' success, perseverance at school and social integration will thus be greatly increased.

How the educational community breaks the dropout cycle



1. Quebec. Conseil supérieur de l'éducation. *The School as an Educational Community: Suggestions for the Renewal of Secondary Education. Summary of a brief to the Minister of Education.* Québec, 1998.



Research on disadvantaged areas shows that schools can have an important influence on young people, provided that:

- schools establish effective **educational and pedagogical practices** that foster student success (academic competencies, motivation)
- in their role as **educational communities**, schools help to integrate young people socially (social competencies, positive relationships, feeling of belonging)
- schools **value effort and give meaning to schooling**, thereby improving students' motivation and perseverance at school (better attitude concerning learning, improved student guidance, understanding of the relationship between school and the future)
- schools **support students outside regular class hours**, together with families and the community, including social and economic partners (variety of supervised activities, good habits concerning health, access to various services)

Supported in this way by the entire educational community, schools effect change in the short term by increasing students' learning and improving their academic and social skills. The graduation rate will improve over the long term, resulting in better integration into the work force and improved socioeconomic conditions.

**NEW APPROACHES,
NEW SOLUTIONS**

**FOSTERING SUCCESS FOR
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS
IN DISADVANTAGED AREAS**

TAKING ACTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Everyone agrees that early action is important with students living in disadvantaged areas. For this reason, the Government of Québec already invests in prevention and intervention in early childhood.

A child's school life, however, must be considered as a continuum, a path that starts at kindergarten and continues all the way through secondary school. If the socioeconomic conditions of young people in disadvantaged areas are not improved over the years, the factors leading to vulnerability will worsen in adolescence. Support is important at the preschool and elementary levels, but intervention with students at the secondary level is absolutely necessary to guarantee the continuity of prevention and intervention services.

This is why a comprehensive strategy aimed at achieving student success must be applied in secondary school.



THE NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS PILOT PROJECT

The NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS pilot project has enabled six secondary schools in urban and rural areas since 2001 to take action to foster student success and encourage students living in difficult socioeconomic conditions to stay in school.

In less than a year, the project rallied students, teachers and school administrators and resulted in changes in the atmosphere in the schools and in students' motivation.

As an example, some schools participating in the NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS pilot project freed teachers from their regular duties to enable them to supervise students more closely and better coordinate interventions with them. In other schools, various forms of homeroom systems were put into place: some teachers teach two subjects instead of one, thereby building stronger relationships with the students.

The enthusiasm for this pilot project gave rise to the NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS intervention strategy, designed to support secondary schools in disadvantaged areas.



A SOLID, COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY

School boards have the responsibility of allocating resources among the schools, taking into account the students' needs and the socioeconomic characteristics of the areas under their jurisdiction. The NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS intervention strategy goes well beyond this: it helps schools implement practices to provide support to students in very disadvantaged areas. To ensure lasting solutions and results, all the schools must build their strategies on a solid base and broad concerted effort.

NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS means that the Ministère de l'Éducation, school boards, schools and the communities around them will take action.

- The school situation will first be analyzed (diagnosis); university researchers and experts from the area will contribute to this analysis and to the search for effective and lasting solutions.
- The school will prepare a success plan, to be refined in collaboration with all its partners.
- The school boards will allocate the available resources and support the success plans.
- The community (community organizations, socioeconomic players) will support the success plan.
- The schools and school boards may pool their experience and expertise.
- Rigorous evaluation will be carried out throughout the process.

The process will result in the creation of a truly educational community, an environment that provides more support to young people and, in a sense, counters the negative effects of difficult socioeconomic conditions.

More specifically, the strategy will be based on:

A better understanding of the problems involved

• An informed diagnosis

The first important step will be the diagnosis. Each secondary school, with its staff and in collaboration with the parents and the community, will have to acquire a better understanding of its students and of their strengths and needs.

Such an analysis could focus on identifying problems associated with learning certain subjects, student perseverance and attendance, young people's health, relations with families or the school atmosphere.

• The contribution of university researchers

Research carried out in Québec will make it possible to determine the effectiveness of educational and pedagogical practices as regards student success and perseverance at school in disadvantaged areas. University researchers will participate in the diagnosis, the search for solutions and the evaluation of the intervention strategy.

