

EDUCATIONAL PROJECT 2023-2027
L.I.N.K.S High School
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:

Maria Caldarella (Principal)

Julia Giannacopoulos (Staff assistant/Teacher)

Shannen Ciricillo (Guidance Counsellor)

Myriam Farley (Student Life Coordinator)

GROUPS CONSULTED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

LINKS Staff members, LINKS parents, LINKS Professionals, Student Advocacy Speaking for and Support You (S.A.S.S.Y), LINKS Students, Governing Board Members

SCHOOL PROFILE

LINKS High School is a secondary school situated in the Eastern part of the Island of Montreal, in the Borough of Ahuntsic-Cartierville (9905 Papineau Avenue) and shares the facilities with St. Pius X Career Centre. LINKS School specializes in the education of students with special needs whose needs are greater than what a mainstream high school offers. Our students have significant learning challenges related to cognitive impairments. Students with cognitive impairments acquire developmental milestones late, and have more difficulty learning self-help skills, social skills, and communicating with others. A cognitive impairment may be deemed to be mild, moderate or severe. A severe cognitive impairment implies that the student's intellectual functioning is below average. These students will need support for most activities in the classroom but can learn basic skills and adaptive behaviour to assist with life skills.

The school welcomes 120 students that range in age from 12 to 21. Our students come from across the eastern territory of Montreal and therefore commute to LINKS by school buses provided by the EMSB. Throughout their time at LINKS, students that are capable are travel-trained by the team to then travel to LINKS independently by public transportation.

The students come from varied socio-economic backgrounds. The *Indice de milieu socio-économique* (IMSE) is an index given to a school by the Ministry that describes the socio-economic backgrounds from which the students come. The IMSE for our school is 9, with 10 being the lowest possible level. Schools with an index greater than 7 receive additional funding from the Ministry to support student success. Additionally, the poverty index is provided by CGTSIM and is revised every year. This is determined by the student population of a school. LINKS' index for the 2023-2024 school year is at 33.68. Schools with an index higher than 35 are eligible for this measure. There is additional money set aside as reserve for LINKS due to our needs.

In 2012, the school name was changed from Paul VI High School to the acronym L.I.N.K.S. (Literacy, Interdependence, Networking, Knowledge and Success). In using this acronym, the school acknowledged the need for students to be literate, in both languages and in Mathematics. Students become independent, but also interdependent, fostering mutual relationships with peers, family, and the community at large. Interdependence allows students to network, making use of the resources that are available to them. They acquire the knowledge to take what they have learned out of the classroom environment and apply it to real-life settings. The goal is for students to be successful, reaching their full potential, whether it may be in obtaining the necessary life skills to contribute to daily life, working in the community or continuing their education. As a result, the students know that they are productive and contributing members of society. Educational success has different meanings depending on the abilities and needs of different students.

As part of the acceptance process, all students go through case conferences. At this meeting, the student, their parents/guardians and a representative from their previous school will meet with a team of LINKS staff, including our administration, guidance counselor and consultants from the Student Services Department. The goal of this meeting is to decide on a program that would be the best fit for the student, considering their cognitive function, academic ability and degree of autonomy. We also have a transition process where our behaviour technicians will go into the elementary schools to observe students in their educational environment. All students have an Individualized education plan (IEP) that is updated three times a year. The IEP describes the goals set for each student for the school year, and any special support the student needs to help reach those goals. The IEP creates an opportunity for the school team, parents/guardians, and students (when appropriate) to work together to improve the opportunities for each student's success.

To help ensure a safe and clear transition after their time at LINKS, students and their families also receive constant support when it comes time for them to graduate. Three years prior to their departure, TEVA (transition école vie active) meetings start. TEVA is a program that provides guidance and support

to students and their families to ensure a smooth transition from the youth sector to adult life. They are organized regularly with all the relevant partners involved to set and track the student's goals to help them successfully transition.

LINKS provides students with a tailored learning setting whereby their individual needs are met with differentiated programming in a safe, caring environment. Over the years, these programs have evolved to reflect changing profiles as well as incorporating new curriculum and courses developed by the Ministry. LINKS teachers have been an integral part of a team that has designed some of our unique, local programs. They include WOTP, TST, APP, Modified Secondary 3, CASP, DEFIS and MAP.

