

EDUCATIONAL PROJECT 2023-2027
PHILIP E. LAYTON
English Montreal School Board

The educational project is a strategic tool for an educational institution that defines its policy orientations, priority actions and expected results. It is a tool to inform its community with a view to ensuring educational success for all students regardless of age. The educational project reflects the characteristics and needs of the students who attend the educational institution, as well as the community's expectations regarding the education they receive. The educational project is prepared and implemented through the collaborative efforts of the various school stakeholders: students, parents, teachers, and other school staff members as well as community and school board representatives.

The educational project is part of a process designed to promote coordinated action and synergy among the various levels of the education system (MEQ, school boards and educational institutions), with due regard for their specific areas of autonomy and characteristics. This educational project must align with the English Montreal School Board's Commitment to Success Plan.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

According to the Education Act, Sections 37 and 97.1, an educational institution's educational project must include:

- a description of the context in which the institution acts and the main challenges it faces, particularly with respect to educational success and, in the case of a vocational training centre, the relevance of the training to regional or provincial labour market needs,
- the specific policy orientations of the educational institution and the objectives selected for improving educational success,
- the targets to be achieved by the end of the period covered by the educational project,
- the indicators to be used to measure achievement of these objectives and targets,
- the intervals at which the educational project is to be evaluated, determined in collaboration with the school service centre or school board.

The educational project must:

- respect the students', parents' and school staff's freedom of conscience and of religion (EA, Section 37),
- cover a period that is harmonized with the period covered by the school service centre or school board's Commitment to Success Plan and the period covered by the MEQ strategic plan (EA, Section 37.1, 97.2 and 209.1),
- comply with the terms established by the Minister to coordinate the entire strategic planning process between the educational institutions, the school service centre or school board and the MEQ (EA, Section 459.3),
- be consistent with the school service centre's or school board's Commitment to Success Plan (EA, sections 37 and 97.1).

COMPOSITION OF THE SCHOOL TEAM

This educational project was created by a school team that included the principal, vice-principal and teachers.

GROUPS CONSULTED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

- The parent community at large
- All EMSB school staff, including teachers and support staff
- Students (focus group)

SCHOOL PROFILE

Philip E. Layton School is a Social Affairs School under the mandate of the English Montreal School Board. The school works in collaboration with the Rehabilitation Program in Specialized School (RPSS) team of the Lethbridge-Layton-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre (LLMRC) and the Integrated Health and Social Service Centre (CIUSSS) for Centre-Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal. Philip E. Layton is the only Anglophone school with the mandate to service visually impaired students in Quebec. It has a supra-regional mandate and accepts children from the island of Montreal, Laval, the West Island, and the South and North Shores. In addition, because of its supra-regional mandate, the school provides itinerant vision services to support blind and visually impaired students in all English school board across the province of Quebec.

Philip E. Layton School offers a full day schooling to 51 students aged 4 to 21. There are 25 teachers in the school, 21 teachers teaching at Philip E. Layton School and 4 vision itinerant teachers. The rest of staff is composed of 11 attendants, 1 daycare staff, 1 special education consultant, as well as rehabilitation staff (speech and language pathologists, physiotherapists, educators, orientation and mobility specialists, vision rehabilitation specialist, PABs, nurses, occupational therapists). All students are admitted to the Lethbridge- Layton- Mackay Rehabilitation Centre first, and then are screened by a joint-admission committee for admission into the school.

Students can be divided into two main groups: those who are blind or visually impaired with no other disabilities and blind or visually impaired students with multiple disabilities (Cerebral Palsy, Autism and/or other rare syndromes and conditions). Our non-verbal students are taught to use augmentative alternative communication technologies in order to facilitate communication and participation in daily activities.

STUDENTS' MEDICAL PROFILES

Along with their visual impairment or blindness, some students may experience seizures or have severe motor disabilities, genetic syndromes, cerebral palsy, etc. The majority of students are dependent on assistance for Activities of Daily Living (ADL). This includes dressing and undressing, toileting, transferring, feeding, swimming and physical education (one- on- one). This also includes communication, one- on -one for mobility and other unstructured activities.

