

**Action Plan to Increase Youth Success
and Decrease Drop-outs
in Eastern Townships Schools**

2006-2016

Table estrienne de concertation interordres en éducation (TECIE)

Action Plan, 2006-2011

Message From the Co-chairs

We are pleased to present this action plan by the *Table estrienne de concertation interordres en éducation (TECIE)* to fight school drop-outs and increase youth graduation and qualifications.

Developing the plan required the commitment of the senior administrators of the TECIE members and their staff as well as education network partners whose complementary role is essential to the success of this social project.

The plan identifies strategic directions adopted to improve regional success rates, and defines the actions and goals that will guide the work of the TECIE and its partners in each of the region's communities. The plan also reflects the TECIE and its members' interest in working with the larger Eastern Townships* community.

Publication of this first five-year phase of the plan offers our partners a better idea of the strategic choices made. Our decisions are the result not only of documented research on school success and drop-outs but also of concerns expressed during regional consultations held November 28, 2005 and March 28, 2006.

Our hope is that these challenges, which call on the entire Eastern Townships community to rally for youth success, mobilize everyone in a permanent way. The future of our youth and the Eastern Townships depends on it.

Bruno-Marie Béchar
Co-chair, TECIE
Rector, Université de Sherbrooke

Claude St-Cyr
Co-chair, TECIE
Director General, Commission scolaire de la Région-de-Sherbrooke
Chair, Table des directeurs généraux des commissions scolaires de l'Estrie

* In this translation and adaptation of the original *Plan 2006-2016 de mobilisation et d'action pour contrer le décrochage et augmenter la qualification et la diplomation des jeunes estriens*, "Eastern Townships" has been used to translate "Estrie," which is, of course, a smaller administrative region than the historical Eastern Townships.

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Preamble

Awareness comes first. It is of the utmost importance that our fellow citizens understand that the future of our youth and society depend more than ever on education, that our existing work in this area is threatened today and that, if we are not careful and open to change, we risk sliding back into the situation of economic and social inferiority that once characterized Quebec.

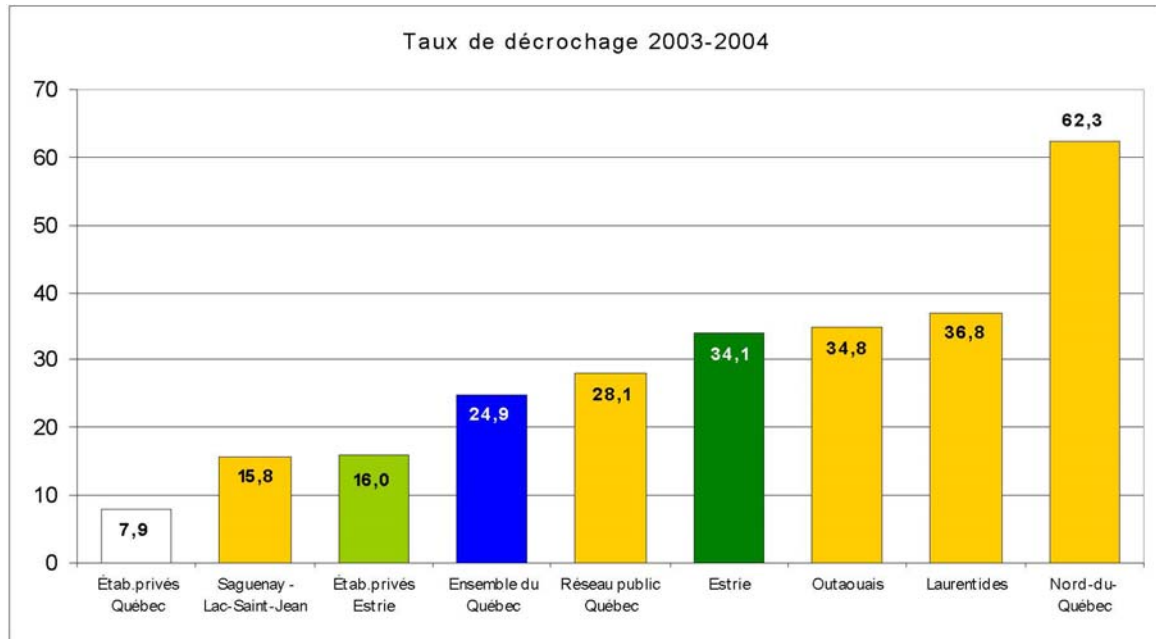
Michel Gervais, Chair, Work Group
Rapport sur l'accès à l'éducation