Development of strengths and knowledge

• Local and regional expertise

Intervention in education in a disadvantaged area calls for particular strategies and specialized resources, some of which already exist in the schools and regions concerned. Expertise and practices that have already proved effective will be used and given priority support. All Québec schools will be able to adopt these practices, adapting them as they see fit.

• Refining success plans

All secondary schools already have success plans. In targeted schools, these plans will be refined to include strategies adapted to their particular problems. The plans will serve as a concrete tool to foster success and prevent students from dropping out of school.

• Education reform

The measures applied in Québec schools under the education reform aim at achieving success for as many students as possible. With the implementation of the Québec Education Program at the secondary level, teachers and students in disadvantaged areas will have an additional tool to make school more stimulating.



A process in touch with the community

• Partnership and networking

Problems rarely have a single cause and solutions may sometimes be complex and involve a variety of players. Schools, in cooperation with teachers, school administrators, parents, professionals, researchers and community representatives, will make a diagnosis and prepare a refined success plan for the school. Schools from the same school board and school boards from the same region will be able to pool their experience and expertise.

• Choices that meet the community's needs

Based on objective data that describes the environment of each secondary school in Québec, the Ministère de l'Éducation will allocate the funds set aside for the intervention strategy among the school boards having the greatest prevalence of disadvantaged areas.

The school boards will distribute the sums among the schools with the greatest number of students from disadvantaged areas and will support the implementation of the refined success plans.

This support will help meet the specific needs of targeted schools and their students.

Added value through the convergence of actions

The NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS intervention strategy will ensure that action is aimed at one and the same goal:

- The Ministère de l'Éducation will determine the orientations, provide support and act as a partner in evaluation.
- The school boards will be responsible for implementing the strategy.
- The schools will apply the solutions most adapted to the specific needs of students, parents and the community.
- The community will rally to support the schools.



A new social contract

Adopting NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS in disadvantaged areas involves ensuring that the dynamic forces in schools and their communities work together. In each region and each milieu, in the community where the secondary school is located, all players concerned by the success of young people will make a concerted effort in a process leading to a new social contract. The stakes involved—student success—will therefore serve to motivate the entire community to act.

Rigorous monitoring

Wherever the intervention strategy is implemented, the Ministère and the school boards will act as partners in managing the NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS intervention strategy for supporting secondary schools in disadvantaged areas.

Implementation of the NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS intervention strategy will be monitored closely by the partners, who will draw up an evaluation plan to answer the following questions:

