école ensemble

2022

PLAN FOR A COMMON SCHOOL NETWORK

RAISE YOUR HAND FOR A BETTER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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About École ensemble

Founded by concerned parents in June 2017, École ensemble's mission is for Quebec to have an equitable education system by eliminating the school segregation caused by subsidized private and selective public school networks.

Acknowledgements

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LEARNING TOGETHER AT LAST: PLAN FOR A COMMON SCHOOL NETWORK

The Quebec school system is unfair. Based on a market-oriented rationale, schools compete for the most profitable students in terms of income and academic achievements. The result is an inefficient and inequitable education system — the most unequal in the country according to the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation. Accordingly, we must act so that Quebec students learn together, regardless of their socio-economic background.

This plan proposes the creation of a **common network** that will protect **public schools** and **contracted private schools** from the education market.

All schools in the common network will have their own catchment area and will no longer be allowed to select students. By eliminating student selection, we are also removing the right to charge tuition fees: students will attend their local school, **regardless of their parents' ability to pay**. Contracted private schools will therefore be **entirely financed** by the state, exactly like public schools.

Contracted private schools will retain their current legal status and their **management autonomy** with respect to their board of directors, recruiting of a chief executive by the board, hiring of staff, collective agreement negotiation and work organization. Some private schools already operate with management autonomy and 100 percent public funding: indeed, a dozen **private schools specializing** in special education have been operating this way for decades.

Alternatively, existing private schools that choose not to be part of the common network will be able to have a **non-contracted private school** status. These schools will **not receive any public funding**, either directly or indirectly. They will retain their right to select their clientele and so will not have a school catchment area.

Including existing private schools into the common network will represent an additional cost for the public purse, whereas not doing so will represent a saving. According to a commissioned study conducted by François Delorme, an economist at the University of Sherbrooke, the implementation of the common network will eventually result in **net annual savings of about $100 million** in public funds.

The **transition period** from the current system to the common network will be gradual, over six years. **Union certifications** for current private schools will be maintained.

All schools in the common network will offer **every student** the choice between different **free elective courses** based on the **fifth period model**. With this model, the time allocated to the current four daily periods is reduced to allow for the creation of a fifth period that is used for elective courses that enhance general education. The additional costs of this measure are estimated at **$43 million**.

An **equitable school map** will be created for each school service centre or school board, based on the innovative concept of **optimized school catchment areas**. The use of optimized catchment areas will prevent neighbourhood residential segregation from extending to school settings. This tool will allow **mapping according to clear criteria** and guarantee students access to a **local** school and true socio-economic balance. A proof of concept was developed for the Laval school service centre in collaboration with the University of Zurich.

Some territories include large underprivileged areas. In some instances, it may prove impossible to create equitable school catchment areas while guaranteeing access to a local school. In such cases, a range of compensatory measures to **mitigate this situation** will be offered to schools in the common network.

The Plan for a Common School Network is pragmatic, ambitious and innovative. It will allow Quebec's children to learn together at last.

PREAMBLE

OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM IS UNFAIR

Quebec's school system is unfair. Based on a market-oriented rationale, schools compete for the most profitable students in terms of income and academic results. By allowing subsidized private schools and selective public schools to choose their clientele, the system creates few winners and many losers. The consequences of this situation, which is unworthy of a democratic society, should concern us all.

We must take an honest look at some of the realities of the Quebec education model:

1. Private schools are subsidized by the state. A student in a private school receives 75% of the public funds that an equivalent student in the public system receives.
2. The subsidized private school system is gaining a greater market share. It has gone from 5% in 1970 to 21% now at the secondary level — with higher levels of 39% in Montréal and 42% in Québec City.
3. The authorities have responded to the private schools' skimming of students from the public system by creating a selective public network that also has the right to select its students. The number of students enrolled in the selective public system is estimated to be at least 20% at the secondary level.
4. At the same time, regular public schools are faced with a heavier workload due to an overrepresentation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with learning disabilities.
5. This new composition of the regular classroom, increasingly skimmed, reinforces the interest in subsidized private schools and the selective public system: the vicious circle of school segregation seems inevitable.

The result is an inefficient and inequitable education system, the most unequal in the country according to the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation. The effects of the education system that Quebecers have given themselves are multi-faceted: student dropout (highest rate in the country), teacher dropout (a quarter of teachers leave the profession during their first five years), insufficient literacy (53% of 16-65 year-olds have low or insufficient literacy skills) and perpetuation of inequalities.

Accordingly, it was for good reason that the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights formally asked the Quebec government in 2020 to specify "Measures taken to ensure that students have equal access to education under the three-tier school system in Quebec, regardless of the economic status of their parents".

Since the publication in 2016 of the ***Steering the Course Back to Equity in Education*** report by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, it is no longer possible to ignore the fact that Quebec's education system undermines the principle of equal opportunity. This flagship document sheds light on what has long been our collective blind spot.

Excerpts:

"The most equitable systems are those where socio-economic background has the least influence on student and school results." *(translated freely)*

"The analyses conducted by the Conseil show that, within Canada, Quebec is the province where the difference in achievement between students from schools in disadvantaged areas and those in affluent ones is the greatest, and markedly so." *(translated freely)*

"From this perspective, the Quebec school system is less equitable than those of other Canadian provinces. In other words, within Canada, it is in Quebec that PISA test results are most closely linked to the socio-economic and cultural status of schools." *(translated freely)*

"The analysis also shows that the stratification of the offer in compulsory education — brought about by a proliferation of selective special programs and private schools — is leading to an unequal treatment that tends to favour the more fortunate. In other words, those who most need the best learning conditions are not benefiting from them, and this runs counter to the very essence of equity."

"Rather than reducing social inequality, however, the Quebec education system operates in ways that contribute in some extent to perpetuating it. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with learning disabilities are overrepresented in public classrooms, and this is creating environments less conducive for learning (and teaching)."

"Competition in education goes hand in hand with the belief that not all schools are alike, and is feeding a crisis of confidence that is weakening the public education system. This crisis reinforces the tendency to group students by educational and or socio-economic profiles, resulting in a form of exclusion that is opening the door to a multi-tiered school. Thus a gap is growing between communities, with some institutions or classrooms viewed as less conducive for learning (shunned by those families who can) and working conditions more challenging (shunned by those teachers who can)."