Industrial policy in Quebec is education. For all intents and purposes, a country does not need resources to grow. We need only put knowledge in the minds of our children.

Pierre Fortin, Economist
La Presse, September 2004

Findings Related to Success

School drop-out¹ rates in the Eastern Townships are worrying. In fact, the region shows one of the worst rates in Quebec. Only three other regions have higher drop-out rates than the Townships.



Source: MELS, *Aide à la gestion des indicateurs de réussite (AGIR) 2005-2006*

Statistics regarding school success indicate that:

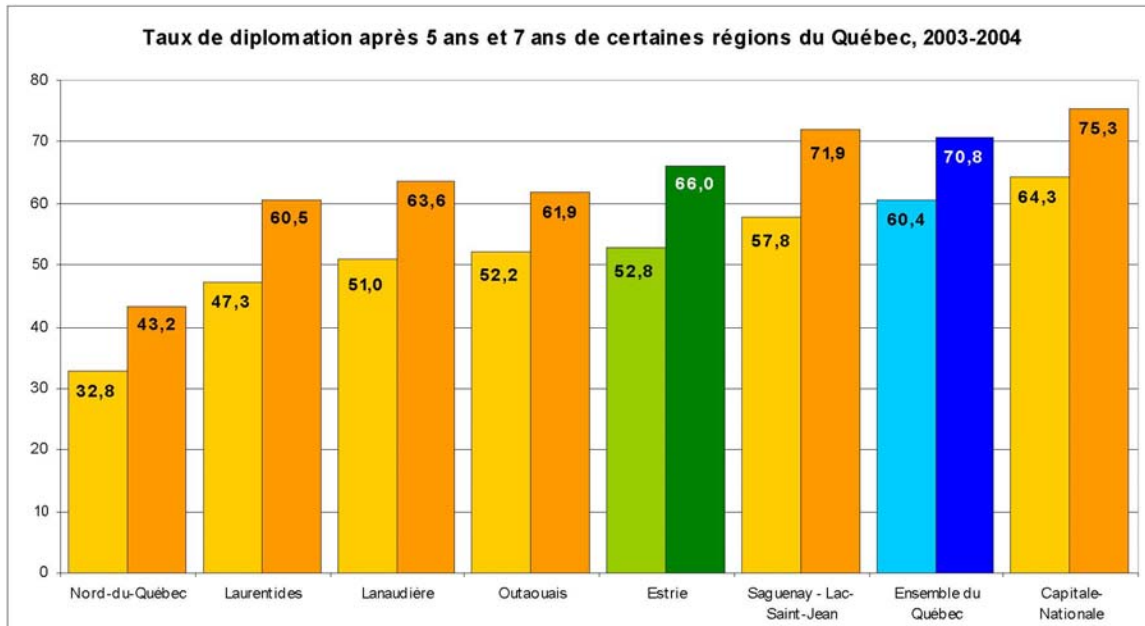
- 34.1% of Townships youth leave public schools prematurely without graduating, while private school students in the Eastern Townships drop out at a rate twice that of the Quebec average for private schools.
- Nearly 4800 Townships youth abandoned their studies in the past five years without graduating or earning qualifications that would lead them to a job; two-thirds of those students are boys.
- The Townships drop-out rate is increasing faster than for Quebec as a whole. In the past five years, it increased by 4.4 percentage points while the rate for Quebec went up 1.3 points.
- More boys drop out than girls. Good year or bad, they represent close to two-thirds of all drop-outs.