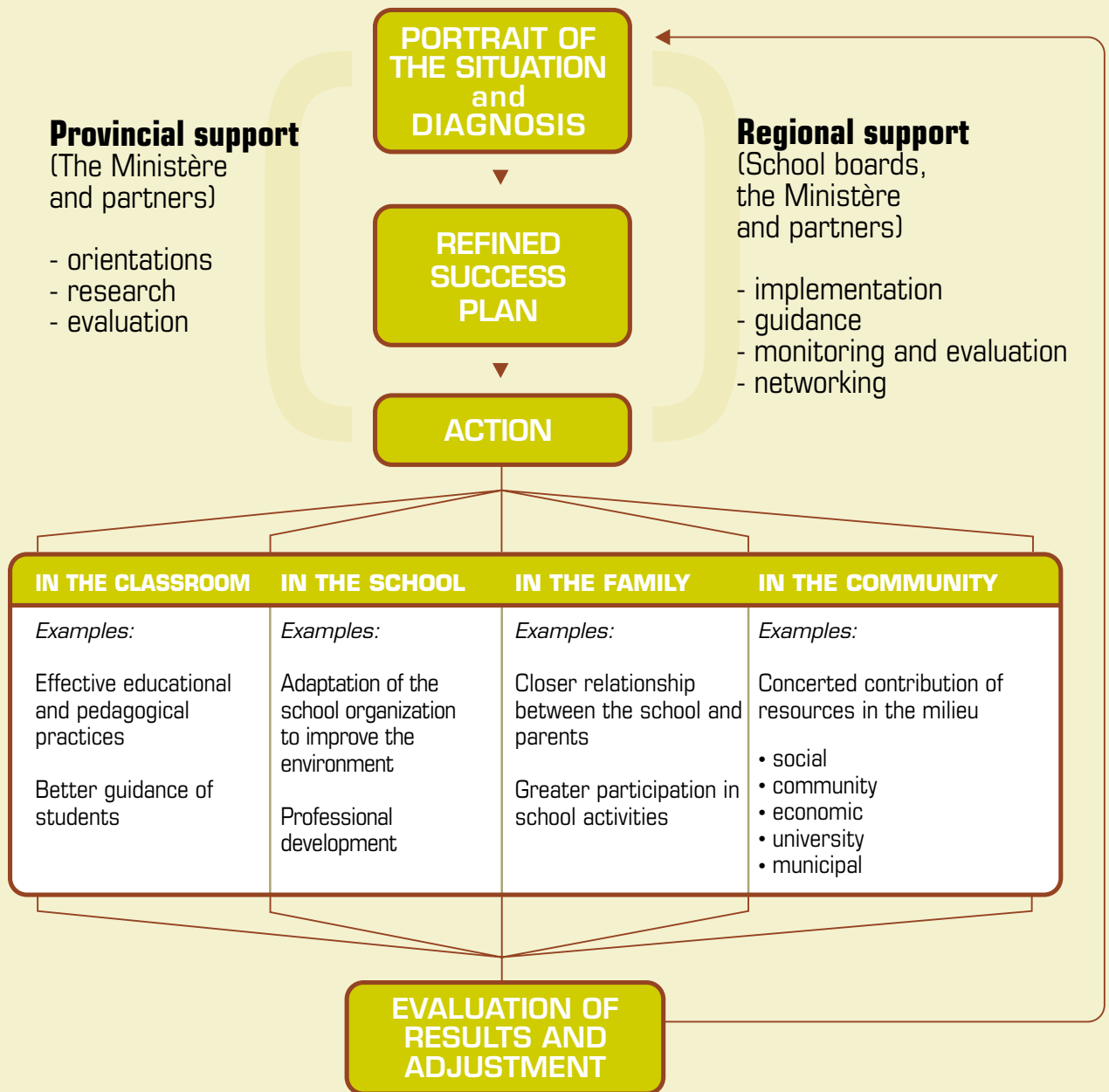
- Is the intervention strategy producing the desired changes?
- What conditions and what actions account for these changes?

This plan will provide for rigorous evaluation of the intervention strategy throughout its five-year implementation and upon its conclusion.



SCHOOLS IN ACTION

The following model describes the process of a school involved in the NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS intervention strategy and the support it receives:





EXPECTED CHANGES

The NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS intervention strategy will enable solutions to be implemented within five years.

The measures to be taken will be determined based on the situation in the milieu. The examination and diagnosis of problems will make it possible to adjust the intervention strategy to the reality at each school and its environment. Thus, the application of the NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS strategy will correspond to the reality of the young people of the region or school involved.



According to the choices made together, the interventions should make it possible to achieve various lasting changes:

For students

- improvement of their learning (knowledge and competencies) and development of their ability to interact with people around them and to integrate into their environment (social skills)
- increased motivation, attendance and perseverance at school
- the development of life skills and social and occupational skills
- improved overall health in cases where there are difficulties because of family problems, rejection, depression, violence or drug dependence

For teachers

- a better relationship with students (in some cases, the opportunity to see them more often)
- more productive contact with parents through improved communication mechanisms
- closer collaboration with fellow teachers due to better organization of time
- a classroom atmosphere more favourable to learning because of a reduced number of discipline problems
- enrichment of skills through professional development

For the school

- creation of an improved educational environment, including the following:
 - better **school organization** (stable classes, variable duration of learning time, means to foster social and employment integration). This could involve:
 - the presence of homeroom teachers or tutors for closer monitoring of students
 - the organization of school time to facilitate interdisciplinary work and in-depth exchanges between teams made up of teachers and other professionals
 - the preparation of a flexible timetable to give students time to become familiar with the job market and to develop social and occupational skills
 - the maintenance or implementation of enriched and differentiated pedagogical practices and educational services related to learning, motivation and behaviour, to assist at-risk students. Close and realistic monitoring will be applied concerning actions taken with these students. This could involve:
 - workshops, projects and visits to cultural sites, to enrich the learning of students and make them more active
 - personalized guidance provided to at-risk students by regular teachers, special education teachers, resource teachers, psychoeducators or other professionals
 - the possibility at any time during the school year of offering intensive support to students who are having difficulty in any subject, to ensure that delays will not lead to failure



– an enriched **social and educational environment** in the school. In practice, this could mean:

- more harmonious relationships among the different players in the school, to create a new climate
- cooperation among all school staff and among students, to find and apply solutions to make the school more pleasant
- a safe and violence-free environment

– a more stimulating **sociocultural and sports environment**, to increase the sense of belonging for students and school staff and to make students want to go to school. The enrichment of school life could take various forms:

- addition of extracurricular activities (sports, cultural activities, etc.)
- organization of civic life at the school (creation of student associations)
- organization of school transportation to enable students to participate in activities and to increase the amount of time spent at school

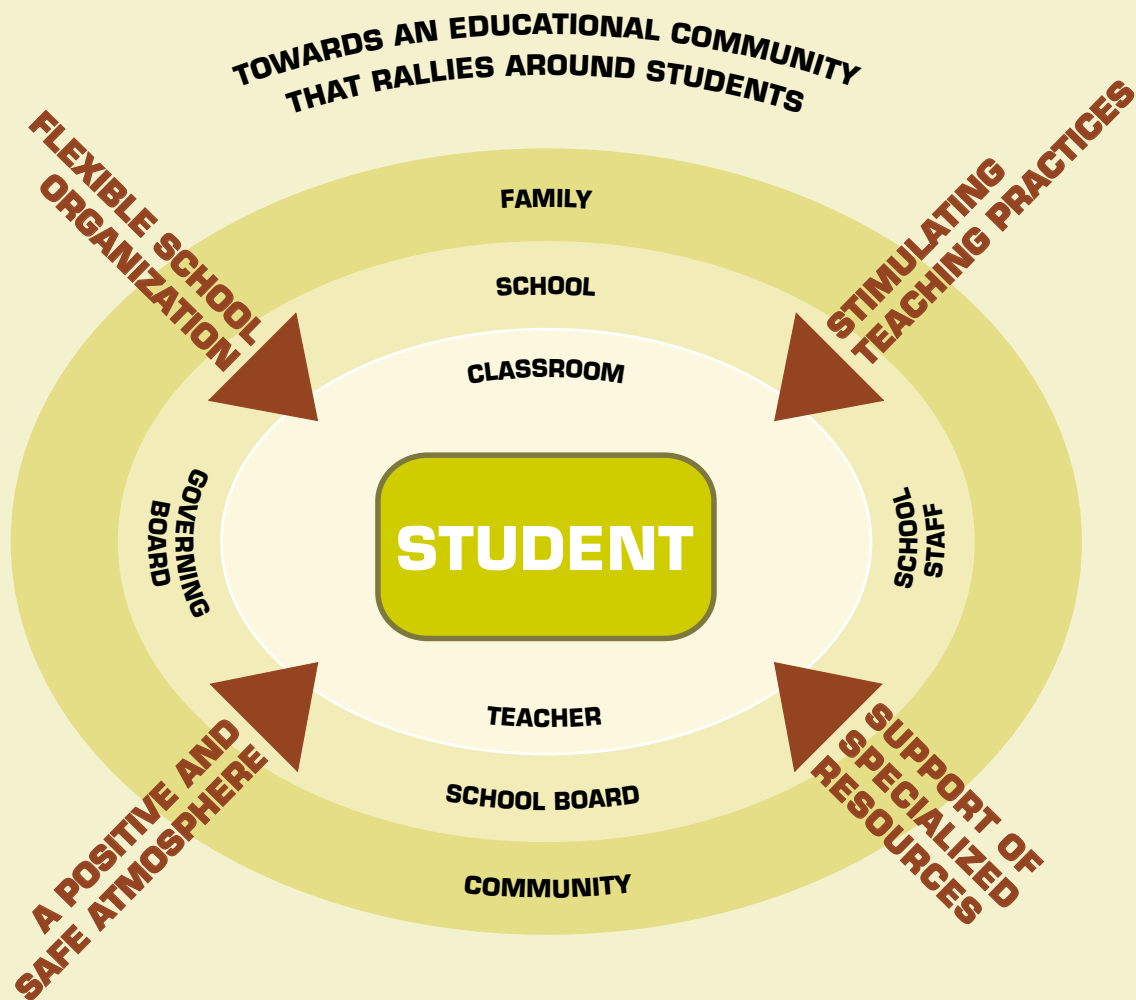
For the community and the family

- increased cooperation between the school and parents. This could involve:
 - better communication between schools and families
 - joint search for solutions to certain problems that are specific to adolescence
 - greater participation of parents in school life
 - closer follow-up by parents of their children's learning, progress and behaviour at school (in particular, through the presence of homeroom teachers or tutors)
 - increased opportunities to reinforce the role of parents and to meet with them
- genuine cooperation, joint action and coordination among the different social players and partners concerned by at-risk students at the secondary level and the problems they face. In practice, this could involve the following:
 - the contribution of CLSCs in providing support to certain students or families that are in difficult situations
 - participation of local police in preventing delinquency and drug dependence
 - participation of young people in volunteer activities that would enrich the community and their own lives
 - support of business people in organizing extracurricular activities or establishing ways of recognizing success



AN ENVIRONMENT THAT FOSTERS STUDENT SUCCESS

With the implementation of the NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS intervention strategy, the school boards and the targeted secondary schools and their surrounding communities will be able to work to create a new environment to foster student educational success. Pedagogical approaches, activities and services to make schools more welcoming and stimulating for students can be introduced. Improved support will be provided to students with greater difficulties.





NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS: A COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

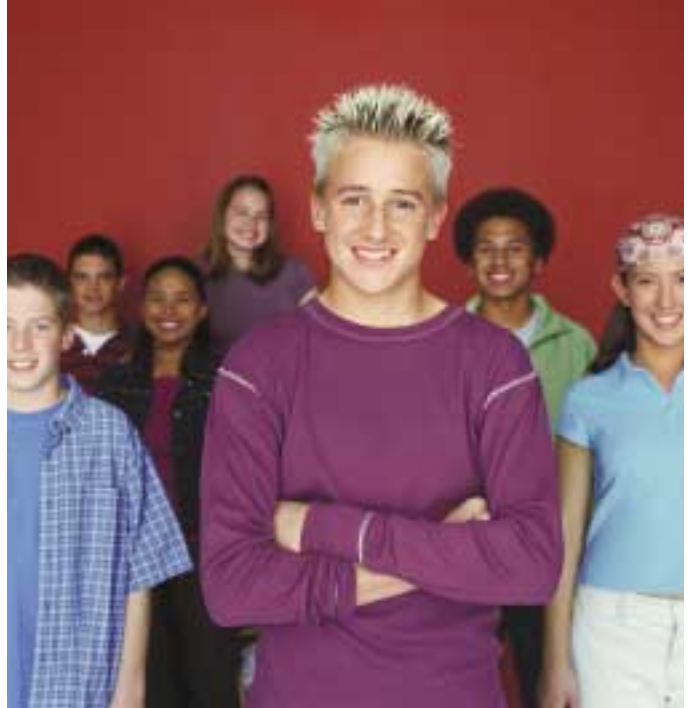
Young people are an invaluable asset to Québec: they represent our future. Unfortunately, some of them live in socioeconomic conditions that make it more difficult for them to participate in society. Education can help them overcome the difficulties of their situation.



But there must be an educational community to support young people who need help. The issue of concerted community effort is crucial for Québec society as a whole: students living in the most difficult conditions must be provided with an environment that fosters the educational success of as many of them as possible. In recent years, educational success rates have stagnated and the struggle to encourage students to stay in school now calls for intensive, coordinated intervention, especially in disadvantaged areas. If we are to make progress in this direction, we must find **NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS.**

Experiences in six Québec secondary schools on the theme of **NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS** have established the importance of rallying all players to achieve student success in disadvantaged areas. The new intervention strategy will foster just such a commitment in secondary schools, families and the community. Together, these partners will make informed diagnoses and will draw on enriched expertise to implement lasting solutions in numerous secondary schools. And they will have means at their disposal to ensure that the solutions provide results. With an investment of \$125 million over the next five years to support the students in nearly 200 secondary schools, it will finally be possible to adopt **NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS** in all the regions of Québec.

Succeeding is more than just obtaining qualifications and receiving a diploma. It involves having greater control over the world in which one lives, using what one has learned at school to live a better life and becoming a full citizen. It also involves breaking the cycle of poverty and difficult living conditions.



To succeed in school is to acquire the means for getting ahead. And most important of all, it means succeeding in life.

This is why we must continue to seek **NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS.**

NEW APPROACHES, NEW SOLUTIONS

**FOSTERING SUCCESS FOR
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS
IN DISADVANTAGED AREAS**

