

SURVEY RESULTS REPORT

of the **Coalition des parents d'enfants à besoins particuliers,**

the **Fédération québécoise de l'autisme,**

and the **Société québécoise de la déficience intellectuelle**

ON

CONTROL

MEASURES IN

QUEBEC SCHOOLS



CPEBPQ

Coalition de parents d'enfants à
besoins particuliers du Québec



FQA

FÉDÉRATION
QUÉBÉCOISE
DE L'AUTISME

Une autre façon de communiquer



SOCIÉTÉ QUÉBÉCOISE
DE LA **DÉFICIENCE**
INTELLECTUELLE

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Sample report on control measures
in Quebec schools

I. Introduction

This report was written during the winter and spring 2023 by the Coalition de parents d'enfants à besoins particuliers du Québec, the Fédération québécoise de l'autisme, and the Société québécoise de la déficience intellectuelle. These three organizations joined forces to conduct an in-depth study to examine the use of seclusion rooms in Quebec schools and its impact on children living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs and their families. The aim of this report is to raise awareness of this crucial issue among partners and political decision makers, and to encourage concrete measures to improve the inclusion and well-being of the children concerned.

The Coalition de parents d'enfants à besoins particuliers du Québec (CPEBPQ) is committed to promoting equitable access to inclusive education and social participation that takes into account the uniqueness and diversity of the needs of children. The Fédération québécoise de l'autisme aims to promote respect for the rights and well-being of autistic people and their families, and to contribute to the development of knowledge about autism. La Société québécoise de la déficience intellectuelle works to defend the rights and promote the interests of people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

The use of seclusion rooms, while it may be justified on grounds of safety for the child and those around him/her, raises concerns about its impact on the mental health of children and their families. It is essential to consider the potential emotional and psychological impacts of these practices on children, as well as the repercussions on the relationship between their parents and their school. The purpose of this report is therefore to assess the current situation, present the results of a survey of parents of children living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs, and make concrete recommendations to foster a more inclusive approach that respects the rights of these children within the Quebec school system.

By presenting the results of this study and highlighting the testimonies and concerns expressed by parents, we hope to raise collective awareness and mobilize partners and political representatives to work together for meaningful change. The inclusion of children living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs in the education system should not be a distant ideal, but rather a concrete reality to which we must all contribute.

In the following sections of this report, we will present in detail the results of the survey, the issues identified, the impacts on children and families, as well as concrete recommendations to improve the situation. We hope that this report will serve as a starting point for concrete action and constructive discussion, to foster inclusive and equitable education that respects the rights of all children living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs in Quebec.

II. Profil of participants

This section presents an overview of the profile of participants who responded to the flash survey from April to May 2023, administered over a 6-week period. The information gathered provides a better understanding of the diversity of people concerned with the issue of seclusion rooms use at school.

A. Total Number of Participants

The survey gathered responses from a significant number of parents of children living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs. A total of 338 people took part in the survey, reflecting the importance attached to this issue.

B. Demographic Categories

Participants were parents of living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs, such as learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disabilities, and other challenging conditions. Parents from almost every administrative region of Quebec took the time to complete the survey, reflecting a varied geographical representation.

C. Characteristics of the children concerned

Information was collected on the types of challenges their children faced at school, which included behavioural problems, communication difficulties, sensory challenges, etc.

It should be noted that children's characteristics can vary considerably from one person to another, reflecting the diversity of specific needs present in the children concerned.

Taken together, this information provides a solid basis for understanding the context and the participants who shared their experiences and opinions on the use of the seclusion room at school.

III. Survey results

This report presents the results of a survey carried out among the networks of parents of children living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs in the three organizations, to gather their perceptions and experiences regarding the use of the seclusion room in schools. The information obtained provides an overview of the current situation and raises important concerns about the inclusion and well-being of the children concerned.

A. Communication With Parents

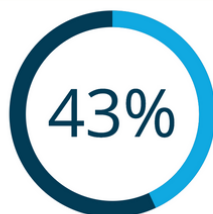
Analysis of the responses revealed that modes of communication between the school and parents varied considerably. Some parents mentioned regular, proactive communication from the school, providing written and verbal information about their child's withdrawal. However, of the 116 parents who reported that their child had been sent to a seclusion room, a majority (55%) reported sporadic, insufficient, or late communication, posing challenges for parents' understanding and involvement in managing their child's needs and behaviour. Around a quarter of these parents (26%) said they didn't know how long their child spent in the seclusion room.

B. Reasons Given for Using the Seclusion Room

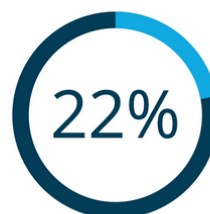
Parents were asked to indicate the reasons given by the school for using the seclusion room. The results showed a diversity of reasons mentioned, ranging from the need to protect the safety of the child and other students, to the objective of fostering a calm and conducive learning environment for all.

