

CONSEIL SUPÉRIEUR DE L'ÉDUCATION

ABRIDGED VERSION

**A SECONDARY SCHOOL ADAPTED
TO THE NEEDS OF YOUTH
IN SUPPORTING THEIR SUCCESS**

BRIEF TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, RECREATION AND SPORT

October 2009

Québec 

CONSEIL SUPÉRIEUR DE L'ÉDUCATION

The present document is an abridged version of the Brief *Une école secondaire qui s'adapte aux besoins des jeunes pour soutenir leur réussite*, prepared for the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation by the Commission on Secondary Education, comprised at the time of its adoption of the following members: Amir Ibrahim (Chair), Ann Beer, Marie Blain, Paul-André Boily, Anik Bouchard, Isabelle Girard, Pierre-André Godin, Huguette Lamontagne, Brahim Nakkach, Martine Ouellet, Claudine Ouellette, Jean-François Parent and Mélanie Rhains.

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INTRODUCTION

In taking an interest in the needs of secondary school students, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation is committed to better understanding the needs of youth to make secondary school a place where the greatest number of them can attain academic achievement and school success.

Secondary school plays a central role during adolescence, a transitional period between childhood and young adulthood characterized by rapid change. This developmental phase—where young people leave elementary behind for secondary



school and eventually college, vocational or continuing education—is by no means insignificant. Students spend five years of their lives in secondary school, five years marked by physical, psychological and cognitive change. Indeed, no

other level of instruction sees so much radical change at such a critical time of development, and this greatly influences the mission of secondary school and its frontline players in their day-to-day practice.

The Conseil chose to include from the outset of its study all the needs of young people attending secondary school. This substantive approach in large part guided the preparation work for its Brief *Une école secondaire qui s'adapte aux besoins des jeunes pour soutenir leur réussite* and its abridged version herein.

The Conseil first sought to better understand today's youth and define the various contexts in which they come of age. This enabled the identification of the key stages of adolescent development, as well as three categories of needs: educational (mirroring the primary mission of the school, to instruct), personal, and social—as schools are mandated to socialize and qualify students as well.

The Conseil then attempted to learn whether there were factors that could make secondary school an institution that best meets the needs of youth. Through research and consultation with various communities, the Conseil was able to identify at least three key factors, related to family, the student-teacher relationship and the school's educational environment.

In identifying the needs of youth and the conditions that can influence secondary school's ability to meet these needs, the goal was to propose courses of action that could enable various school players to meet the daunting challenges they encounter in their day-to-day practice. The Conseil herein intends to present tools to stakeholders who shape secondary education and to inspire institutional practices aimed at meeting all the needs of youth, be they educational, personal or social.

The Conseil wishes to thank all students, parents, teaching and professional personnel and support staff, as well as the school administrators of the five secondary schools that participated in the consultations. It would also like to thank the Commission on Secondary Education, experts and all those individuals who contributed to the preparation of its Brief.



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT YOUTH AND THEIR NEEDS?

In outlining the key stages of adolescent development in youth aged 12 to 17, the Conseil acknowledges the scope and complexity of physical, psychological and cognitive change that occurs during adolescence and that this greatly influences both the mission of secondary school and the role of adults who work with youth. Starting from these observations, the Conseil has identified three major categories of needs.

A Long and Complex Period Of Development

To further its understanding of adolescence and the needs of youth at this critical stage of their lives, the Conseil examined a number of literature sources, namely the studies of the influential Pan American Health Organization (2005). The authors of one such study present a new approach to classifying the key stages of adolescent development and the typical changes that occur on the physical, cognitive, social and emotional levels: These stages include pre-adolescence



EACH DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE IN ADOLESCENCE BEGINS EARLIER IN GIRLS THAN IT DOES IN BOYS.

(8-11), early adolescence (11-14), and middle adolescence (15-17). They also note that the onset of puberty now starts at an earlier age (9 for girls and 11 for boys), and that each stage also begins earlier for girls.

In *Pre-adolescence*, the difficult yet essential process of defining one's personality begins. For the first time in their lives, preadolescents turn away from their parents and look to their peer group for appropriate behaviour or attitudes. At this stage, they like to take risks, test limits and question authority. They are also more susceptible to peer pressure and influence.