"The Conseil would like to point out that a wealth of research has shown heterogeneous groups to be the most efficient and equitable. Indeed, academically speaking, while the tendency to homogenize classes does not appear to significantly impact those students who learn easily, it is particularly detrimental to students who are more at risk. More importantly, homogenization diminishes the opportunity for a diverse group of students to sit side by side every day, an essential prerequisite for learning tolerance, solidarity and how to live together. The Conseil sees a serious threat here, not only to the system's equity but also to its overall efficiency."

"It is particularly important to avoid a lowest common denominator mindset, to build on the potential of students and to maintain high expectations for every single student."
(translated freely)

"Since it is possible to improve the education system's overall performance without harming the best students, it is in the best interest of governments to explore all the options available to them in order to promote greater social diversity within classes and schools."
(translated freely)

"The unequal treatment observed is unacceptable and avoidable." *(translated freely)*

We believe, as does the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, that the unequal treatment of Quebec students is unacceptable. And that these inequities are avoidable — the objective of our plan is to propose to the legislator a roadmap so that Quebec's children can learn together at last.

OUR PLAN

To put an end to the consequences of the widespread competition between subsidized private schools, selective public schools and regular public schools at the elementary and secondary levels in Quebec, École ensemble proposes the creation of a common network that will protect public schools and contracted private schools from education markets. Private schools that choose not to be part of the common network will be given a non-contracted private school status but will continue to be regulated by the Ministère de l'Éducation.

This new institutional architecture is supported by four pillars that are at the basis of our Plan for a Common School Network:

1. ENSURING ACCESS TO NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHOOLS

2. OFFERING ALL STUDENTS A CHOICE OF ELECTIVE COURSES

3. CREATING EQUITABLE SCHOOL MAPS

4. MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF DISADVANTAGE

PILLAR 1

ENSURING ACCESS TO NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHOOLS

Many parents believe that they can choose their children's school. In reality, it is the subsidized private and selective public schools that choose their students. This education market, where schools compete for the most profitable students (in terms of income and academic achievement), operates at the expense of regular public schools, which are unable to respond to this unfair competition. The allocation of students through this market lies at the heart of inequity in the Quebec school system. To address this injustice, we are first focusing on proximity.

Students will attend schools based on their local catchment area. Public and contracted private elementary and secondary schools in Quebec will no longer have the right to select their students. In other words: one address, one catchment area, one school. This approach will mark the end of competition among schools within the common network.

- As a result, no choice regarding the school to attend will need to be made in the common network. The only decision to make will be to enroll in the common network or in a non-contracted private school.

- Offloading students with poor academic results from contracted private schools to public schools will not be permitted.

- Public and contracted private schools will no longer be able to accept boys or girls only, nor only children of a given religion or ethnic group.

- Eliminating student selection also implies the abolishment of the right to charge tuition fees: students will be enrolled in their school, regardless of their parent's ability to pay. Education will be free for all within the common network.

    - Contracted private schools will therefore be entirely financed by the state, i.e., as much as public schools. Non-contracted private schools, on the other hand, will not receive any public funding, either directly or indirectly. Thus including existing private schools into the common network will represent an additional cost for the public purse, whereas not doing so will represent a saving.

    - A study commissioned to François Delorme, an economist at the University of Sherbrooke, shows that implementing a common network will eventually result in net annual savings of about $100 million in public funds.

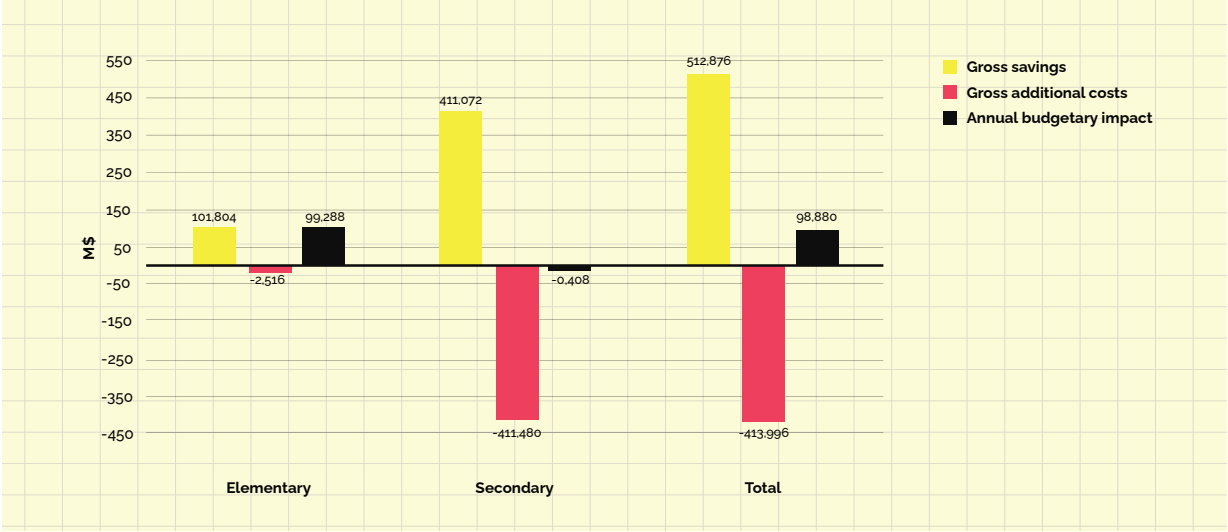
    - Our base scenario (6% of elementary school students and 6.7% of secondary school students enrolled in non-contracted private schools – a scenario based on [unsubsidized] private schools attendance ratios in Ontario), and after the transition period, the additional costs related to operating under a contract with the state are $414 million, while the savings of being non-contracted schools are $513 million, for a positive annual balance of $99 million.