Other reasons included managing disruptive or inappropriate behaviour and seeking an individualized approach to meet the child's specific needs.

However, the survey also reveals that there is abusive use of the seclusion room in some cases. Of the 116 parents who indicated that their child had been sent there, a significant number said that their child was sent to the seclusion room a few times a week (43%), or even a few times a day (22%).



of parents said their child was sent to the seclusion room a few times a **week**



of parents said their child was sent to the seclusion room a few times a **day**

C. Perceived Justification for Using the Seclusion Room

Some parents said they understood and accepted the use of the seclusion room in appropriate situations, while stressing the importance of limited, last resort, and well-supervised use. Other parents expressed concern about the emotional and psychological impact on their child, questioning the effectiveness and appropriateness of this behaviour management measure. Indeed, of the 116 parents who indicated that their child had been sent to a seclusion room, **almost half (45%) felt that the use of the room was not justified, or only marginally so, in most cases.**

D. School complaints

Part of the survey aimed to assess the number of parents who had lodged a complaint about the use of the seclusion room. The results showed that a very high percentage of parents (70%) **whose children had been sent to a seclusion room did not lodge a complaint, even though they felt the use of the seclusion room was unjustified.**

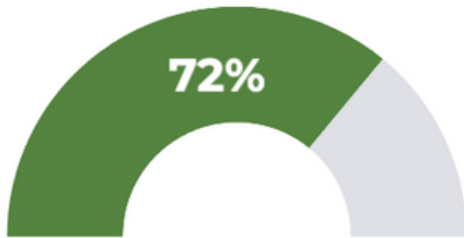
Several respondents said they hadn't made a complaint, because they felt it was pointless, that there was no openness on the part of school staff, or even for fear of reprisals against their child. For example, that their child might be suspended or expelled from school, because the school doesn't know how else to handle the situation.

This reflects concerns about the lack of alternatives or positive management strategies, as well as problems of communication and collaboration between school and parents.

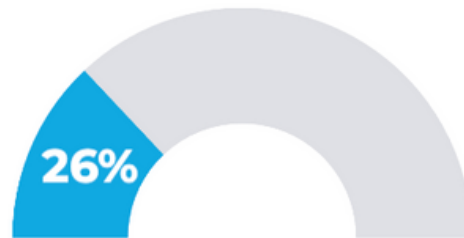
E. Suspension and expulsion from school

The survey also asked parents whether their child had been suspended or expelled from school. Regarding suspension cases, a significant number (26%) of respondents stated that their child had been **suspended from school at least once during the last school year**. Of the 88 parents whose children had been expelled, a strong majority (72%) considered that their child's suspension was **unjustified**. What's more, **almost half (46%) of these children had been expelled more than once in the last school year, and a quarter (25%) had been expelled more than 5 times**.

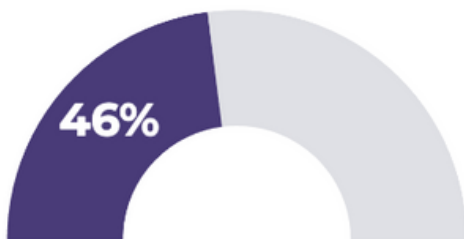
**No suspension
justified**



**At least one suspension
during the year**



**More than one suspension
during the year**



**More than five suspension
during the year**



To justify these suspensions, three reasons often came up: **the child's disorganization and aggressiveness, and the lack of resources at school**.

Only **20 respondents indicated that their child had been expelled** from school, but this is an extreme measure that can be traumatic for a child and brings many complications for parents. For example, having to find another school willing to accept their child. Some even consider homeschooling, meaning that a parent must stop working to look after his child full-time and a loss of income for the family. The school often justifies the expulsion because the child is considered violent and cannot be managed. **In 90% of cases, parents consider that their child's expulsion was unjustified.**

These results underline the importance of taking parents' concerns and experiences into account when developing school policies and practices. They also highlight the need for transparent communication.

IV. Discussion of results

The purpose of this section is to examine the survey results in detail, focusing on the impact of seclusion rooms use on children and families, as well as on current school practices and policies.

A. Impact on children and families

The survey results reveal significant emotional and psychological consequences for the children involved in the use of the seclusion room. Many parents expressed concern about the negative impact of this practice on their children's well-being. The parents' responses highlighted feelings of distress, isolation, and anxiety in the children, as well as an alteration in their self-esteem and school motivation. These findings underline the need for alternative approaches that promote the inclusion and well-being of children with special needs.