The school is led by one full-time principal. The staff consists of 20 teachers (one staff assistant released at 50% and another teacher released 20% for teacher mentorship), one secretary, a full-time guidance counselor, student life coordinator, five behavior technicians, fourteen attendants, and five part-time tutors. The LINKS staff is rich in experience and education. Staff members ensure to be up to date with the most relevant research, participate in professional development activities related to their domain, and attain certification in a wide variety of fields. Most teachers have been certified in Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Related Handicapped Children (TEACCH) in North Carolina and/or virtually. Their classrooms and teaching practices have been transformed to accommodate our students on the autism spectrum. Staff has also been Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) trained, resulting in a unified approach to situations requiring behavioural interventions. Mental health awareness campaigns have been at the forefront of all career sectors, and so our staff took part in an intensive course on Mental Health First Aid, also receiving certification. The LINKS team is committed to delivering all the necessary support, resources, tools and heart to ensure the success of all our students.

We presently have five behaviour technicians, who work collaboratively with the classroom teams to support our students. They are at the centre of creating and implementing behaviour intervention plans for students requiring a tailored approach. They also are responsible for creating material to support students in the classroom and during unstructured time.

LINKS has hired a social worker at 1.5 days per week to be a liaison between outside resources and our students' families. The student service department at the school board consists of many professionals who are at LINKS weekly to support our students. They include an Occupational Therapist, TEVA Consultant, ASD Consultant, Special Education Consultant, Speech-Language Pathologist, Behaviour Management Specialist and Assistive/Accessible Technology Consultant. We also work in collaboration with the community

SPVM officer near our school. They are ready to help us during our time of need.

LINKS offers many spaces for students to work independently, take time to self regulate or to work through a crisis. There are two rooms available for them, a sensory motor room called the Nova and a sensory room called the Oasis. The school is presently putting together another sensory motor room for our older students. In addition, the Quadri lounge is a place to encourage students with their communication, interpersonal skills and motivate them in a welcoming environment.

One has only to walk along our hallway to experience the spirit of commitment, engagement and collaboration that exists in our school. One will immediately witness sharing, supporting and mentoring at every level. Transitioning new students into our school life, as well as transitioning students leaving our school to the next phase of their educational or vocational experience is vital.

In addition to the professionals that work with our students, LINKS has a variety of therapists that hold individual and group sessions. On any given day, students are participating in Drama Therapy, Music Therapy, Dance Therapy as well as girls and boys' groups. These different forms of therapy offer many benefits for our students including but not limited to the encouragement of communication, an increase in socialization, relaxation, motivation, self-confidence and physical and emotional wellness.

Extra-curricular activities are numerous at LINKS. Teachers lead clubs such as sewing, film making, yoga, sports, botanical, and karaoke among others. A few years ago, we embarked on a new venture after families approached us looking for additional support once the LINKS school day was over. The after-school program was created to meet the needs of families requiring after school care for their children while they were at work. It provides a variety of activities throughout the week that are tailored to our student's strengths and interests and helps develop their life skills and social skills. It is also a great place for students to socialize with other students in an unstructured environment.

LINKS has a comprehensive breakfast program, where students are engaged in every part of the process. They learn how to read recipes, prepare the ingredients, follow safety protocol, cook the meals and clean up. They are also responsible for taking orders and delivering the breakfast. Several of our students go on to work successfully in cafeterias and restaurants.

Finally, the school year culminates with a Variety Show that is the highlight for every student, family member and guest. Students participate in every aspect

of preparing the show. They write the scripts, make props and costumes, choreograph and star in the production. This occasion provides the opportunity for each student to shine and celebrate their achievements together. This experience builds self-esteem and confidence. Our students can say, "Yes we can!" and move forward with pride in their abilities. Our goal is not only for our students to adapt to the world around them, but to sensitize others to the incredible value they bring to society.

MISSION AND VALUES

Our Mission:

Our team of dedicated and highly competent staff collaborate to create an individualized learning path for each student. Our goal is to meet the academic, physical, social, behavioral and emotional needs of our students in a safe environment. Through advocacy and professional development, we strive to enhance their quality of life and provide opportunities to become contributing members of the community.

Our Values:

We believe that:

1. Everyone can learn regardless of his or her capabilities.
2. The student must acquire sufficient knowledge and skills needed to cope with their environment.
3. Students are entitled to be respected.
4. Self-esteem is an integral part to any learning.
5. The community, parents and the school are equal stakeholders in the overall education of our students.

THE CONSULTATION

The school members met for a total of three separate occasions in consultation with the teacher council and APPA members. The participants shared their thoughts through an online survey that was sent out to all parents, staff and members of the LINKS community. The school team processed the results by examining each answered question in the survey and created a document with all of the results grouped together by category.