Note 1 (p. 30) explains the scenarios analysed.[1]

1 The economic study *Plan pour un réseau scolaire commun : Estimation des impacts budgétaires de la réforme proposée* (François Delorme et al., March 2022) is available online. www.ecoleensemble.com/reseaucommun

Base scenario:

gross savings, gross additional costs and annual budgetary impact
Québec, 2018-2019



These numbers are based on the most recent available data (2018-19); the budget of the Ministère de l'Éducation (pre-school/elementary/secondary sector) in that fiscal year was $10.5 billion.

Contracted Private Schools

Contracted private schools will retain their current legal status and their management autonomy (board of directors, recruiting of a chief executive by the board, hiring of staff, collective agreement negotiation and work organization).

Some private schools already operate according to this model, combining management autonomy and 100 percent public funding. A dozen private schools specializing in special education have been operating this way for decades.

- Contracted public schools will have to be publicly accountable for the public funds they receive (through publication of financial statements [including those of their foundation] and an annual report).
- They will be subject to the Student Ombudsman, the Basic school regulation, the Quebec Education Program, the hiring of legally qualified teachers (Regulation respecting teaching licences), the certification of studies (ministerial examinations) and the renewal of permits before the Commission consultative de l'enseignement privé.
- They must be non-profit.
- Their current union certifications will be maintained.

Only existing private schools will be able to join the common network. The creation *ex nihilo* of a contracted private school will be forbidden.

Inspiration From Finland and Quebec

The concept of contracted private schools is inspired by the Finnish model, in which private schools were integrated into a common system with public schools in the 1970s. Finnish private schools kept their legal status and autonomy and were given a catchment area like public schools. They lost their right to charge tuition fees and were financed by public funds, in the same fashion as public schools. Finnish private schools have given up the concept of exclusivity and are rallying behind a common goal — educating the country's children — with amazing success.

The notion of contracted private schools is also inspired by the Parent Report which proposed the creation of "semi-public" schools.

The relevant details are contained in Volume 3 of the Parent Report (1966):

"What we propose is a clearer definition of the relationship between private education and the school system as a whole and a better understanding of the public duties assumed by private education. The terms "private institution" or "private sector of education" no longer seem to us accurately to describe the position and the function of the institutions which will be asked to play a part in educational development plans, to help inaugurate educational reforms and to benefit by financial assistance from the state. We suggest that henceforth the designation "private institution" be applied only to institutions which abstain from active collaboration with the public sector, and that the others be called "semi-public"."

"A semi-public institution which receives from a public body grants equivalent to the expenditures authorized in the public sector must in return accept admission standards comparable to those of the public institutions with which it collaborates. In practice, this means that it must accept all pupils who apply to it in order to receive the education it dispenses, provided that these pupils meet the requirements fixed in the agreement and live within an area which has been jointly defined. A semi-public institution cannot require these students to pay supplemental tuition fees; it must comply with the same provisions regarding free education as the public sector. The same principle applies to the compensation and working conditions of administrative and teaching personnel. The standards set by the Department with regard to grants made to public bodies must likewise apply to semi-public institutions. To act otherwise would be tantamount to the state's using its own funds to compete with itself and to lowering the standards of public education."

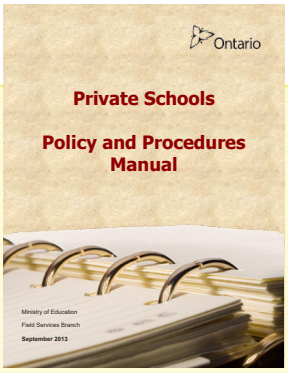
Non-Contracted Private Schools

Non-contracted private schools will continue to be subject to the existing standards for subsidized private schools.

- **They will maintain their right to select their clientele and will not have a school catchment area.**
- **However, they will no longer receive any public funds, either directly through subsidies or indirectly through funding for school transportation, for example.**
- **Despite the fact that they are not subsidized, non-contracted private schools will be inspected by the Ministère de l'Éducation, as is the case in Ontario [see sidebar].**
- **Current union certifications will be maintained.**
- **International human rights law establishes that the state must allow educational institutions to operate outside of the public system. It is also recognized that the state generally has no obligation to fund private educational establishments. The Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms recognizes the right of parents to "choose private educational establishments for their children, provided such establishments comply with the standards prescribed or approved by virtue of the law." However, as international law dictates, the Charter does not recognize any right to state subsidies.**
  - By not proposing to nationalize private schools, this plan respects the right of private institutions to operate outside of the public system. Moreover, by having the option to be part of the common network, private schools can maintain their teaching mission and their autonomy, while at the same time not being part of the education market and thus contributing to the education of all Quebec children.

The Ontario Model

Although private schools in Ontario do not receive public funding, they are inspected by the Ministry of Education. Their official status is that of "inspected private schools." The *Private Schools Policy and Procedures Manual* outlines the Ontario government's requirements "and the consequences of non-compliance, which can include fines, loss of credit-granting authority and possible school closure."



International and Alternative Schools

Within the common network, public international and alternative schools will be able to maintain their teaching philosophy and will henceforth accept students from their school catchment area. It should be noted that some international and alternative schools already refrain from selecting students in Quebec, such as the new École internationale Sacré-Coeur in Rouyn and the École alternative de la Tortue des bois in Mauricie. These public schools have a special program that benefits all students in their community.

The values behind the common network, such as accepting diversity and community building, are in fact perfectly in line with the founding principles of international and alternative schools.

Transition Period

The transition is planned over a six-year period. The following table gives more details regarding student allocation and subsidies at the secondary level.

This transition allows all parents of current subsidized private schools to benefit from free schooling as of Year 1, based on the decision made by their school to operate under a contract with the state.

The transition period also avoids a rate shock for parents whose children attend a subsidized private school that would choose to operate outside of the common network.

In budgetary terms, the transition will be completed in six years. Each year, the savings associated with the phased elimination of public funding to non-contracted private schools will increase. Ultimately, the Quebec government will save $99 million annually in our base scenario (6% of elementary students and 6.7% of secondary students attend non-contracted private schools).