PROGRAMS

- Quebec Education programs taught at Philip E. Layton: C.A.S.P., Profound, modified and where appropriate regular QEP
- Braille Instruction
- Vision stimulation programs, Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) interventions
- Physical education and swimming program
- Access to specialized technology: augmentative communication instructions for students who are non-verbal and or have limited communication (switches, iPads)
- Resource Support

CURRICULUM INFORMATION

The curriculum at Philip E. Layton School (PEL) aims to ensure the greatest possible social participation by students in all environments. In collaboration with our rehab partners we aim to work together to develop competencies relating to knowledge, communication, gross and fine motor skills, socialization, and community life.

The educational programming offered allows us to organize our services to ensure that the individual needs of students are met, based on their own abilities and pace of learning. More importantly, the goal is, if possible, to develop in our students a sense of autonomy, by teaching them to express comfort, discomfort, preferences, etc. Teachers offer students opportunities to manipulate, explore and experiment (one example, cooking). Students at PEL are supported in communication, through the use of technical aids such as pictograms, gestures and tactile representations of objects.

A partnership between Rehab and Education has brought about the infusion of a CVI (cortical visual impairment) based curriculum. This includes visual stimulation activities based on music, lighting and sound.

Tactile Literacy

Access to literacy for PEL students is facilitated by the use of tactile books created by teachers. PEL students experience their literacy through touch, sound and smell. Creating and using tactile books ensures that students are exposed to literacy skills in a way that is meaningful and relevant to them.

Tactile System

The anticipation bins are used as a frame of reference for each activity, a start and finish that is concrete. Teachers use objects that the students recognize and interact with daily to implement routine and structure.

Braille

Pre-Braille and early braille users are provided with many opportunities to explore a variety of tactile books and materials to practice tracking skills as well as tactile discriminations skills. Pre- braille and beginner braille users are given opportunities to write using different braille tools (braille slate, swing cell, braille note and Perkins brailier). As the student becomes more proficient in braille, they are given a variety of braille texts at their reading level to encourage reading fluidity skills and foster a love of reading. As their braille writing skills improve, they continue to produce work using a brailier. They are also taught how to use a computer braille display to complete written assignments and navigate the internet.

MISSION AND VALUES

MISSION

Philip E. Layton School, a school for the blind and visually impaired, in cooperation with the community, encourages each child to learn and to develop their fullest potential within a safe, nurturing and respectful environment, and helps them to achieve a level of independence which would enable them to integrate into the community.

VALUES:

Philip E. Layton School believes that:

- All visually impaired students, regardless of additional handicaps, have the right to learn in an environment adapted to their needs. This could range from a small self-contained class to an integrated setting.
- The educational setting of a visually impaired student should provide them with the tools necessary to access the curriculum and to participate in activities of daily living.

THE CONSULTATION

The school team sent an online survey to the parents of Philip E. Layton students. The school's teachers and support staff were also surveyed, and the results were shared in a staff meeting. Finally, students were consulted through a focus group.

Parents expressed appreciation for the individualized support each student receives. All groups agreed that the school provides a safe environment that is conducive to providing care for students who have multi-layered needs. Students said that they really enjoyed the learning activities that are prepared for them in the various subject areas. Staff noted that the collaborative work between the school and rehabilitation staff is germane to ensuring high quality care for students throughout the year.

Parents also expressed that they would like to have more strategies to use with students in the home setting. Students had a specific request about making fire drills quieter. Overall, the staff would like to continue to receive professional development in areas of special needs. They continue to seek out new ways to reduce the disruptions experienced because of the needs of student care during teaching time, which is an ongoing challenge within this environment.

ORIENTATIONS

The academic section of the educational project is designed to align with the school board's Commitment to Success Plan. While the Board acknowledges the importance of all subjects and grades in student development, the primary focus for reporting is on core subjects in most schools. For schools that have a greater number of students with special needs and or a unique student population, it is recognized that each school must establish objectives that assist parents and or caregivers in understanding the progress of each student's learning journey. While all students receive provincial report cards, it is important to note that our students have diverse and often complex needs, which can be reflected in academic marks below grade level according to provincial norms. The objectives outlined in this educational project aim to provide more comprehensive feedback to parents and caregivers regarding the progress, strengths and challenges of each student.

COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is fundamental to the well-being and development of all individuals, particularly for students with special needs. The ability to express one's needs, wants, and thoughts is not only a basic human right but also a cornerstone of meaningful education and social interaction. For students with special needs, communication challenges can significantly impact their ability to participate fully in educational activities and engage meaningfully with others. Recognizing this, the Board is committed to ensuring that all students have access to the necessary tools and support to communicate effectively. Where appropriate, the Board is working to provide students with communication devices and assistive technologies to enhance their ability to express themselves and engage with their environment. By empowering students to communicate their needs and wants, we are fostering their independence, self-advocacy, and a positive quality of life.

- **GOAL: To ensure that all students have access to devices and equipment, and are efficient in using them, to appropriately and effectively communicate their needs and desires.**

Regular and meaningful communication with parents is essential, particularly for students with moderate to severe special needs. Parents play a crucial role in supporting their child's development and education. Keeping them informed about their child's progress is key to this partnership. While all students in the province receive a provincial report card, our school recognizes that these report cards are unable to take into consideration the wide array of needs, strengths and challenges that affect student performance. We aim to provide regular updates to parents throughout the year, ensuring they are informed about their child's achievements, challenges, and overall development. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of each student's progress and enables us to work collaboratively with parents to provide the best possible support and learning experiences for every student.

- **GOAL: To provide parents with regular feedback concerning student progress in addition to report card marks.**

SCHOOL CLIMATE

Creating a positive school climate is essential for the holistic development of all students, especially in a special needs setting. At PEL, we understand that a nurturing and inclusive environment significantly impacts student learning and well-being. One of the critical components of fostering a positive school climate is actively seeking and incorporating feedback from our students. Their insights are invaluable in

shaping a supportive and responsive educational experience. When students feel accepted, respected, listened to, and connected to their school community, their confidence and motivation to learn increases. By prioritizing these elements, we aim to create an environment where every student feels valued, heard and empowered to reach their full potential.

EMSB schools use a survey tool to gather feedback from students about their school experiences. Alternative schools, because of their small student populations, use an annual focus group format with questions for students about their school life and what improvements can be made from their perspective.

- **GOAL: To implement an annual focus group for students concerning their well-being at school and identifying areas for improvement.**

Building strong community partnerships is essential for special needs schools to foster equity and create meaningful opportunities for diversity and inclusion. By collaborating with local organizations and other schools, we can provide our students with enriching experiences alongside their peers from various backgrounds. These partnerships can open doors for our students to participate in a wide array of activities, enhancing their social skills and broadening their horizons.

- **GOAL: To explore opportunities for student exchange and collaboration with other schools and community groups.**

DIGITAL COMPETENCY

In 2018, the MEQ launched its Digital Action Plan which was its blueprint for the integration of digital technology and associated innovative pedagogical practices into the education sector. In 2019, the MEQ published its Digital Competency Framework with 12 dimensions, which was derived from the Digital Action Plan.

The Digital Competency is not only for students, but also for teachers. Teachers will continue to receive professional development to increase their grasp of the 12 dimensions.

- **GOAL: To continue building capacity in the digital competency through professional development.**

APPENDIX: OBJECTIVES AT A GLANCE

GOAL	Specific Initiatives Towards Improvement
To ensure that all students have access to devices and equipment and are efficient in using them to appropriately and effectively communicate their needs and desires.	
To provide parents with regular feedback concerning student progress in addition to report card marks.	
To implement an annual focus group for students concerning their well-being at school and identifying areas for improvement.	
To explore opportunities for student exchange and collaboration with other schools and community groups.	
To continue building capacity in the digital competency.	