The main concerns from parents were about their child's post graduation questions and support in the community that is needed. Additionally, many were also concerned about the fact that our school was only given two days of school lunch

through the mini bistro. They were wondering if it is possible to offer it more. The students reported back through our SASSY (Student Advocacy Speaking for and Support You) which is composed of a group of students who regularly meet once a week to discuss their thoughts and concerns about the school. Their contribution to this included more physical activity during the day, access to secondary credits and updating the overall appearance and functionality of the school.

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. 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 overall 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.

ACADEMIC PROGRESS

In Quebec, all elementary and secondary students receive a provincial report card three times a year, providing parents with feedback on their child's progress in relation to the competencies outlined in the Quebec Educational Program. However, these report cards do not provide a template that addresses the specificity needed to accurately reflect the progress of students in a special needs setting.

At LINKS, teachers maintain regular communication with parents. Despite this, there is a need for more precise diagnostic tools to establish a realistic, appropriate and accurate baseline of student learning. These tools also facilitate differentiated instruction.

Over the next three years, our focus will be on implementing Brigance Early Development Inventory throughout the school year. This initiative aims to establish benchmarks for student's basic skills in Mathematics and ELA, allowing educators to plan more effectively and provide targeted feedback for student improvement.

GOAL: Implement diagnostic testing in ELA and Mathematic skills at regular intervals throughout the academic year to assess student literacy skills and provide targeted feedback for improvement.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

Creating a positive school climate is essential for the holistic development of all students, especially in a special needs setting. At LINKS, 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.

Through these heartfelt collaborations, we ensure that our students are not just included, but cherished and celebrated as integral members of the broader community.

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.

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.	Every student at LINKS receives a computer and/or iPad for their academic, social and/or behavioural needs. There are also students who come with measure devices to which we are always ensure their functionality and updating when needed. Additionally, we are always adding more students in need for measure devices every year.
To provide parents with regular feedback concerning student progress in addition to report card marks.	Effective communication through emails, phone calls and parent teacher meetings happen on a regular basis at LINKS. The

	<p>parents are always in the process when it comes to their child's education. Along with feedback and discussions, IEPs are updated three times a year to ensure that we are guiding our students.</p>
<p>Implement diagnostic testing in ELA and Mathematic skills at regular intervals throughout the academic year to assess student literacy skills and provide targeted feedback for learning development..</p>	<p>As of the 2023-2024 academic year, most homeroom teachers have effectively used the Brigance tool to help assess students' academic process in both ELA and Mathematics. The Brigance booklet follows the student on their academic journey at LINKS. Teachers will and have received professional development on their tool to aid in their process of utilizing it efficiently and effectively.</p>
<p>To implement an annual focus group for students concerning their well-being at school and identifying areas for improvement.</p>	<p>A group of students in our SASSY group (Student Advocacy Speaking for and Support You) meet weekly to discuss their concerns and questions about LINKS. They have identified the areas of improvement that have been brought to the principal and discussed amongst the teacher council, staff meetings and governing board.</p>
<p>To explore opportunities for student exchange and collaboration with other schools and community groups.</p>	<p>LINKS has always been excited and eager to collaborations with other schools and communities. Our students have visited McGill, adult education centers and communities around Montreal. These opportunities allow for our students to find their purpose, their interest and connect with others.</p>
<p>To continue building capacity in the digital competency.</p>	<p>In the 2023-2024 academic year, understanding and developing digital competency has been at an ultimate high at LINKS. Teachers have been meeting monthly to discuss their input on how they utilize technology in the classroom and what they can improve on. Thus, allowing the students to use their technology in the classroom with ease.</p>

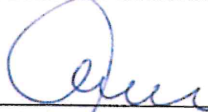
RESOLUTION TO APPROVE EDUCATIONAL PROJECT:

WHEREAS the Ministry of Education in Quebec has required each school to update their Educational Project during the academic year 2024-2025;

WHEREAS the Educational Project has engaged in a thorough and inclusive strategic planning process, involving consultation with all stakeholders to effectively address current and future challenges and opportunities;

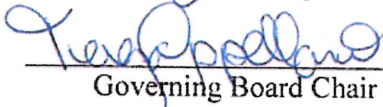
WHEREAS the new project goals align to the EMSB's Commitment to Success Plan and includes objectives, indicators, and targets that align with the Ministry's strategic indicators and priorities;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the governing board hereby approves the revised Educational Project for the period 2023-2027 as presented and acknowledges its importance in guiding the development and decision-making processes towards improving student outcomes and school climate.



School Principal

Date: 25/03/25



Governing Board Chair