¹ The **drop-out**, or student finishing without a diploma or qualifications, is one registered in a given year that meets the two following criteria:

- a) no diploma or specific qualification is achieved in the given year. Recognized diplomas are: the *diplôme d'études secondaires* (DES), *diplôme d'études professionnelles* (DEP), *attestation de formation professionnelle* (AFP) and *attestation de spécialisation professionnelle* (ASP). Recognized qualifications are: the *certificat de formation en entreprise et récupération* (CFER) and *insertion sociale et professionnelle des jeunes* (ISPJ);
- b) the student is not registered the next year in general education (for youth or adults), professional training or college in a Quebec educational institution.

Findings Related to Success

In terms of **earning a diploma**², Townships rates are equally discouraging.



Source: MELS, *Aide à la gestion des indicateurs de réussite (AGIR) 2005-2006*

- Only 52.8% of students earn their diploma after five years of high school.
- When students persevere after five years of high school, the graduation rate climbs to 66% (graduation after seven years of high school).
- 42.3% of boys graduate after five years, which is 10.5 percentage points below the provincial average. No school board in the region succeeds in having more than 50% of its boys graduate after five years.
- In the past five years, the graduation rates after five and seven years has declined constantly, widening the gap from the provincial average.

In terms of success rates in **passing government exams**, for all exams combined, the Eastern Townships ranks 15th among 17 administrative regions across the province. We place 13th out of 17 for the average grades obtained in the exams.

² Eligible diplomas for the purposes of calculating these statistics are the DES, DEP, CEP, AFP, ISJP and the CFER. Only the first diploma earned by the student is counted for the statistic.

Mission – Vision – Targets

Mission

The TECIE seeks to mobilize all of the Eastern Townships in an effort to make educational success a priority in the development of young Townshippers and in the social, economic and cultural development of our region.

Vision

The TECIE wants the Eastern Townships to become one of the most successful regions in Quebec with regard to educational perseverance, qualifications and graduation among youth, thereby giving them the opportunity to pursue higher education and access the job market.

Targets³

- Between now and 2016, reduce from 1000 to 400 the number of youth quitting school each year without qualifications or a diploma.
- Between now and 2016, reduce from 600 to 250 the number of boys quitting school each year without qualifications or a diploma.
- Increase the regional graduation rate after seven years from the 2004 rate of 66% to 80% in 2016.

³ Each local community must contribute to these targets according to its own situation. Therefore, each local community will be asked annually to set its drop-out rate reduction targets and graduation and perseverance increases based on local factors.

Values

Values

Education is an important means of self-actualization and social and professional integration. Eastern Townships' youth deserve the best possible conditions to succeed.

In addition to the constant and sustained effort of **each young Townshipper** to succeed in his or her studies, we believe our youth should also be able to count on the support and guidance of their family, school and community. They will in turn be able to achieve their dreams, overcome difficulties and succeed in their studies.

The family is the first school. Parents are our number one educators and their support is essential throughout their child's school years, from day care to the day they graduate.

School is where 5 to 16 year-olds spend most of their time. It is in many ways their second family. It must always foster a culture of excellence which translates into quality services and high expectations. It must encourage every student to reach always higher and support and motivate their efforts through relevant, effective and exemplary practices.

The success of this collective project requires the contribution of **each community partner**. In addition to the contribution of youth themselves, their parents, teachers, principals, administrators and other staff, the sustained cooperation and support of employers and unions, social and community organizations serving youth, health and social service establishments, municipalities and all other members of the community is essential. Your contribution is in fact vital to the success of each young person.

The priority actions identified by the TECIE in its *Action Plan to Increase Youth Success and Decrease Drop-outs in Eastern Townships Schools* are based on the following values:

**Commitment – Confidence in youth potential – Cooperation
Accountability – Consistency – Openness to the future
Conscientiousness**

Framework Strategy

The educational and research communities have recognized the complexity of school drop-outs. Current knowledge regarding school drop-outs and success allowed us to identify essential factors in any strategy aimed at resolving the problem. These **essential factors** lead to **intervention areas**, which must be prioritized. Research also indicates the **need for a cooperative, eco-systemic approach**, allowing for action on various fronts and in numerous locations simultaneously. Such an approach requires that all education stakeholders and partners assume their share of the **responsibility** in working toward youth success.

Six Priority Intervention Areas

- The **prevention and early screening of learning problems** in mother tongue instruction, especially reading, as well as math before a child starts school and as soon as the first signs of difficulty appear.
- **Assistance to students with difficulties** learning their mother tongue, especially reading, and math, in their school and community, to ensure they develop the skills required to succeed.
- **Regular guidance from significant and committed adults** for each child throughout his or her school years, in the family, school and community.
- The **expression and maintenance of high expectations** regarding youth's commitment to their education and success – high expectations of educators and administrators, as well as community partners in terms of quality of services and practices implemented.
- The **use** by teachers of **recognized practices** that give meaning to their instruction, that feed, expand and heighten the educational and professional aspirations of youth.
- **Close contact between schools and the work environment** to give youth a sense of meaning and perspective to their education.

Project Success

All educational partners must assume their respective responsibilities.

Students must:

- Work constantly at their studies and participate actively in learning activities.
- Set high goals for their own success and be demanding of themselves.
- Increasingly recognize as they grow up that they are also responsible for the quality of their school life and success, which depend on the behaviour they adopt.

Parents must:

- Provide for the fundamental needs of their children and prepare them to learn and meet their obligations at school.
- Develop their child's sense of confidence and self-esteem.
- Read to their children from the earliest age and then regularly encourage their children to read varied texts.
- Recognize the importance of education and share that message with their children.
- Have high expectations of their children's school success at all levels.
- Guide and support them throughout their school years.
- Help and support schools in the instruction, socialization and qualification of their children and in the school's educational success plan.

Teachers must:

- Have high expectations of their students and their own success as educators.
- Develop their professional skills as educators.
- Implement effective learning and assessment strategies adapted to the needs of each student.
- Develop a sense of learning in each student.
- Maintain a positive, enriching learning environment in which each student is motivated to give his or her best.

Principals must:

- Assume their fundamental responsibility for the quality of instruction provided to youth in their community.
- Be capable of introducing and implementing change.
- Motivate, mobilize and manage people.
- Implement the processes and arrangements that maximize resource effectiveness and bring improvements in results.
- Instill a culture of excellence leading to success.
- Offer parents and local communities the opportunity to contribute actively to the success of their youth.
- Establish their educational success plans and ensure the actions are accomplished.

- Account for efforts toward the improvement of student success and the results achieved.

Administrators, commissioners and governing board members must:

- Instill a culture of excellence in their organization.
- Coordinate their strategic plan with the TECIE's action plan for the educational success of young Townshippers.
- Adopt an official position with regard to the development of education and youth training and qualification in the Eastern Townships.
- Express high expectations of youth graduation and qualification in the region.
- Provide constant and attentive support to principals in their leadership toward youth success.
- Account for efforts made to support the improvement of educational success among young Townshippers.

Local communities must:

- Help provide opportunities to learn and excel, and cooperate actively with schools.
- Contribute time and resources to improvement efforts on behalf of youth success.
- Ensure that youth are in a position to learn and participate actively in school.
- Promote education and instill and defend this value in and among youth.

Post-secondary institutions must:

- Contribute actively to knowledge regarding educational success and failure.
- Help strengthen skills in educational personnel and administrators.
- Support schools in their experiments and in evaluating their results.
- Adapt programs to meet the changing needs of society and its citizens.