Transition from subsidized private school to contracted / non-contracted private school

OPTION 1: SUBSIDIZED PRIVATE SCHOOL DECIDING TO OPERATE AS A CONTRACTED PRIVATE SCHOOL						
Secondary	Currently	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
I	Selected students	Catchment area students	Catchment area students	Catchment area students	Catchment area students	Catchment area students
	Subsidized tuition fees	Free education	Free education	Free education	Free education	Free education
II	Selected students	Selected students	Catchment area students	Catchment area students	Catchment area students	Catchment area students
	Subsidized tuition fees	Free education	Free education	Free education	Free education	Free education
III	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Catchment area students	Catchment area students	Catchment area students
	Subsidized tuition fees	Free education	Free education	Free education	Free education	Free education
IV	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Catchment area students	Catchment area students
	Subsidized tuition fees	Free education	Free education	Free education	Free education	Free education
V	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Catchment area students
	Subsidized tuition fees	Free education	Free education	Free education	Free education	Free education

OPTION 2: SUBSIDIZED PRIVATE SCHOOL DECIDING TO OPERATE AS A NON-CONTRACTED PRIVATE SCHOOL						
Secondary	Currently	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
I	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students
	Subsidized tuition fees	Full tuition fees	Full tuition fees	Full tuition fees	Full tuition fees	Full tuition fees
II	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students
	Subsidized tuition fees	Subsidized tuition fees	Full tuition fees	Full tuition fees	Full tuition fees	Full tuition fees
III	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students
	Subsidized tuition fees	Subsidized tuition fees	Subsidized tuition fees	Full tuition fees	Full tuition fees	Full tuition fees
IV	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students
	Subsidized tuition fees	Subsidized tuition fees	Subsidized tuition fees	Subsidized tuition fees	Full tuition fees	Full tuition fees
V	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students	Selected students
	Subsidized tuition fees	Subsidized tuition fees	Subsidized tuition fees	Subsidized tuition fees	Subsidized tuition fees	Full tuition fees

Budgetary Impact – Transition (Base Scenario)

Level	Year since implementation 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	% non-contracted private schools
GROSS SAVINGS ASSOCIATED WITH ELIMINATING SUBSIDIES FOR NON-CONTRACTED PRIVATE SCHOOLS, 2018-19 (000$)								
Elementary	0	16,967	33,935	50,902	67,869	84,837	101,804	-
Secondary	0	82,214	164,429	246,643	328,858	411,072	411,072	-
Total	**0**	**99,182**	**198,363**	**297,545**	**396,727**	**495,909**	**512,876**	**-**
GROSS ADDITIONAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH INCREASING SUBSIDIES FOR CONTRACTED PRIVATE SCHOOLS, 2018-19 (000$)								
Elementary	0	2,516	2,516	2,516	2,516	2,516	2,516	-
Secondary	0	411,480	411,480	411,480	411,480	411,480	411,480	-
Total	**0**	**413,996**	**413,996**	**413,996**	**413,996**	**413,996**	**413,996**	**-**
BUDGETARY IMPACT, 2018-19 (000$)								
Elementary	0	14,452	31,419	48,386	65,354	82,321	99,289	6.0%
Secondary	0	-329,266	-247,051	-164,837	-82,622	-408	-408	6.7%
Total	**0**	**-314,814**	**-215,632**	**-116,450**	**-17,269**	**81,913**	**98,880**	**6.3%**

Contracted Private School Foundations

Despite the fact that contracted private school foundations will no longer benefit selected students, contracted private schools could still benefit in the long-term from the actual funds of their foundation. This situation would create inequity with regard to public schools. Accordingly, the new common network must address this injustice.

Therefore, we propose that the legislator:

1. ask the Canada Revenue Agency not to grant charitable status to school foundations;
2. produce the balance sheet of contracted private school foundations;
3. once the balance sheet is available, make a one-time payment to school service centres or school boards' foundations comparable to the capital held by contracted private school foundations.

This approach will compensate public schools while not taking anything away from contracted private school foundations. It should be noted that almost half of the school foundations assets are actually made up of public funds provided through tax credits.

PILLAR 2

OFFERING ALL STUDENTS A CHOICE OF ELECTIVE COURSES

Each secondary school will offer all of its students a choice between different elective courses, ensuring that this choice does not have segregating consequences. Selecting students within a school will therefore no longer be allowed. A school will not be able to select students for elective courses based on academic results or fees, as is the case with many current special projects, concentrations or profiles.

Diversifying Equitably

In its *Special School Projects in Secondary Education: Diversifying Equitably* report published in 2007, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation expressed concern about the inconsistent development of special school projects in Quebec. The Conseil recognized various positive impacts of special projects (improved basic general education; recognition and promotion of fields of interest in various learning areas; greater number of involved and motivated students; creation of engaged and collaborative school teams; greater parent interest and satisfaction; more dynamic school boards and secondary schools). But it also criticized the risks:

- Fragmentation of a common education
- Exclusion of some youth
- Skimming of regular classrooms
- Unequal onus of integrating students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties
- Unfair distribution of teachers' workloads
- Competition among public schools

Fifth period model

In order to retain the benefits of special projects while eliminating the associated risks, this plan recommends that elective courses be offered to all students based on the fifth period model. This approach involves reducing the time allocated to the current four daily periods to allow for the creation of a fifth period used for elective courses that enhance general education.

Note 2 (p. 31) gives more details regarding the fifth period model.

This model has been in place for a decade and has won wide support among the school community: students, parents, teachers, administrators, unions and school service centres see it as a success story that could inspire all of Quebec.

Although the fifth period model is essentially a turnkey solution, some schools could also suggest a model that allows a non-segregative choice of elective courses. We recommend that local innovation in this area be allowed but that schools be required to respect the following guidelines:

- Students must choose their elective courses freely: selection based on fees, grades or behaviour is forbidden.
- The prescribed instructional time per subject must be respected.

We recommend that the legislator cover the costs related to elective courses ($43 million annually — see Note 2).

It should also be noted that extracurricular activities (e.g., lunchtime sports, inter-school sports, various clubs) are maintained and that the schools' current concentrations (e.g., circus, soccer) — for which they already have expertise — can be redeployed in the fifth period.

Federation sports programs

With regard to the Sport-études programs of sports federations (which concern 2% of secondary school students), we propose to transform them into federation sports programs.