Early adolescence signals the onset of sexuality development. At this stage, abstract thinking is more advanced, marking the beginning of independent thought rather than ongoing dependence on parents. Adolescents begin exploring the world more independently, spending more time with their friends and in small groups. Early adolescence is a critical time in identity building. At this stage, fundamental competencies that shape future relationships and behaviours are developed.

In *Middle adolescence*, the body continues to grow and change. Young people exhibit greater skills in metacognitive tasks, problem solving and planning. There is an increase in self-confidence and in the ability to reflect on emotions and relationships with others. There is also an increase in empathy and openness towards close friends. Lastly, the importance of the group begins to decrease, as does the influence of peer pressure.

Values In Which Family Plays An Important Role

There are six main groups of values that a young person subscribes to:

- Family, friends, love life
- School, work
- Respect, cooperation
- Happiness, well-being
- Sports, leisure activities
- Some religious beliefs

According to researchers consulted by the Conseil (Pronovost & Royer, 2004), the family is a place of birth, education and support. Family is where the child grows up, learns, matures, and assimilates values. If school is associated with acquiring knowledge, then family is associated with shaping the individual. Family is a symbol of great stability and consistency; and, like friends, can always be counted on unconditionally, as young people themselves assert.



**FAMILY AND FRIENDS FORM
A CORE SET OF VALUES
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.**

In addition to family, the presence of friends is equally important. Young people have a natural desire to be with someone else, to be around other people, and not be alone. Friends are seen as loyal individuals who do not judge or criticize.

Young people care very much about their studies and future careers. Respect and cooperation are also important values in their view, as is their desire to be happy. Lastly, young people express a great need for love and security, which they generally find within their own family and circle of friends.

Coming Of Age In Different Environments

Youth aged 12-17 come of age in many different environments, but do so primarily within the family and in school. Technology and the virtual world also greatly influence their relationship with knowledge and shape how they socialize, even before the start of adolescence.

The family is a young person's first social environment, and as such plays a fundamental role in student success and perseverance. Parents' interest in school matters, encouragement of independence, and degree of commitment can



**YOUNG PEOPLE CHANGE IN THEIR
SEARCH FOR INDEPENDENCE,
AND COME OF AGE IN DIFFERENT
ENVIRONMENTS: FAMILY, SCHOOL
AND TECHNOLOGY.**

motivate young people to succeed and set higher goals, and minimize behavioural problems at the same time. Parental contribution to academic achievement and school success among adolescents can thus take many forms: overseeing children's school work, following their progress in different subjects, setting educational goals with them, consolidating knowledge, and communication with the school.

The *school* is a second setting in which a young person come of age. Not simply a place for the transfer of academic knowledge, school is a provider of socialization, and their most important social environment beyond the family. Some of the reasons young people love, stay in and perform well in school are: a good school climate, accessible and engaged teaching personnel, the availability of student resources and services, and the ties forged between home and school.

Technology also greatly influences the daily lives of today's youth. In addition to multiplying opportunities for socialization, the prevalent use of information and digital technologies among adolescents is transforming their relationship with knowledge and school. It is essential, then, that teaching personnel be cognizant of this and consider the use of technology in their teaching methods and strategies. Indeed, a greater integration of technology in teaching practices and establishing a quality virtual environment in secondary schools represent a major challenge for the future.

Three Categories Of Needs

Young people attend secondary school in order to succeed in studies that matter to them. The first category of needs, *educational needs*, is related to the conditions necessary to ensure students' academic achievement and school success. Some of these conditions include: the school team—particularly teaching personnel—the educational setting, and the school's structure, education offer, educational project and success plan.

During adolescence, young people experience developmental milestones in their lives, which at times can make them vulnerable on a personal level. To meet these *personal needs* a range of assistance programs and support services are offered to

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE
EDUCATIONAL, PERSONAL
AND SOCIAL NEEDS.

students in school, either individually or in groups: health services, psychological counselling, special education, guidance counselling and social work.

Professional personnel and support staff also oversee the quality of interpersonal relationships that students engage in with their peers and other individuals in the school.

Lastly, for secondary students, school is not just a place for learning. All the various elements that make school a welcoming and positive social environment, and foster youth integration and a sense of belonging in the school community are related to a third category of needs, *social needs*. These elements include: extracurricular and school-related activities; school climate; physical facilities; socialization tools such as codes of conduct and ethics; as well as supervision and security.