Action Plan Principles

- 1. The active participation, mobilization and involvement of all partners concerned**
Meeting the specific targets and youth success in general requires cooperation among all partners, regional and local.
- 2. Documented and successful practices**
The TECIE will give priority to measures that fall under the six intervention areas identified in the framework strategy. These will be measures recognized in the literature for their effectiveness or which will be subject to a rigorous and documented methodological evaluation.
- 3. Actions that touch on all aspects of life**
To be effective, interventions must occur as close as possible to youth, in their daily environment, be it at school or elsewhere. “Local community” refers to the territory served by a high school and the elementary schools that feed it.
- 4. Perseverance, assessment and accountability**
To be successful, such a project requires the perseverance of local and regional participants, adapted management methods, regular monitoring of actions and results and rigorous assessment accompanied by an annual form of accountability.

Action Plan Strategies

Improving drop-out, graduation and qualification rates among Townships youth cannot happen without a strong concerted effort by all people and organizations involved and without priority being given to education as a community development tool. Communities must collectively take responsibility and make a steady commitment.

The TECIE is committed to making the improvement of educational success among youth an essential tool in the social, economic and cultural development of our youth and the Eastern Townships region itself. We are committed to launching a wide mobilization of regional stakeholders and generating collective responsibility for the critical development of education.

Strategic Direction I: Regional Action – Developing & Promoting Education

1. *Publicizing the situation in the Eastern Townships*

- Ensure that findings and results regarding Townships youth graduation, qualification and drop-outs are shared among all local and regional stakeholders.

2. *Mobilization*

- Ensure that TECIE members coordinate their strategic plan with this action plan.
- Seek commitments from various stakeholders in the region to contribute to resolving the problem, **with priority** being given to the **following: parents, employers, unions, youth and community groups.**

3. *Developing and promoting education, qualifications and diplomas for Townshippers*

- Establish a strategic development plan for education as a cornerstone to development of the Eastern Townships. The plan should emphasize higher expectations among Townshippers of youth graduations and qualifications and should include specific strategies for each major stakeholder group.

4. *Promotion of professional, technical and scientific careers*

- Mandate the *Table estrienne de concertation formation-emploi* (TECFE) to establish and implement a promotion and development plan for careers that require professional and technical training and for scientific careers, and provide the required financial support.

Action Plan Strategies

*The complexity of the drop-out problem is widely recognized by organizations and the research sector, which have all described the need for **cooperative, eco-systemic and multifactorial solutions**. Such complexity requires further research to determine the best practices and conditions for resolving the problem as well as a wide distribution of the research results to all community stakeholders.*

The TECIE is committed to documenting the most promising practices and sharing that information with school teams and other community stakeholders working on behalf of youth. We are also committed to implementing a system to monitor knowledge and the evolution of and changes in the drop-out problem.

Strategic Direction II: Documentation – Monitoring – Publication

1. Documentation and monitoring

- Develop terms of reference on high school drop-outs.
- Establish agreements with resource experts and the research sector regarding the development of knowledge on drop-outs, high school success and promising practices, with priority given to the intervention areas identified by the TECIE in the above framework strategy.
- Ensure the development of a regional monitoring system to increase knowledge on drop-outs, high school success and promising practices, particularly to strengthen local expertise and adapt and revise training practices.

2. Publication of knowledge and promising practices

- Develop a system for publishing knowledge and promising practices regarding drop-outs and successes.
- Establish agreements with authors, research groups and institutions.
- Share promising practices related to the TECIE's priority intervention areas with the various stakeholders in the region according to the roles and contributions specific to each, including parents, youth, employers, unions, teachers and other school staff, social and community stakeholders, the health network, municipalities, etc.
- Organize regional information-sharing events focusing on the results, promising practices and knowledge about drop-outs and successes, and cooperate with partners and community stakeholders in their organization of similar events.

Action Plan Strategies

An effective action plan to reduce drop-outs and increase youth graduation and qualification in the Eastern Townships is not an exclusively regional issue. Local communities must be supported in addressing their own problems, through the larger mobilization and through local measures to improve perseverance and success among Townships youth.

The TECIE is committed to supporting the mobilization of local stakeholders based on the territories served by each high school and its associated elementary schools.

Strategic Direction III: Support – Accompanying Local Communities

1. Support in addressing the problem

- Facilitate access to statistics and other information to document the particular situation in each community and provide the support required to analyze and interpret the data.
- Support public information events that spread information about the local problem.
- Support local communities in identifying targets and indicators relevant to their situation and in implementing review methods.

2. Support for local efforts

- Support local communities seeking the services of a liaison agent or cooperative mechanisms to engage in concerted efforts to improve youth success in our schools.
- Support liaison agents or local cooperative mechanisms in accomplishing their mandate and establish a regional networking system for liaison agents and/or local cooperative mechanisms.

3. Support implementation of promising practices in the TECIE's priority intervention areas

- Support the identification and implementation of practices related to the priority intervention areas described in the framework strategy.

Action Plan Strategies

The follow-up of actions and assessment of results are crucial to the success of this necessary and ambitious plan. By doing so, progress is identified, adjustments can be made and a precise evaluation of results according to success indicators can be achieved. For its part, accountability establishes a climate of trust within the TECIE, its members and the community as a whole.

The TECIE is committed to implementing action plan follow-up and assessment mechanisms and carrying out an annual public accountability exercise.

Strategic Direction IV: Follow-up – Accountability

1. Follow-up

- Prepare a trend chart to track action plan implementation and the evolution of regular success indicators as well as agreed regional indicators, such as absenteeism, skills at the elementary level, registration in regular high school courses, etc., and to ensure application.
- Establish agreements with the partners concerned to define indicator sources, data-gathering methods and information sharing, and if applicable to determine how to respond to and follow-up on such information.

2. Accountability

- Develop and agree to a framework that sets the objectives, content and terms for an annual accountability exercise.
- Carry out an annual public accountability review of the 2006-2016 action plan's implementation and of the evolution of success indicators and target results.

Resources for Accomplishing the Plan

The TECIE has the following resources available to implement its action plan on behalf of youth success in the Eastern Townships:

Human Resources

- Staff of TECIE member organizations involved in the plan
- Decision-making members of the TECIE and work committee
- Partners in the wider Eastern Townships community
- Resource experts
- Regional success project team

Political Resources

- TECIE member boards of directors
- *Conférence régionale des élus de l'Estrie*

Financial Resources

- Financial resources, related to student success, of TECIE organizations
- Person-hours for the regional effort by all TECIE organizations and their partners
- Funds from a specific agreement to be reached with the *Conférence régionale des élus de l'Estrie*

About the TECIE

The Table estrienne de concertation interordres en éducation brings together:

- The Eastern Townships School Board, *Commission scolaire des Hauts-Cantons*, *Commission scolaire de la Région-de-Sherbrooke* and *Commission scolaire des Sommets*
- Champlain College and the *CÉGEP de Sherbrooke*
- Bishop's University and the *Université de Sherbrooke*
- The regional association of private schools
- The *Agence de santé et de services sociaux de l'Estrie*
- The *Conférence régionale des élus de l'Estrie*
- *Forum Jeunesse Estrie*
- The *Groupe d'action pour l'avancement technologique de l'Estrie* (GATE)
- Regional branches of the following provincial departments: Education, Leisure and Sports; *Emploi-Québec*; Economic Development, Innovation and Exports; Municipal Affairs and Regions.

The committee is the result of a regional desire to cooperate among education sector partners.

It acts as spokesperson for the Eastern Townships in regional and inter-level education matters, addressing the *Conférence régionale des élus de l'Estrie*, socio-economic and provincial partners and the Eastern Townships population.

Apart from various priorities inherent in serving and representing the Eastern Townships, the TECIE has adopted **youth success and the fight against drop-outs as its number one priority.**

The TECIE has therefore given itself the mandate of mobilizing the entire Eastern Townships to significantly improve the educational success of Eastern Townships' youth. The TECIE will accomplish this mandate through its usual role: lobbying, mobilizing, providing support and expertise, and networking.

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