Designation

As the Ministère de l'Éducation points out, sports special projects are sometimes mistakenly referred to as Sport-études concentrations, when this designation should be reserved for programs designed for student-athletes identified by their own sports federation.

Note 3 (p. 35) explains the proposal under which admission to a federation sports program will no longer be linked to the school attended by the student.

Optional courses

Optional mathematics and science courses offered in Secondary 4 and 5 may have a segregating effect by grouping students in these enriched options together for all their classes.

Note 4 (p. 37) presents a proposal to reduce the segregating nature of these optional courses, some of which are prerequisites for CEGEP programs.

PILLAR 3

CREATING EQUITABLE SCHOOL MAPS

The boundaries of the school catchment areas will be established in such a way as to optimize proximity, school capacity and socio-economic mixing, **the aim being that school catchment areas within the same territory should be as similar as possible**. Optimized school catchment areas will prevent the non-mix of some residential neighbourhoods from extending to school settings.

Note 5 (p.38) presents an equitable school map proof of concept for the Laval school service centre.

Optimized school catchment areas will therefore:

1. **minimize the distance between home and school for students;**
2. **reflect the school's capacity;**
3. **be socio-economically similar to each other.**

Given the importance of proximity for elementary school students, the distance factor will be given more weight in elementary school maps. This weighting will lead to the creation of catchment areas that are somewhat less similar to each other from a socio-economic point of view. This result is an acceptable compromise in the special case of the elementary level because proximity and safety must come first and the question of school segregation is most problematic at the secondary level.

It is worth noting that, overall, the number of kilometres travelled by Quebec students to get to school will be considerably reduced due to the common network, with corresponding savings in terms of time and greenhouse gas emissions. Our model for Laval establishes an average home-to-school distance of 4 km. The current average distance is unknown, but it is certainly higher because of out-of-neighbourhood trips to selective public and subsidized private schools.

- In the event that two secondary schools in the common network are located very close to each other, it would be possible to group them so that one offers the first cycle and the other offers the second cycle.
- The school catchment maps for the francophone, anglophone and First Nations networks will be distinct.
- "Welcome classes" (linguistic, educational and social integration) are maintained.
- When parents are separated, the current rules will apply (parents who live in two different catchment areas choose which catchment area the child will belong to).
- The current regional catchment areas for schools and classes dedicated to special education (students with disabilities, social maladjustments or learning disabilities) will remain the same.
- Professional services (speech therapy, etc.) will be allocated by the common network.

Optimized Catchment Areas and Students with Special Needs

In its *Toward a School Enriched by All its Students* report published in 2017, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation discusses special needs students. The Conseil finds that "funding services regardless of the diagnosis of children is a shared concern. The main challenge is to allocate resources equitably according to the needs of each setting. The greater the diversity of school environments across the system (low school and social mixing), the more complex the mechanism to achieve equitable distribution of resources." *(translated freely)*

Equitable school maps will be key in establishing a simpler and fairer distribution of resources.

Similar to electoral maps, school maps will be redrawn periodically to take into account changes in the environment, such as new neighbourhoods, new schools and demographics. Based on the model of Élections Québec and its Commission de la représentation électorale (CRE), the Ministère de l'Éducation could create an independent entity to review school maps. The National Assembly could also entrust this mandate directly to the CRE, as the latter's founding legislation allows.

Choice of a Socio-Economic Mixing Index

The school map model presented in this plan was developed in collaboration with researchers from the University of Zurich and the Université de Montréal. The main socio-economic mixing criterion used to design the catchment areas is *the percentage of families in which a parent holds a university degree.* This factor is the strongest predictor of access to higher education. It is worth noting here that there is also a strong correlation between education and income. Moreover, education provides income stability throughout life and protects against labour market fluctuations.

The socio-economic environment index (SEI) used by the Ministère de l'Éducation could not be used in the school map model, because it takes into account the characteristics of the environment as opposed to those of the students. The Ministère recognized the limitations of its index in its 2003 Education Statistics Bulletin *(The School Population Map and Poverty Indices)*, which are amplified by the expansion of the selective public network:

"The index attributed to this student does not always reflect his or her family circumstances. Given that each student brings to the school the value of the index of his or her territorial unit, the index calculated for the school suffers from the same distortion. Consequently, a school should not be described as being made up of disadvantaged students, but rather of students from disadvantaged areas."

"There is an increasingly pressing need to find an alternate solution, given that more and more special programs are being implemented in public schools, and that these schools will have a tendency to select the strongest students, as private schools do now. These students, whose family environment tends to be more favourable than that of most other students in the territorial unit, will bring the index of their unit with them to the school. As a result, the poverty index of a school that uses selective admission procedures will not be representative of the actual family characteristics of such students (probable overestimation of disadvantage)."

PILLAR 4

MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF DISADVANTAGE

Some school service centre / school board territories include large disadvantaged areas. In these instances, it will sometimes be impossible to create equitable school catchment areas (that are similar to each other in their territory) while respecting the maximum home-to-school distance. In such cases, this plan proposes that a **series of compensatory measures be offered to schools in the common network whose catchment areas differ significantly in terms of socio-economic diversity from those of other schools in their territory.**

- Compensation will vary according to the level of inequity in the identified catchment areas. Compensation could take the form of infrastructure (retrofits, expansion, new building) or special budgets (books, equipment, cultural outings, hiring of experts [artists, farmers, etc.]).
- The intention is not to allow the creation of inequitable catchment areas in return for compensation. Everything must be done to achieve equity between school catchment areas in their territory: compensation is a last-resort solution.

It should be noted that large-scale areas of poverty are beyond the capacity of the Ministère de l'Éducation to deal with and must urgently be addressed by all concerned public authorities.

- Another element of disadvantage must also be addressed by the legislator, namely, the possibility that the catchment areas of a single school service centre / school board are similar from a socio-economic point of view but are nevertheless considered disadvantaged **at the Quebec level.** Compensation will therefore also have to be offered in these cases at the provincial level.
- Funds already exist to mitigate the impact of disadvantage (e.g., ***Agir autrement,*** $46 M). The legislator may choose to increase the amount, but the plan proposed here recommends that funding be allocated to schools according to the two levels previously identified (inequity at the school territory level and inequity at the provincial level) and according to the socio-economic mixing index of the catchment areas (and not according to the current SEI, whose shortcomings are known).

CONCLUSION

Imagine a Quebec family with school-age children. The parents are worried: will their kids be accepted in the "right school"? Will they be able to afford that school? They already have to pay for a tutor to help the kids prepare for their exams... Will the kids have to travel long distances in the morning and at night? And what about their friends? Will they also go to the "right school"?

Now imagine if the learning journey for the children in this family was... simple! The children go to their local school. This school is excellent, diverse and free. All the students who attend that school can choose from free and motivating elective courses. And the children from the neighbourhood who have been friends since pre-school also go to this school.

This serene vision seems so far from the reality of Quebec families.

On December 18, 1968, the Union Nationale government passed the ***Act respecting private education,*** by which Quebec began to transfer public funds to "private" schools. In the late 1980s, the public system began to compete with subsidized private schools by also offering selective schools and classes. School markets have been growing ever since.

Today, Quebec's education system is the most unequal in the country — "a waste of human potential" as described by the great Guy Rocher.

Remedying a school system that has been unequitable for more than half a century is a major challenge.

We are responding to this challenge with our ***Plan for a Common School Network,*** for which we revisited the question of equity in education on new grounds. The result is a pragmatic, ambitious and innovative plan.

If we believe that diversity is a strength of our society; if we believe that exposure to different points of view makes for better citizens; and if we believe that all students deserve to have high expectations, then we need a common network. We need to allow the children of Quebec to learn together, at last.

NOTE 1

COMMON NETWORK BUDGETARY IMPACT, BY SCENARIO

Scenario 1: Base scenario, minus 1 for elementary schools

Scenario 2: Base scenario – Elementary (6 %) and secondary (6.7 %) [unsubsidized] private schools attendance ratios in Ontario (2018-2019)

Scenario 3: Base scenario, plus 1% for secondary schools

Scenario 4: Base scenario, plus 2% for secondary schools

Common Network budgetary impact, by scenario

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
Budget balance ('000$)				
Elementary	61,690	99,289	99,289	99,289
Secondary	-408	-408	30,133	60,661
Total	**61,282**	**98,880**	**129,422**	**159,949**
Proportion, non-contracted private				
Elementary	5.0%	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%
Secondary	6.7%	6.7%	7.7%	8.7%
Total	**5.7%**	**6.3%**	**6.7%**	**7.2%**

NOTE 2

ELECTIVE COURSES FOR ALL: FIFTH PERIOD MODEL

The fifth period model has been in place for 10 years at École secondaire Sainte-Marie, in Princeville[2].

The Fifth Period Model at École Sainte-Marie

- **A fifth period of 60 minutes is added each day by reducing the length of the four regular periods from 75 to 60 minutes. This additional period is used for elective courses that enhance general education.**
  - This is possible because only 80% of the instructional time per course is prescribed.
  - Each student chooses two fifth period courses per year. He or she takes them on alternating even and odd days.
  - Like other courses, fifth period courses are taught and assessed by teachers and are compulsory.
- **The courses are varied and respond to the needs expressed by the students and their parents (e.g., performing arts, enriched French, Spanish, computer science); the personal skills of the teachers (e.g., a teacher who is a former ping-pong champion); and the environment of the school (e.g., proximity to a swimming pool or a forest).**
- **Courses often include a special outing (e.g., a hockey match, an apprentice day at the École du meuble).**
- **There is no selection based on grades, fees or behaviour.**

2 See the article *Une école fait un bond prodigieux en révisant l'horaire des cours*, Journal de Québec, October 26, 2019. [Online] https://www.journaldequebec.com/2019/10/26/une-ecole-fait-un-bond-prodigieux-en-revisant-lhoraire-des-cours

- There is a fee of approximately $100 per year per student for the fifth period. At the secondary level in Quebec (435,000 students), this amounts to $43 million, the equivalent of a funding program such as *Une école accessible et inspirante*. This plan recommends that the legislator cover the costs related to elective courses to ensure that they are free.
- Students who do not reach the passing grade in any compulsory subject will temporarily and partially replace a fifth period course with a pedagogical support period. This period is supervised by teachers in the subject area (but not necessarily the student's own teachers).
- Students who wish to do so can transform one or two of their fifth period courses into a study period. These students can have their school work completed before the end of their school day, allowing those with a busier personal schedule (due to, e.g., job, sports club, conservatory commitments) to use one hour for school work at the end of classes.

Notes regarding the planning of fifth period:

- The fifth period programs are recognized as "local programs." They are graded and count for two credits on the report card. Credits earned in fifth period do not count toward the DES, but it may be decided locally that at least two out of four credits from fifth period programs are required to pass.
- The courses are taught by teachers. Guest lecturers may be invited within the limits of the budget.
- The pedagogical support period is temporary and only partially replaces the fifth period course. For example, a student enrolled in fifth period hockey and music but needing support in French could have a schedule like the following (on a 9-day schedule):
  - Days 1, 3 and 5: music / Days 2, 4, 6 and 8: hockey / Days 7 and 9: French
- Students with special needs (EHDAA) also participate in fifth period courses. The special educators assigned to them accompany them to fifth period.
- Fifth period does not have to be the last period of the day; indeed, moving it during the day may facilitate the availability of certain facilities.

There are many benefits to the fifth period model:

1. Enrichment without segregation (no selection based on grades or fees).
2. Learning outcomes are maintained.
3. Greater sense of belonging.
4. Greater attendance and student engagement.
5. Students with learning difficulties benefit from the pedagogical support period, which provides more support than regular remedial assistance.
6. Students perceive teachers more positively; some teachers become mentors who influence other courses.
7. Changes teachers' perception of students; they now see certain students (for whom expectations were low because of their poor academic performance) as more committed.
8. Allows some students to finally be successful and be recognized (e.g., at achievement awards).
9. Motivates demobilized teachers.
10. The fifth period is an opportunity to benefit from what the neighbourhood has to offer and contributes to a greater sense of community. It shapes the school's personality and identity.