HOW DOES A GOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUTH?

All other things being equal, why are some secondary schools recognized for being better able to meet the needs of youth? What are the factors that make some schools in the education network better than others? What are the conditions required to increase a school's ability to meet the needs of secondary students? These, in essence, are questions the Conseil set out to answer in its Brief.

Following its examination and analysis of the key stages of adolescent development, the Conseil advanced the theory (later confirmed by views expressed by players during the consultations) that a secondary school able to meet the needs of youth is a school that must have at least two of the following three conditions in place:

- The school-family partnership is very important and recognized as a factor in student success;
- The teaching personnel is highly engaged in student success and supported by other members of the school team;
- The educational environment is aligned with student success.

A Positive and Ongoing School-Family Partnership

There are many styles of parenting (authoritarian, authoritative, indulgent and neglectful), and the effect parents can have on student success is considerable. Indeed, parental involvement in supporting their child's school progress has an influence on the success of all secondary students. Consequently, parental guidance, encouraging independence and emotional support all have an impact on school results. To wit, high-achieving students are those whose parents encourage, praise and discuss course selection with them, attend school performances (i.e. sports, cultural, science events), help with homework when needed and chaperone during field trips or special activities.

What are the contributing factors to successfully establishing good ties in school-family partnerships? First, the school must undertake to organize activities likely to interest all families; provide parents with the necessary tools for their new role;

inform them about programs and courses offered; put greater effort into problem prevention rather than problem resolution; and where needed, adopt strategies to reach families from a lower education background.



THERE IS A CORRELATION BETWEEN PARENTAL COMMITMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS AMONG SECONDARY STUDENTS.

A second factor contributing to success consists in ongoing parental commitment. Parents are more likely to participate in school activities when they sense their presence in their child's school is both welcomed and desired, when they understand that their participation is an integral part of their roles as parents, and when they have a positive relationship with their adolescent child.

A third factor is having a shared vision of the concept of education, allowing for a "joint education" process resting on a mutual understanding of the family's and school's respective roles. Joint education rests on three basic tenets: it does not mean co-instruction; it does not mean joint management; and it does not mean education for the whole family.

Family diversity also presents an important challenge for secondary school, as it calls for a greater social openness to lifestyle choices and diversity in modern family patterns. It also demands relaxing and broadening policies and programs to better accommodate this diversity. Lastly, the many different types of families, lifestyles, and cultural backgrounds now more than ever require changes in how, when and who from the school communicates with the home.

A final factor is the community at large, which needs to be an active participant in the educational mission of secondary school, as the responsibility for education does not solely rest with the family and school. A school-community partnership fosters school democracy and brings power closer to the local community. It also encourages civic engagement on the part of the student.

Teachers Engaged In Student Success

Meeting the educational, personal and social needs of secondary students concerns all members of the school team: administrative, teaching and professional personnel, and support staff. These individuals play distinct and complementary roles within the institution, and need to agree on the values they intend to promote. They must also establish effective communication channels and their efforts must be founded on a shared desire to help the student.

Without underestimating the role and importance of any school player working with students, the pivotal role secondary school teachers play must be recognized and supported in their day-to-day practice. Indeed, an integrated response to the educational, personal and social needs of students would not be possible without the active participation of teachers, as they are the bedrock of any effort aimed at



IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE
THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF TEACHERS IN
WORKING WITH SECONDARY STUDENTS.

students. It is the teachers who are tasked with guiding students, assisting them in becoming responsible individuals, and communicating with their parents. Being a teacher demands special skills

such as having a good understanding of their students and awareness of their primary culture and incorporating this in pedagogical approaches, learning situations and evaluations, and communications with parents on the goals and objectives of education.

Acknowledging this pivotal role of teachers and the responsibilities incumbent on them requires concerted and ongoing support on the part of the school administration and other members of school personnel.

Lastly, the student-teacher relationship can also influence student development, their system of competencies, independence, and investment in learning. These factors interact not only with one another, but also with others, i.e., family and parent and peer relationships.