As far as families are concerned, it's clear that the use of the seclusion room has a destabilizing effect on the parent-school relationship. Many parents have expressed frustration at the lack of communication and collaboration on the part of the school. This leads to increased stress and anxiety for parents, who feel excluded from their child's educational process. It is imperative to establish effective channels of communication between the school and parents, to foster a relationship of trust and mutual support.

B. School Practices and Policies

Assessment of current seclusion practices at school reveals discrepancies with existing recommendations and guidelines for inclusive education. Survey results indicate that the use of the seclusion room is often justified on grounds that do not correspond to the situations for which this measure should be employed. This finding points to a critical need for educational policies to be reviewed with a view to developing clear and consistent protocols for the use of behaviour management and support measures.

It is essential to take into consideration alternative practices and positive approaches that meet the specific needs of children living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs, while promoting their inclusion in the school environment. The training and awareness of all members of the educational team and school decision makers in positive intervention strategies, as well as in the needs of children, must be reinforced. Partnerships between schools, families and healthcare professionals should also be encouraged to create an inclusive and benevolent learning environment.

In summary, the results of this survey underline the **harmful consequences** of seclusion room use on the children and families concerned. It is imperative to rethink current school inclusion practises and policies, favouring alternative and positive approaches.

Collaboration between partner organizations, political decision makers and schools are essential to put in place measures and policies conducive to inclusive education and the well-being of children living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs and their families.

V. Recommendations

This section details recommendations considering the survey results, focusing on the impact of seclusion rooms use on children and families, as well as on current school practices and policies.

A. Awareness-raising and training

With the aim of fostering a better understanding of the needs and rights of children living with a disability and/or diverse needs and promoting inclusive practices, the report's author organizations recommend the following actions:

1. Raising awareness among teachers and school staff of the reality of children living with a disability and/or diverse needs, and of their rights:

- Organize regular and comprehensive awareness-raising and training sessions for teachers and school staff to develop their understanding of different conditions, specific needs, and adapted intervention strategies.
- Increase awareness and training activities for teachers and school staff.

2. Training on alternatives to withdrawal and positive intervention strategies:

- Set up mandatory training programs focusing on positive approaches to behaviour management and alternatives to seclusion, such as emotional regulation strategies, calm environments, and individualized educational adaptations. Such training should also address the promotion of self-determination for children living with a disability and/or diverse needs.
- Make School boards and Service Centres training readily available and accountable, especially in terms of follow-up. Offering relevant training is not the only solution. The intervention framework and necessary conditions (support, dedicated resources, pedagogical services, etc.) must be put in place to ensure that children's right to equal opportunity is respected.

B. Communication and collaboration

To improve collaboration between schools and families, and to foster open and transparent communication, the following recommendations are made:

1. Renforcement de la communication entre l'école et les parents :

- Establish clear and accessible channels of communication to enable parents to receive regular information on their child's academic progress, school events and well-being and safety issues.

- Encourage two-way communication that values information sharing and feedback.

2. Encouraging collaboration between all the stakeholders involved :

- Promote regular meetings between parents, teachers, health professionals and other relevant stakeholders to facilitate the exchange of information and the coordination of efforts on behalf of the child.
- Encourage the creation of multidisciplinary teams to develop individualized intervention plans. Furthermore, considering the perceptions gathered, it is important for all adults involved in intervention to demonstrate good judgment and benevolence towards developing children, and to presume their right to make mistakes.

C. Reviewing Policies and Practices

To ensure a consistent and inclusive approach, it is recommended that school policies and practices relating to the use of the seclusion room (including the 1999 Adaptative Education Policy) be reviewed. Recommendations include:

1. Review of educational policies regarding the use of the seclusion room :

- Evaluate current bylaws, policies, and update guidelines to ensure they reflect the principles of inclusion and respect for the rights of children living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs.
- Ensure that use of the seclusion room is limited, well documented, and accompanied by appropriate monitoring and evaluation measures.
- Give teachers the power to disclose and report without reprisal to the appropriate authorities (e.g., CPS, student ombudsman, etc.).

2. Development of clear and consistent protocols for the use of behavioural support and management measures :

- Establish protocols that promote positive and responsive supports, with particular attention to using proactive behaviour management strategies, adapting the environment, and promoting inclusion within the classroom.

These recommendations are the fruit of the collective reflection of the organizations that drafted the report and aim to promote effective school inclusion for all children living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs. By implementing these measures, we can progressively create an inclusive educational environment, respectful of the rights and well-being of all children, whatever their particularities.

VI. Conclusion

In this study, conducted in collaboration with the Coalition de parents d'enfants à besoins particuliers du Québec, the Société québécoise de la déficience intellectuelle and the Fédération québécoise de l'autisme, we examined responses to a survey on the use of the seclusion room in schools. The results raise significant concerns about the impact of this practice on children living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs and their families.