Examples of courses that may be offered in fifth period:

Socio-educational activities — Reach For the Top, enriched French, native languages, chess, ornithology, regional history

Sports — Basketball, soccer, volleyball, badminton, judo, swimming

Arts — Theatre, improvisation, music, visual arts, comic strips, audio and video editing, photography, circus, dance

Science — Robotics, computer science, electronics, construction projects

Community involvement — Volunteer work, training (e.g., *counseling training, training in recreational support for people with disabilities, first aid, coach or official training, national lifeguard*), educational greenhouses, culinary activities, various responsibilities (e.g., *outdoor equipment rental at the school, equipment repairs, management of physical and outdoor activity centres*)

Introduction to vocational training — Introduction to jobs in the health, construction and agriculture trades

Physical and outdoor activities — Mountain biking, weight training, rock climbing, wilderness survival, self-defence, yoga

This list could be expanded based on the personal expertise and interests of the teachers (e.g., a teacher who speaks the Algonquin language) and the community (e.g., linking with a nearby history museum or vocational training centre).

N.B.:

- Extracurricular activities (e.g., lunchtime sports, interschool sports, various clubs) will still be offered.
- The schools' current "concentrations" (e.g., circus, soccer) — in which expertise is already established — can be redeployed in the fifth period.

NOTE 3

PROPOSAL FOR SPORTS FEDERATIONS' SPORT-ÉTUDES

- **The Sport-études programs in collaboration with sports federations (in which 9,400 secondary school students are enrolled, or 2% of students) will be dissociated from schools and will now be called federation sports programs.**

  - Regardless of the school they attend, students will be able to enroll in a federation sports programs.
  - The costs and conditions of enrollment in a federation sports programs will be dictated by the sports federations. The program calendar may extend beyond the regular school year.

- **The funds allocated by the Ministère de l'Éducation to schools for the current Sport-études program will be transferred to the sports federations.**
- **Those enrolled in a federation sports programs will be able to use their daily fifth period class as a study period. They will leave school with their school work completed, freeing up training time. This will be a formal bridge between the school and the federation sports programs.**

  - This feature could be extended to similar situations, such as for students at a music conservatory or in an Arts-études program currently delivered by an external provider.

- **If they wish, federation sports programs may verify the academic seriousness of their enrolees (e.g., by tracking report cards).**

With regard to sports activities offered to students:

At school

- Physical education will be maintained;
- School sport (interschool and intramural sports) will also be maintained;
- Additional sports classes will now be available in fifth period.

In the community

- Association sports (community teams, municipal teams, provincial leagues, etc.) will still be available.

NOTE 4

PROPOSAL FOR OPTIONAL COURSES (SECONDARY 4 AND 5)

Once Secondary 3 and 4 report cards are issued, students can choose between maths and science options for the following school year. These optional science and mathematics courses are more advanced than their regular versions; they are often referred to as "advanced" or "strong" maths and science. These optional courses are prerequisites for science and mathematics courses in Secondary 5, which in turn are prerequisites for some CEGEP programs.

However, these optional courses can have a **"streaming effect".** Some schools tend to group in the same class students who choose advanced maths and science. **These students are together not only for those specific classes but also for other compulsory courses (e.g., English and history).** While it is understandable that this practice is much simpler for the administrative purpose of organizing school timetables, it is clear that is has the effect of creating two narrowly hermetic streams. One is selective and allows for more post-secondary pathway options. The other allows access to fewer post-secondary programs and is made up of students who do not perform as well academically.

In the interests of equity, **we propose that the legislator** 1) document the phenomenon and 2) immediately instruct those responsible for school organization, particularly school organization technicians, to avoid any streaming effect as much as possible when creating groups.

NOTE 5

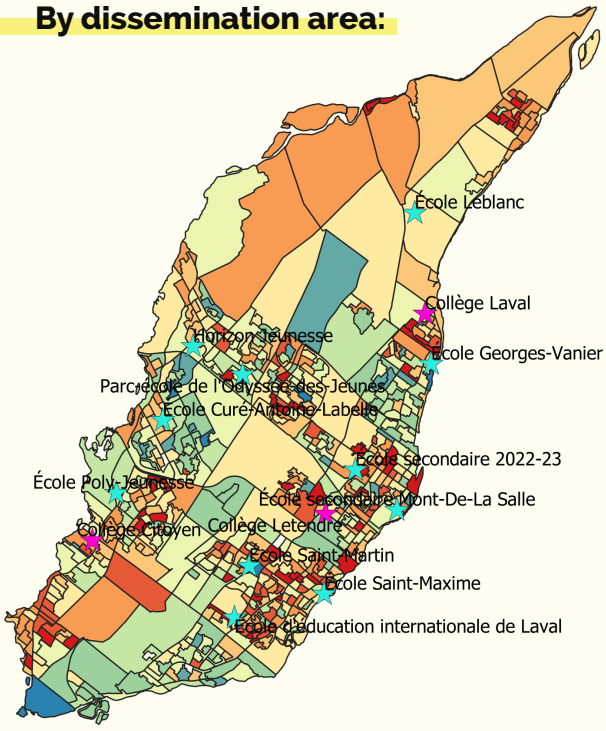
EQUITABLE SCHOOL MAP MODEL

This equitable school map model for the French-speaking secondary schools of Laval was developed by researchers from the University of Zurich in the *Zentrum für Demokratie Aarau* and by the Swiss firm Ville juste.

All 11 public schools (including one due to open in 2022-23) and the three subsidized private schools in the city are included in the map. The unsubsidized private school, North Star Academy, is not included in the map and is considered a **non-contracted private** school in this model (i.e. not belonging to a school catchment area).

Distribution of families with school-age children in Laval with at least one parent with a university degree

By dissemination area:



Laval average: 48 %

- 0 - 10%
- 10 - 20%
- 20 - 30%
- 30 - 40%
- 40 - 50%
- 50 - 60%
- 60 - 70%
- 70 - 80%
- 80 - 90%
- 90 - 100%

Schools

- subsidised private
- public

Source : Statistics Canada table: Census families with at least one child aged 18 and under living at home in private households by highest certificate, diploma or degree of parent with highest completed degree, and number of children aged 18 and under / 2016 Census / 25% sample data / geography: 637 Laval Census Subdivision dissemination areas

The colour scale shows that disparities between dissemination areas are considerably reduced by optimized school catchment areas. To optimize the catchment areas, mapping software first assigns a catchment area to each school based on proximity and school capacity. The boundaries are then modified, through successive rounds, based on major public roads in order to achieve the most socio-economically similar catchment areas. Catchment areas thus succeed in optimizing home-to-school distance, school capacity and the selected socio-economic index.

Within the common school network, students will be assigned to schools based on their local catchment area. No elementary or secondary school in Quebec, whether public or contracted private, will have the right to select its students. **In other words: one address, one catchment area, one school.**

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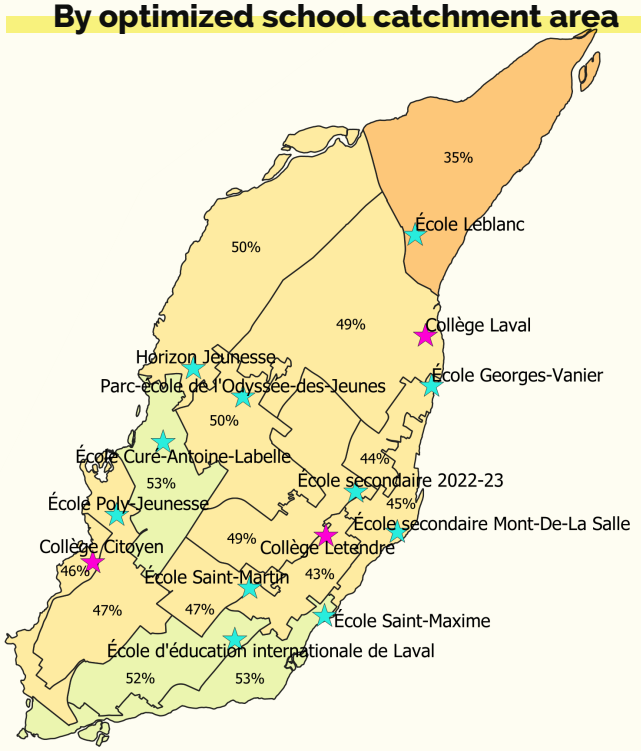
By optimized school catchment area



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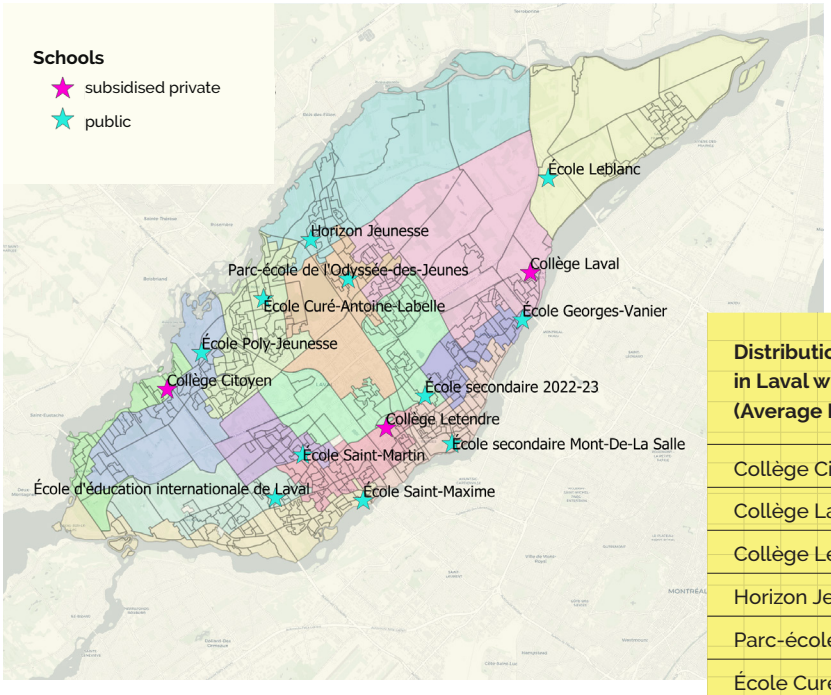
Optimized school catchment areas - City of Laval

The table shows that all schools are within ±5% of the average, except in the case of École Leblanc (North-East). In this specific instance, Pillar 4 of the plan will allow for compensatory measures to be implemented as the catchment area is substantially different on a socio-economic level from those of the territory's other schools.

The average home-to-school distance within the optimized school catchment areas of our model is 4 km. The actual average distance in Laval is unknown, but certainly higher because of out-of-neighbourhood travel to selective public and subsidized public schools[3]



Distribution of families with school-age children in Laval with at least one parent with a university degree (Average Laval : 48%)

Collège Citoyen	46%
Collège Laval	49%
Collège Letendre	43%
Horizon Jeunesse	50%
Parc-école de l'Odyssée-des-Jeunes	50%
École Curé-Antoine-Labelle	53%
École Georges-Vanier	44%
École Leblanc	35%
École Poly-Jeunesse	47%
École Saint-Martin	47%
École Saint-Maxime	53%
École d'éducation internationale de Laval	52%
École secondaire 2022-23	49%
École secondaire Mont-De-La Salle	45%

3 Methodological notes are available online. www.ecoleensemble.com/reseaucommun

NOTE 6

COMMON NETWORK KEY CHARACTERISTICS

COMMON NETWORK		EDUCATION MARKET
Public schools I **Contracted private schools**		**Non-contracted private schools**
100 percent public funding		No public funding
Schools located close to home		Schools potentially remotely located
Free elective courses for all students		Paid and selective elective courses
Allocation of students based on equitable school map		Selection of students
Collective agreements remain valid		Collective agreements remain valid
Management by School service centre or school board	Management autonomy	Management autonomy
Free education		Unsubsidized tuition fees

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PLAN FOR A COMMON SCHOOL NETWORK