An Educational Environment Aligned With Student Success

Many secondary schools in Québec have been able to adapt to the needs of youth in a number of ways, notably by implementing mentoring and tutoring strategies to better follow the progress of their students. These schools have an excellent understanding of the young people attending their institution (the result of programs adopted to establish a good bridge between elementary and secondary levels) as well as their challenges, namely their educational, personal and social needs. A synergy is thus achieved by the school team, all members of which have a shared vision of their students' needs.

A great number of secondary schools have created smaller learning communities by separating the two cycles of learning or by grouping students of the same cycle according to field or degree. In some cases, this arrangement has resulted in shrinking the size of the institution by forming a “school within a school.” This type of structure



MANY SECONDARY SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUTH BY ADAPTING THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT.

also allows to accommodate the changing needs of youth throughout their developmental stages by adapting, for example, codes of conduct and ethics depending on the cycle. Moreover, this often results (particu-

larly during Cycle 1) in a smaller teacher/student ratio, thus strengthening the student-teacher relationship. It also reduces the number of 12- to 13-year-old students arriving in secondary school who require support services as they transition between educational environments.

In order to facilitate bridging different levels of instruction, secondary institutions have adopted a panoply of measures that support the passage between elementary and secondary school, to ease students' adaptation to a new environment at a critical time in their developmental stage. When planning to enter college, secondary school students greatly benefit from being informed and prepared for the new structure of instruction they will encounter in CÉGEP. Lastly, as for bridges between secondary school and vocational training and adult education, efforts to prepare youth are equally important to ensure continuity in education and following individualized educational paths for each student.

Five Model Secondary Schools

The Conseil undertook an extensive consultation of approximately 200 education players associated with five Québec secondary schools. These individuals—representing students, parents, teaching and professional personnel, support staff as well as school administrators—provided great insight into the needs of youth



THE CONSEIL INTERVIEWED APPROXIMATELY 200 PLAYERS IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY THE RIGHT LEVERS FOR MEETING THE NEEDS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS.

and on the ability of secondary school to meet them. The dialogue and players' views revealed current institutional dynamics, existing levers and obstacles, as well as

the right conditions to foster student success. The ensuing observations and analysis enabled the Conseil to identify areas for development and to formulate approaches likely to inspire and guide other school communities in responding to the needs of youth at the secondary level.¹



HOW CAN WE GUIDE THE EFFORTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS?

To inform the efforts of school players to increase their ability to meet the needs of youth, the Conseil herein presents four approaches for secondary school.

1. Promoting The Development Of Secondary School As A Social Environment Aligned With All The Needs Of Students

Throughout the stages of adolescence, secondary school takes an increasingly central role in the lives of youth. They spend a large part of their day at school learning and studying, as they are students first and foremost whose ultimate objective is to obtain a diploma. However, secondary school is also a place where peer bonding occurs and friendships are forged. It is here that young people meet many adults who may become important figures in their lives. Secondary school is also a time for passions, ideals and discovery. Young people are introduced to many activities in the fields of sports, culture and/or science. School is an exceptional environment for socialization. Secondary school as a social environment means adolescents can feel welcome, stay there outside class time, and pursue their activities and/or discover new interests.



SECONDARY SCHOOL IS A TIME FOR PASSIONS, IDEALS AND DISCOVERY.

1. Readers who wish to learn more about the views of the players can consult the unabridged version of this Brief [in French only], *Une école secondaire qui s'adapte aux besoins des jeunes pour soutenir leur réussite*.

Many local education players met by the Conseil have adopted a range of strategies to support the concept of secondary school as a social environment:

- *Values shared and understood by all school players.* The school engages all players—both internally and in the community at large—in values that reflect the educational community, and leverages the sharing and quality of relationships in carrying out its mission.
- *A heterogeneous school population.* An asset and a value, heterogeneous schools and classrooms make it possible to work in the spirit of an educational community: the classroom becomes a locus for democracy and its values, a place where students can learn first-hand how to live together.
- *A diversified education offer.* During adolescence, special school projects open the door for youth to come together around common interests, discover friends, and explore and try out new interests. Open to all, these projects can meet the needs of all types of students and make a secondary school stand out by drawing on its unique environment and community.
- *School structures aligned with students and student success.* Creating smaller learning communities by grouping students according to field, degree or cycle of learning reduces the teacher/student ratio and strengthens the student-teacher relationship. It also permits the adoption of distinct codes of conduct and ethics adapted to the two cycles of instruction.
- *Forums for exercising civic engagement.* The various structures of student representation which provide youth the opportunity to express their views and actively participate in school life are another means of building secondary school into a positive, social and study environment.
- *Stimulating and well-maintained school facilities.* Promoting the development of secondary school as a social environment also involves consideration of the school's physical facilities. Such schools are equally attentive to the technological world in which young people live and offer a virtual environment commensurate with their abilities and how they interface with the day-to-day world.

2. Strengthening The School-Family Partnership

All school players working with students share with parents the challenging mission of educating tomorrow's citizens. Given that the family is a key player in the success of the educational projects for secondary students, developing the school-family partnership should be made a priority in the coming years. To this end, secondary schools are called on to multiply and expand the means and channels of communication and dialogue with parents to encourage a greater number of them to join existing participatory structures such as governing boards.

To assist parents in assuming their responsibilities, new forms and types of school-family partnership should be explored and encouraged: parental involvement in school activities and committees; attendance at sports and artistic or cultural events; participation in training or information workshops or forums that help them follow their children's progress; meeting school personnel at report card time; attendance at governing board meetings; as well as being receptive to mutual dialogue, ideas and views, to name but a few.

Outside the school environment, parents can demonstrate their support in a variety of ways: by talking with their children about their day at school; helping them study for an exam; discussing subject selection (be it an elective course or an educational path) and future plans; or encouraging and supporting goals and achievements. In short, contributing to their child's success means adopting a supportive, open and receptive attitude toward school life. For their part, students' expectations toward their parents are quite clear: they do want their parents to take an interest in their education and be understanding, encouraging and supportive, even when courses are failed or grades are lower than expected.

In its Brief, the Conseil reiterated the value of understanding cultural diversity and modern family structures, reaching out to parents in a variety of ways, fostering dialogue between teachers and parents, promoting awareness of school and community resources available to families and being receptive to their views and contributions. New forms of school-family partnership should be explored by



THE SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP
IS A KEY PRIORITY FOR DEVELOPMENT
AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL.

leveraging the availability of some parents to liaise with other parents; by valuing all types of volunteer work; by encouraging parents to speak on or share their expertise in a given discipline or

subject; or by bolstering their full participation in school and school-related activities. Lastly, all initial training and professional development for teaching personnel should include a greater emphasis on the importance of school-family partnerships and communication with parents.

3. Supporting Teachers As Important Adult Figures and Encouraging Their Professional Development

Teachers need to be open, energetic, attentive and genuinely interested in their students' success. They must also be respectful of their students' ideas and of who they are as individuals, and capable of showing appreciation, recognition and support. For their part, students believe that mutual respect and trust are essential for any positive relationship, and express their inherent need—both human and pedagogical—for interaction with their teachers in many ways. While students appreciate that adults can inspire them to think, they also have a real need for pedagogical support that can, at times, take the form of personal help. As they are important adult figures in the lives of students, the pivotal role of teachers must be acknowledged and encouraged in day-to-day practice.

The work of teaching personnel comprises many roles: educator, instructor, subject specialist, mentor, facilitator. Good teachers are inspired and inspiring, and ideally


AS YOUTH NEEDS ARE CONSTANTLY CHANGING, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT TEACHING PERSONNEL UPGRADE THEIR SKILLS TO APPROPRIATELY MEET THESE NEEDS.

passionate about what they teach. They must possess good interpersonal and listening skills, be open-minded and engaged, and have a flair for teaching the subject well and

fostering communication among students. They must also have access to a range of current pedagogical tools: As the needs of youth are constantly changing, it is essential that teachers continually upgrade their skills and competencies to appropriately meet these needs.

To support teaching personnel in the multiple roles of their practice and assist them in meeting the needs of youth, it is important to both encourage and assure their professional development. One possible means of doing so lies in diversifying their duties.

In this regard, the Conseil proposes a novel approach of providing secondary school teaching personnel—both those with qualified research competencies or those who wish to acquire them—the benefit of a research time stipend² in order to conduct research on pedagogy or education. The ensuing research outcomes could be used to assist teachers in their various duties with adolescent students. This form of professional development could become a powerful lever in the professionalization of teachers and encourage some of them to pursue higher certification.³ In addition, access to magisterial and doctoral degrees in the field of continuing education represents an exciting opportunity, both in potential benefits for the community as well as in enhancing the value of the teaching profession.

The Conseil has examined specific arrangements in college education⁴ where teaching personnel have access to programs and funding that grant (under certain conditions) a full or partial release allowance to complete a solo or collaborative research project for the benefit of their institution or the entire college network.

2. A research time stipend is an allowance whereby teachers may be partially or fully released from their teaching duties to devote time to other teaching-related activities.
3. It is important to note that a Master's or PhD degree does not replace the current requirement of a four-year Bachelor of Education, and this must remain a prerequisite for a teaching license. Masters or PhDs are additional qualifications to pre-service training for the purpose of ongoing development and professionalization.
4. The information that follows is taken from research work conducted in 2009 by Catherine Lebossé, research agent with the Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation's Research and Studies department.

Consequently, the Conseil deems that it would be practical to diversify teaching duties, namely through research on pedagogy and education. The benefits could be many, for example: diversifying the work of teaching personnel; enhancing their knowledge on youth and their needs; finding local solutions to challenges of student motivation, perseverance and retention; developing tools for communicating with parents; fostering personal and professional renewal; increasing professional motivation and revitalizing the teaching profession.

4. Encouraging Strong Local Leadership To Ensure An Appropriate Response To The Needs Of Secondary School Students

As a social environment, secondary school cares about the transfer of the values that underlie its strengths and excellence. In such an environment, values are clearly defined and foster a sense of belonging and school community. As a corollary, parents seek out these schools because they identify with these values and find that they are reflected in the school's educational project. The stability of the administrative staff and other members of the school team is one means of ensuring the transfer of institutional values fundamental to an appropriate response to the needs of youth.

Secondary school administrations are directly involved. To ensure the continuity of institutional values and expertise in the response to the various needs of students—and to provide uninterrupted services and education links—many secondary school administrations implement participative management models whose benefits reach down to the student level. Communication, partnership and collaborative structures are established among the various school players, embodying the administration's pedagogical leadership.



LOCAL LEADERSHIP ENSURES LASTING INSTITUTIONAL VALUES AS WELL AS AN ONGOING AND CONSISTENT RESPONSE TO THE NEEDS OF YOUTH.

This local leadership, which ensures lasting institutional values as well as the continuity and consistency of the response to the needs of youth, must be

assumed at every level of the system and supported in an ongoing fashion, particularly during a transitional period such as the current implementation of the education reform. In an education community engaged in the success of each and every student, local players need to make choices at the core of many different educational objectives: the educational project,⁵ the success plan, the application of the *Basic School Regulation*, the institution's options of elective courses, and the offer of special school projects. This requires the assumption of strong and concerted local leadership, exercised primarily by the administration and the governing board of each secondary school.

5. "A school's educational project shall set out the specific aims and objectives of the school, and objectives for improving student success. It may include actions to promote those aims and objectives and integrate them into the life of the school. (...) The aims and objectives of the project objectives shall be designed to ensure that the provincial educational policy defined by law, the basic school regulation and the programs of studies established by the Minister are implemented, adapted and enriched." (The *Education Act*, s.37)

"The success plan of a school shall reflect the strategic plan of the school board and comprise (1) the measures to be taken based on the aims and objectives of the educational project, in particular, those relating to the supervision of students; (2) methods for evaluating the implementation of the success plan. (...) The success plan shall be reviewed each year and updated, if necessary." (ibid., s.37.1)

As this institutional leadership is carried out in a context of decentralization, it is important to reaffirm that strengthening the local hub could represent the most effective means to meet the needs of secondary students and guide them to success. Governing boards and administrative personnel in secondary schools—with the support and assistance of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport and school boards—assume important pedagogical and administrative responsibilities that impact the response to the educational, personal and social needs of youth.

In brief, to appropriately meet the educational, personal and social needs of youth, secondary schools need sufficient latitude to accommodate a range of institutional choices aligned with the characteristics of students, their families, and their surrounding communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To embody its proposed approaches, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation presents the following recommendations to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport, parents, and all secondary education stakeholders involved in meeting the needs of youth:

General Considerations

Considering the educational, personal and social needs of secondary school students;

Considering the role mandated to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport to oversee the stewardship of the Québec education system;

Considering the role of school boards, administrations, and school teams with respect to the needs and interests of all secondary school students;

Considering the vital role of parents play in supporting the educational path and school success of their child;

Considering the current frameworks on complementary educational services which require all school players to collectively assume the mission of meeting the needs of secondary school students;

Considering the dearth of empirical data on 12- to 17-year-old youth and their needs;

Considerations Regarding Secondary School As A Social Environment

Considering the importance at the secondary level of varying the means allowing for a response to the range of needs and interests of an increasingly heterogeneous school population;

Considering that heterogeneity in education, both in the classroom and the school, is an important feature of secondary school;

Considering the potential of diversification offered by the education reform, the curriculum, the Québec Education Program and the need to remove systemic barriers that can at times hinder their implementation;

Considerations Regarding the Professional Development of Teaching Personnel

Considering the pivotal role teaching personnel play among adolescent students;

Considering the importance of ensuring the link between initial and ongoing training of teaching personnel and the challenges facing secondary institutions and their personnel;

Considering the importance of empowering teachers with regard to their own professional development;

Considerations Regarding Local Leadership

Considering the decisive role played by educational institutions in developing a sense of belonging in school and the community, and in adhering to institutional values and the academic achievement and school success of each student;

Considering that one of the key levers of an appropriate response to the needs of secondary school students is strengthening the local hub;

Considering the value of the educational project as a cornerstone of the school success plan and the efforts of all secondary school players;

Considering the responsibility of each institution to leverage teamwork and the partnership of all local players in meeting the needs of secondary school students;

The Conseil recommends to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport:

1. To encourage local leadership so as to ensure pedagogical change in secondary schools and an appropriate response to the needs of all secondary students. To this end, it recommends to increase latitude at the local level by amending frameworks in the education system (collective agreements, the *Basic School Regulation*, budget regulations) that may hinder a school's ability to meet the needs of youth.
2. To amend collective agreements with teaching personnel to allow for a greater diversification of duties (research, facilitating, mentoring of new staff) and a redistribution of work tasks between new and more experienced teachers. To this end, it recommends supporting the testing of different research time stipend formulas for teaching personnel.
3. To fund workshops and awareness initiatives established by Québec-wide parent associations as well as those of local school boards and governing boards in the area of developing school-family partnerships at the secondary level.
4. To advance the value and quality of the Québec education system to the general public in order to promote the importance of teaching personnel as well as the pivotal role they play among adolescent students.

5. To fund research on youth aged 12-17 and their needs.
6. To ensure that school boards have the necessary means to provide a quality physical and technological environment for students and personnel, making each secondary school a social environment that is both welcoming and stimulating.
7. To provide secondary schools with technologies that spur the development of a virtual environment adapted to the needs of youth and a wider range of communications channels with parents.

○ **The Conseil recommends to parent organizations and members of school governing boards:**

8. To make the school-family partnership a priority for development at the secondary level. To this end, it recommends defining parental needs regarding information and communication with schools and supporting the efforts of governing boards in this area.

○ **The Conseil recommends to school boards and secondary school administrations:**

9. To support the school-family partnership at the secondary level by promoting the benefits of parental commitment to student success.
10. To support the student-teacher relationship by exploring various means of diversifying the duties of teaching personnel with regard to the three areas of student needs.
11. To participate in testing research time stipend formulas that would allow teaching personnel to develop research skills, participate in collaborative research and apply the results in day-to-day practice.
12. To support any upgrading initiatives established by the school team in the area of parent-teacher communication, as well as research and its applications in the fields of pedagogy and education.
13. To ensure the transfer of institutional values and culture at the secondary level by establishing structural and management frameworks for an appropriate response to the needs of youth, namely the social and professional integration of new teachers, the continuity of services and redistribution of work tasks between new and more experienced teachers.

The Conseil recommends to school teams, and in particular, teaching personnel in secondary institutions:

14. To adopt means to assist them in better understanding the students enrolled in their institutions and the needs that arise during adolescence, and to take these into account when carrying out the school's educational project and the success plan.
15. To develop and diversify the means and channels of communication and dialogue with parents and to explore the potential of their new roles in school.
16. To include within the school success plan the vital contribution of parents in the educational projects for secondary students.
17. To plan the implementation of harmonized strategies for the bridges between elementary and secondary school, between secondary and vocational training or adult education, and between the secondary and college levels, in order to mitigate the challenges these transitions present for students in their educational and personal paths.

The Conseil recommends to universities that offer initial and ongoing training for teaching personnel:

18. To place particular emphasis on the development of competencies related to parent-teacher communication, awareness of the needs that arise during adolescence and the enhancement of communications skills with adolescent students.
19. To assist teaching personnel in developing research competencies.
20. To expand research on youth aged 12 to 17 and on their educational, personal and social needs.

CONCLUSION

To meet the challenges that arise from the complex and changing needs of adolescent students—challenges that particularly concern teaching personnel and parents and which must be met one institution at a time—secondary school and its players are urged to adopt diversified means. This, in essence, is the key message of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation in its Brief *Une école secondaire qui s'adapte aux besoins des jeunes pour soutenir leur réussite* and its abridged version herein.

In the first chapter, the Conseil outlined the key stages of adolescent development and defined the resulting needs. Upon entering secondary school at the age of 11-12 until its completion at the age of 16-17, adolescents experience a series of physical, psychological and cognitive changes that affect every aspect of their school, family and social life. Gradually, they begin to solve more complex problems and acquire more in-depth knowledge in an increasingly technological environment. They interact with others, build their identities, and seek their place in society.

The Conseil also noted that secondary school is a place where peer bonding occurs and friendships are forged, a place where young people meet many adults who may become important figures in their lives. School is also a time for passions, ideals and discoveries. Young people are introduced to sports and cultural activities as well: in many ways secondary school becomes a social environment.

Given the key stages of adolescent development, 12- to 17-year-olds present distinct educational, personal and social needs. *Educational* because young people do want to succeed in studies that matter to them, and to do so requires certain conditions be in place, namely well-trained personnel engaged in their students' success. *Personal* because during secondary school young people experience developmental milestones in their lives that can at times make them more vulnerable on a personal level. Lastly, *social* because school must also be a welcoming, constructive and positive social environment. Adolescents have an inherent need for peer bonding and to develop a sense of belonging and community in school; extracurricular activities, special school projects, structures for student representation and forums of engagement all present opportunities to meet these needs.

In chapter two, the Conseil examined some conditions that can positively influence a secondary school's ability to appropriately meet the needs of youth. In doing so, the Conseil interviewed around 200 school players, students and parents associated with five secondary schools recognized for being model institutions in meeting these needs. In addition, the Conseil also reviewed the education system in Finland to learn more about the latest innovations in the field of pedagogy.

Thus, from the outset of its study on the needs of secondary school students, the Conseil sought to define conditions likely to increase a school's ability to meet these needs. Following its examination and analysis of the key stages of adolescent development, the Conseil advanced the theory (later confirmed by views expressed by players during the consultations) that a secondary school able to meet the needs of youth is a school that must have at least two of the following three conditions in place:

- The school-family partnership is very important and recognized as a factor in student success;
- The teaching personnel is highly engaged in student success and supported by other members of the school team;
- The educational environment is aligned with student success.

In the five schools consulted, several levers and a few challenges and obstacles were observed with respect to these conditions, and the Conseil acknowledged them in its Brief.

In chapter three, the Conseil formulated its approaches and recommendations, in the hope they will inspire school players as well as parents when making local decisions affecting the future of each secondary student. In its first approach, the Conseil calls for *promoting the development of secondary school as a social environment aligned with all the needs of students*, in light of secondary school's unique place during the key stages of adolescent development. In its second approach, the Conseil advises all secondary school players to *strengthen the school-family partnership*, and to make this a priority in the coming years. *Supporting teachers as important adult figures and encouraging their professional development* is the third approach, and the Conseil proposes diversifying the duties of teaching personnel and promoting the personal and professional renewal of secondary school teachers. In its the fourth approach, the Conseil suggests *encouraging strong local leadership to ensure an appropriate response to the needs of secondary school students*.

Lastly, the Conseil submitted its recommendations to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport, parents and other education stakeholders.

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The full text (in French) of the Brief

Une école secondaire qui s'adapte aux besoins des jeunes pour soutenir leur réussite

as well as its abridged versions in French and English [*A Secondary School Adapted to the Needs of Youth in Supporting Their Success*] are available on the website of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation: **www.cse.gouv.qc.ca**

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