It's clear that communication between the school and parents needs to be improved. Many parents have expressed frustration at the lack of information and slow communication regarding their child's withdrawal. This creates anxiety and makes it difficult for parents and the educational team to work together.

The reasons given for using the seclusion room are varied, ranging from the safety of other students to the management of disruptive behaviour. However, it is essential to note that frequent use of this measure can have harmful consequences for the emotional and psychological well-being of the children concerned. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure that seclusion practices are used as a last resort, after all other positive intervention options have been exhausted.

The complaints lodged by parents and the often-unsatisfactory results of these efforts highlight the need for a thorough investigation of seclusion practices in schools. It is imperative to take these concerns seriously and put in place clear procedures for handling complaints, while ensuring that appropriate corrective action is taken.

In conclusion, it is essential to take action to improve school inclusion for children with special needs. The recommendations arising from this study call for increased awareness, training for school staff on the specific needs of children, enhanced communication and collaboration between the school and parents, and a review of policies and practices surrounding the use of the seclusion room.

We therefore call on all partners and decision makers to be aware of these issues and to work together to ensure inclusive education that respects the rights of children living with a disability and/or diverse needs and their families. By investing in policies and measures that promote inclusion, we will contribute to a more equitable and caring society for all.

We hope that this report will serve as a basis for concrete action to improve school practices and support children living with a disability and/or diverse needs in their educational journey. The road to truly inclusive education is still long, but together we can make a difference.

Many thanks to all the participants and partner organizations for their invaluable contribution to this study.

VI. References

Appendix

List of recommendations and ministries concerned

Number	Recommandation	Ministry concerned
Awareness-raising and training		
1	Organize awareness-raising and training sessions for teachers and school staff to develop their understanding of different conditions disabilities and/or diverse educational and social needs and adapted intervention strategies.	Ministry of Education
2	Increase awareness-raising and training activities for teachers and school staff	Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Services
3	Set up training programs focusing on positive approaches to behaviour management and alternatives to withdrawal, such as emotional regulation strategies, calm environments, and individualized educational adaptations. Such training should also address the promotion of autonomy for children living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs.	Ministry of Education
4	Make school board training available and accountable, especially in terms of follow-up. Offering relevant training is not the only solution. The intervention framework and necessary conditions (support, dedicated resources, pedagogical services, etc.) must be put in place to ensure that children's right to equal opportunity is respected.	Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Services
Communication and collaboration		
1	Establish clear and accessible communication channels to enable parents to have regular information on academic progress, school events and issues related to the child's well-being.	Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Services
2	Encourage two-way communication that values information sharing and feedback.	Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Services

Number	Recommendation	Ministry concerned
Communication and collaboration		
3	Promote regular meetings between parents, teachers, health professionals and other relevant stakeholders to facilitate the exchange of information and the coordination of efforts on behalf of the child.	Ministry of Education
4	Encourage the creation of multidisciplinary teams to develop individualized intervention plans. Furthermore, considering the perceptions gathered, it is important for all adults involved in intervention to demonstrate good judgment and benevolence towards developing children, and to presume their right to make mistakes.	Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Services
Reviewing policies and practices		
1	Evaluate current bylaws, policies and update guidelines to ensure they reflect the principles of inclusion and respect for the rights of children living with a disability and/or diverse educational and social needs.	Ministry of Education
2	Ensure that use of the seclusion room is limited, well documented and accompanied by appropriate monitoring and evaluation measures.	Ministry of Education
3	Give teachers the power to disclose and report without reprisal to the appropriate authorities (e.g. CPS, student ombudsman, etc.).	Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice
4	Establish protocols that promote positive and responsive supports, with particular attention to using proactive behaviour management strategies, adapting the environment, and promoting inclusion within the classroom.	Ministry of Education

Glossary

Control measures: A control measure is any means of preventing or limiting a person's freedom of movement by using human force or mechanical means, or by depriving them of a means they use to overcome a handicap. Source: Quebec Ministry of Health and Social Services.

Quiet room: Also known as a soothing room or isolation room, this is a closed space in the school where students go, voluntarily or involuntarily, to calm down. What should be an exceptional measure of last resort is unfortunately being used more and more in schools as a way of removing them from the classroom and punishing them.

Children with special needs: These are children who are experiencing difficulties in their schooling in terms of the school's threefold mission to educate, socialize and qualify. This includes students with learning or adaptative disabilities.
Source: Quebec Ministry of Education.

Handicapped students: A student with a disability that results in a significant and persistent incapacity and who is prone to encountering obstacles in carrying out everyday activities. Source: Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ).