



# ***Towards Empowerment, Respect and Accountability***

***Report and Recommendations on the  
Impact of the Internet and Related Technologies  
on English Public Schools in Quebec***

**Presented to the Quebec English School Boards Association  
by  
QESBA Task Force on the Internet and Related Technologies  
Dr. Claude Lajeunesse, Chair**

**June 2008**

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Mandate.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Methods.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Objectives.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Research Overview.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The omnipresent nature of technology.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Social networking technologies     and their associated behaviors.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Challenges of integrating technology     into school curriculums.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Recommendations.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Annex I</b>	
<b>Biographies of Task Force members.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Annex II</b>	
<b>Internet Survey of QESBA Constituency.....</b>	<b>19</b>

## Task Force Members

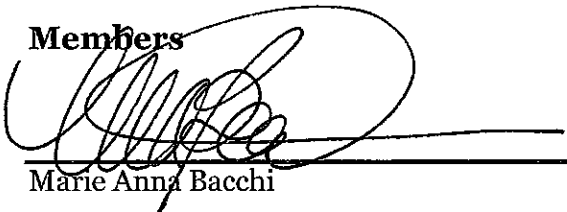
### Chair



---

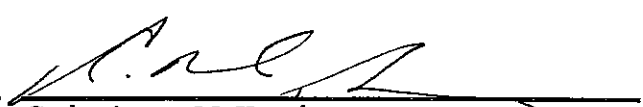
Claude Lajeunesse

### Members




---

Marie Anna Bacchi



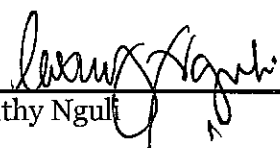
---

Catherine McKeogh



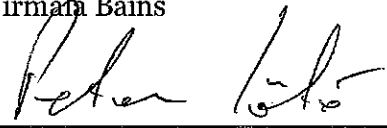
---

Nirmala Bains



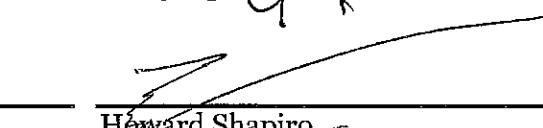
---

Cathy Ngult



---

Peter Côté



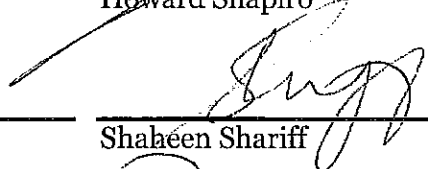
---

Howard Shapiro




---

Frédérick Gaudreau



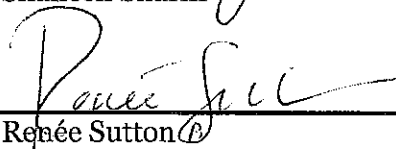
---

Shahéen Shariff



---

Jaswant Guzder



---

Renée Sutton



---

Robert Libman



---

Elias Makos

Ex-Officio: Debbie Horrocks (President, QESBA); Rosemary Murphy (QESBA Board member); Ronald Canuel (President, Association of Directors General of English School Boards of Quebec/Director General, Eastern Townships School Board); Antonio Lacroce, (Director General, English Montreal School Board).

Administrative support: David Birnbaum, Executive Director, QESBA; Andrew Churchill, researcher; Angela Rosa, logistical support.

## **Executive summary**

### ***Mandate***

In August of 2007, the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) decided to create a Task Force on the impact of the Internet and related technologies on English public schools in Quebec. In doing so, the association noted: “With the ever-expanding reach of information technologies, public education finds itself confronted with new challenges as well as opportunities. The moral, legal and sociological challenges posed by these new technologies go far beyond the boundaries of public education. Similarly, the solutions to those challenges can hardly be the sole responsibility of educators. New problems demand new approaches. QESBA believes that the time is right to explore ideas and strategies to respond to these concerns.”

Convened under the leadership of Dr. Claude Lajeunesse, President and CEO of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada and former President of Concordia and Ryerson Universities, the volunteer task force was charged with preparing a report and recommendations to be presented to the Board of Directors of QESBA by late Spring 2008 on tools, strategies and interventions to maximize the positive use of the Internet and minimize potential abuse within Quebec’s English public schools.

### ***Methods***

In response to this mandate, the Task Force held its first of five meetings last October, and proceeded over the next eight months to better understand the challenges and opportunities that the Internet and other technologies pose for schools, school boards, teachers, students, principals and other stakeholders. In this work, the Task Force benefited from the varied experience and perspectives of its members, who include a former teacher and school administrator, media commentator, senior health-care administrator, a senior law enforcement officer, university student, parent and a telecommunications senior manager, among others. It is worthy of specific note that Dr. Shaheen Shariff, McGill University assistant professor and published expert on cyber-bullying, was a leading and active member of the Task Force.

In addition to regular meetings, the Task Force completed an extensive literature review of the field and then, in order to supplement this review with a local context, commissioned and analyzed a survey of some 1000 QESBA-member students, parents and teachers. Additionally, the Task Force held meetings with representatives of the Quebec Library Association, the Sûreté du Québec and a range of other informal consultations with interested stakeholders in order to solicit their insights.

Detailed summary information of the literature review and summary statements from our own survey form the body of this report. Finally, the task force spent considerable time developing a framework upon which to propose a series of recommendations to QESBA and its member school boards. Those recommendations – as first recognized in the mandate bestowed on the Task Force – reflect the evident reality that the Internet and its impact are subjects for all of society’s components to embrace. Our

public schools are a vital, but not exclusive player in addressing the challenges and opportunities explored in this report.

***Objectives***

Early in its deliberations, the Task Force fixed the following three objectives. They have served as a general but not limiting guide for the completion of this report:

- Raise public awareness and understanding of the positive impact of the Internet on student learning and development as well as the potential to initiate innovative solutions to address issues of Internet abuse.
- Positively influence the further development of pertinent school and school board pedagogical programs and outreach activities.
- Encourage the Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sport to actively recognize and respond to the impact of new technologies.

## Research overview

The Task Force reviewed pertinent research on the impact of information technologies, including the Internet, on education. Three principal themes emerged:

- Its ubiquitous and rapidly evolving nature
- The complexity of social networking technologies<sup>1</sup> and their associated behaviors
- Challenges of integrating technology into school curriculums

While not exhaustive, the research review highlights the profound complexity of the issues. More specifically, the Task Force was struck by the tension between understanding adolescent on-line experiences as being formative, constructive and full of positive potential versus the frequent public characterization of these experiences as anti-social and academically threatening. This tension is central to our policy recommendations.

Where possible, this report draws upon Canadian research, and more specifically, research completed within Quebec's English schools. Additionally, the Task Force supplemented available research with its own large-scale survey of students, parents and teachers within the school boards served by the QESBA. This survey was conducted on-line in February and March of 2008; over 1000 respondents took part. This survey was available in both English and French. Summary statements drawn from this survey are included in the research overview and supporting data for those summaries are annexed to this report. Each statement is highlighted with a bullet.

### ***The omnipresent nature of technology***

In 2005, Media Awareness Network concluded Phase II of its comprehensive study, *Young Canadians in a Wired World*.<sup>2</sup> This study looked at attitudes and behaviors of over 5,000 Canadian students in Grades 4 through Secondary V. It documents the ever-extending reach of the Internet and associated technologies:

- 94% of young people have Internet access in their home
- 37% of young people have their own individual Internet connection
- 23% of students have their own cell phone
- 86% of students have their own e-mail accounts

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this report, we looked at the broadest definition of social networking technologies which would include not only sites specifically geared to promoting social networks (e.g. MySpace and Facebook) but also sites that promote social interactions –such as YouTube, blogging and chatrooms.

<sup>2</sup> This study is publicly available and can be downloaded from <http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/research>.

This information is corroborated by a recent study conducted by Task Force member, Dr. Shaheen Shariff in Montreal-area English schools.<sup>3</sup> Her survey research includes over 500 local-area students in Grades 5-9 and found that:

99% of students have at least 1 computer in their home  
33% of students have 3 or more computers in their home  
95% of students use the Internet at home (52% are on-line every day)  
37% of students have their own cell phone.  
Over 65% of students have had negative social experiences on-line  
(These online behaviors begin by sixth grade.)

Our own study of QESBA constituents corroborates these findings:

Over 95% of respondents have at least one computer in their home.  
Over 80% of respondents have high speed Internet access.  
Over 85% of respondents report young people spending at least 1-3 hours on-line per week.  
Almost 60% of parents (and 90% of students) report young people having their own e-mail address.

### ***Social networking technologies and their associated behaviors***

Over the last five years, the Internet has taken the adolescent social world by storm. Facebook (founded in 2004) and YouTube (founded in 2005) rank in the top 10 visited sites worldwide. In Canada, Facebook now ranks number one.<sup>4</sup> Recent research shows that over 50% of on-line teens use social network sites and have created on-line profiles.<sup>5</sup> This research also shows that over 50% of youth access these spaces multiple times per week. Facebook traffic data corroborates this use pattern, showing that over half of their users return daily with an average time spent in excess of twenty minutes.<sup>6</sup>

What is happening within these on-line spaces? The tension between fearing the danger of the Internet and focusing on its possibilities is currently being recognized and explored in social science research communities. Recent studies are showing that students experience various forms of cyber-bullying in increasingly high numbers.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the consequences of cyber-bullying can be serious: increased social anxiety, decreased school achievement, and teen suicide.<sup>8</sup> Despite the frequency and

---

<sup>3</sup> This is an ongoing study funded by Social Science and Humanities Research of Canada. The principal investigator is Dr. Shaheen Shariff at McGill University.

<sup>4</sup> Alexa is an Internet traffic data company. Their site address is <http://www.alexa.com>.

<sup>5</sup> Lenhart, Amanda. (2007) "Social Networking Websites and Teens: An Overview." *PEW Internet and The American Life Project*. Available at <http://www.pewinternet.org>.

<sup>6</sup> This data is reported by Facebook and is available at <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>.

<sup>7</sup> Barak, A. (2005). "Sexual Harassment on the Internet." *Social Science Computer Review*, 23(1), 77-92.; Media Awareness Network (2007). "Young Canadians in a wired world: Key findings." Available at [http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/research/YCWW/phaseII/key\\_findings.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/research/YCWW/phaseII/key_findings.cfm).

<sup>8</sup> Willard, N. (2006) *Cyber-bullying and Cyberthreats. Responding to the Challenge of On-line Social Cruelty, threats, and Distress.* Ingram Book Co.

severity of bullying, many students often reject assertions that their on-line worlds are dangerous and urge adults to understand cyber-social networks in light of the positive impact it has on their lives.<sup>9</sup> Teens report that the networks facilitate and extend their social interactions. Examples they cite include organizing events, connecting with like-minded peers, and exposure to others whom they would not normally meet. Common in these reactions is identifying the capacity of the Internet to help students transcend the local boundaries of school and geography which traditionally have restricted their social communities.

The aforementioned study, *Canadians in a Wired World*, asserts that: “Young people tell us that their on-line experiences are generally positive and socially rewarding” and that “kids use the Internet to extend their existing social networks.” In contrast, the study also acknowledges that, “Mainstream Web sites expose young people to inappropriate content and risky situations” and that “for some young people the Net is a vehicle for bullying and sexual harassment.”<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, these social network sites do not just exert an impact on our youth. For example, over 85% of Ontario teachers report that they have “experienced cyber-bullying” and believe in significant numbers (19-39% depending on the question), that it contributes to: 1) teachers leaving the profession prematurely; 2) students dropping out of school; 3) decreased classroom quality; 4) decreased job satisfaction of teachers; and, 5) students performing poorly.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, some teachers report that they and their colleagues no longer feel safe in properly exercising their role as authority figures within school for fear of retribution from students in the form of on-line attacks that are damaging or even libelous. The impact of this can be that they are less likely to give a low grade for a poor assignment and less likely to intervene when they see students misbehaving.<sup>12</sup>

In light of these findings, understanding how the QESBA constituency viewed these issues was a major focus of the survey the Task Force conducted. To this end respondents were asked a number of questions to gauge their feelings of safety versus fear of on-line activity as well as its potential for negative versus positive behaviors. The following statements offer a summary of these findings:

- The majority of all respondent groups do not believe that the Internet negatively impacts students’ social lives, is causing harm to positive social development or is the cause of the majority of social problems

---

Shariff, S. (2004) Keeping schools out of court: Legally defensible models of leadership to reduce cyber-bullying. Educational Forum, Delta Kappa Pi. 68(3) 222–233.

<sup>9</sup> Media Awareness Network (2007). Young Canadians in a wired world: Key findings. Available on-line at [http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/research/YCWW/phaseII/key\\_findings.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/research/YCWW/phaseII/key_findings.cfm).

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

<sup>11</sup> *Ontario Teachers College (2007)*. State of the Teaching Profession Survey Result. Available on-line at [http://www.oct.ca/publications/professionally\\_speaking/september\\_2007/results.asp](http://www.oct.ca/publications/professionally_speaking/september_2007/results.asp).

<sup>12</sup> This research is part of an ongoing study funded by Social Science and Humanities Research of Canada. The principal investigator is Dr. Shaheen Shariff at McGill University.

- The majority of all respondent groups do not see Internet behavior as inherently more anti-social or more dangerous than face-to-face interactions.
- Only 4% of teachers surveyed report having been a victim of an on-line incident by students (and only 5% of an incident by parents).
- The majority of all respondent groups do not agree that the Internet and other technologies are having a negative impact on their school culture.

The Task Force concludes from our survey that the media discourse demonizing technology<sup>13</sup> is generally rejected by the QESBA survey respondents. Furthermore, the Task Force believes that the widespread incident rates of on-line teacher harassment suggested by the media and the Ontario Teachers College report are not supported by our own research.

While somewhat comforted by these findings, the Task Force nevertheless recognizes that the Internet remains a medium that can prompt incidents of problematic behaviors. The Task Force believes that such behaviors must be understood in their full social complexity and *not* simply as resulting from the Internet and related technologies themselves. We believe our QESBA survey indicates that our respondents support this view as well.

Given this understanding, the Task Force was further curious about the QESBA constituency's opinions about the role that schools can and should play in educating students about proper use of technology and responding to incidents of abuse. To these questions our survey data suggests that:

- The majority of parent and teacher respondent groups believes schools and school boards have a right and responsibility to deal with Internet issues regardless of the physical location of their performance. Interestingly, approximately one-third of students were unsure of the answer to this question, meaning there was not a majority agreement nor majority disagreement.
- The minority of respondents believes that schools do enough to educate either students or parents about the potential dangers of the Internet.
- The minority of teacher respondents agrees that schools do enough to protect teachers from on-line harassment or bullying and that schools do enough to educate teachers about emerging legal issues.

---

<sup>13</sup> To read more about the way media is portraying young peoples' use of technology, please see Shariff, Shaheen (2008) *Cyber-Bullying: Issues and Solutions for the School, the Classroom and the Home* Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group).

Given these findings, we believe schools can and should be doing more to both educate about potential dangers and respond to particular incidents. It is apparent that the QESBA survey respondents generally believe that this work should be done in a proactive, pedagogical manner rather than a reactive or fearful one.

Furthermore we believe this approach to be soundly grounded in other documented research. For instance, Dr. Shariff in her own research observes that:

- Bullying is informed and driven by societal attitudes that are engaged in, and tacitly condoned by adults. Cyber-bullying is an extension of bullying behavior (at sporting events, at work, in the home, at school, road rage, popular media, news, etc.) that mirrors and is modeled by adult behavior; and
- Research on cyber-bullying more accurately discloses it as an extension of societal bullying; we believe that the responses that focus on banning technology and demonizing perpetrators are misguided and in fact, exacerbate the problem.<sup>14</sup>

Shariff details how this exacerbation happens in at least two important ways: 1) While consistent disciplinary responses are necessary, exclusively punitive responses to incidents that criminalize students decrease the likelihood of teens reporting; and 2) Assigning the blame to the children and technology diverts the focus from a constructive and necessary discussion of the root causes of the behavior. These causes can be biological and environmental, and are often also embedded within the systemic structures of educational institutions.

Dysfunctional relationships between administrators and teachers, underlying tensions relating to diversity, pressures from parents, can all significantly influence the ways in which bullying and cyber-bullying play themselves out in physical and virtual school environments.<sup>15</sup>

We believe that the kind of proactive educative work by schools combined with reasoned disciplinary responses that appears to be supported by our constituency is the approach that QESBA schools should be embracing. Recommendations for how to implement this type of approach appear in the last section of this document.

### ***Challenges of integrating technology into school curriculums***

The challenges of effectively integrating technology into schools are numerous. They include everything from the financing of the technology itself to creating the time and culture that will allow teachers to bring the complex process of integrating technology

---

<sup>14</sup> To learn more about the shortcomings of non-contextualized disciplinary responses to cyber-bullying please see: Shariff, S (2008) *Cyber-Bullying: Issues and Solutions for the School, the Classroom and the Home* Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group).

<sup>15</sup> To learn more about the relationship between school culture and cyber-bullying, please see: Shariff, S (2008) *Cyber-Bullying: Issues and Solutions for the School, the Classroom and the Home* Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group).

into their teaching practice. What is less clear is how successful schools have been in accomplishing these goals and whether or not this success leads to measurably more desirable student outcomes.<sup>16</sup>

For example, much academic literature suggests that getting teachers to integrate technology successfully is extremely difficult beyond a limited number of early adopters<sup>17</sup>. That said, there are clear examples of projects that indicate that adoption challenges can be overcome by a sustained input of time and support for teachers. This type of support can lead to significant curricular transformation.<sup>18</sup>

Further complicating technology integration in curriculum is the breadth of opinions about the impact technology is having on education. These contrasting camps are well documented in the Task Force's survey results. A number of parents lamented the impact that technologies are having on students and a perception of their decreasing ability to read and write well. In sharp contrast, some teachers surveyed see technologies – especially within the context the Quebec Education Program – as a sort of panacea for the future. While the breadth of responses was informative, the Task Force was most interested in the positive response by the majority as demonstrated by:

- The majority of all respondent groups believes that the Internet and other technologies have a positive impact on education

They offered, however, some qualifiers:

- The majority of all respondent groups was unsure or agreed that students were unsure how to evaluate the quality and/or accuracy of on-line sources and that students are unsure what constitutes cheating when cutting and pasting from on-line sources.

---

<sup>16</sup> To learn more about the challenges of implementing information and communication technologies please refer to: Yelland, N., Neal, G. A., & Dakich, E. (Eds.). (2008). *Rethinking education with ICT: New directions for effective practices*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers and/or Zandvliet, D. (2006). *Education is not rocket science: The case for deconstructing computer labs*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

<sup>17</sup> For an article reviewing examples of this literature and detailed discussion about the barriers to ICT adoption please see: Bracewell, R.J., Sicilia, C., Park, J., & Tung, I.-P. (2007, May). Tracking adoption and non-adoption of ICT activities by teachers. Invited presentation to the Technology and Teacher Education Pre-conference, 2007 Congress of the Humanities and Sciences, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon. Draft available at [http://www.tact.fse.ulaval.ca/papers/Bracewell\\_aera2007.pdf](http://www.tact.fse.ulaval.ca/papers/Bracewell_aera2007.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> An example of one such project is “Learning with Laptops” in the New Frontiers School Board. For a review of this project please see: Strong-Wilson, T., Pasinato, M., Ryan, K., Thomas, B., Mongrain, N., Harju, M.-L., et al. (2007). Line up your ducks! Teachers and students learning with laptops in a teacher action research project. *LEARNing Landscapes*, 1(1). A second example is the “Enhanced Learning Strategy” with laptops at the Eastern Townships School Board. <http://www.etsb.qc.ca>

- There was a perception gap between teacher responses (majority agreed) and student and parent responses (minority agreed) when asked if teachers effectively integrated technology into their teaching practice.
- The minority of all respondent groups felt that teachers, parents and students use technology to communicate effectively with each other.

The recommendations in the final section of this report speak directly to these responses.

While it is clear to the Task Force that schools could and should continue to strive to more effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices, it would be remiss of the Task Force to ignore the important strides schools and teachers have already taken. Specifically, the teachers who responded to this Task Force documented the importance of technology to their teaching and the specific ways in which they integrate technology into the classroom:

- 83% of teachers surveyed have their students use technology and/or the Internet for school work.
- Only 6% of teachers surveyed see technology as “not very important” to their teaching whereas 57% see it as complementary (and either integrated or peripheral) and 15% see it as “central and integrated”

Furthermore the feelings these teachers expressed towards technology in general are reinforced by their related contentions, in substantial majority, that the Internet and related technologies do **not**:

- contribute to teachers leaving the profession prematurely
- contribute to students dropping out of school
- decrease the quality of the classroom experience
- decrease job satisfaction of teachers
- contribute to students performing poorly
- make teacher less likely to give students a low mark, or
- make teacher less likely to discipline students

While it is apparent from these responses that the teachers surveyed are taking strides in implementing technology and are not fearful of doing so, it is also important to note that they do not feel these efforts are being adequately supported. This is evidenced by responses which indicate that the majority of teachers **disagree** that:

- schools do enough to help teachers integrate technology into their teaching practice

The Task Force recommendations seek to address this expressed need to support and challenge teachers to better integrate technology into their teaching practices and to help students better utilize technology as an integral component of their learning.

## Recommendations

***Before proceeding to its recommendations, the Task Force proposes that they be understood within the following framework of principles and observations, all predicated on the findings and discussions described in the report before you. Ultimately, policy and practice on the use of information technologies in schools must be aimed at maximizing educational and developmental benefits while minimizing abuse that results in cyber-bullying and other negative behaviors.***

### ***More specifically:***

- A. The task force has learned of a pressing need for *educational and transformative approaches and preventative practices* to more fully engage students in dialogue, provide them with responsibility, leadership and learning opportunities within ethical frameworks that guide both young people *and adult stakeholders* to appreciate the impact of their words and expressions on others. To adequately prepare students for the knowledge-based society, educators must value media literacy and model responsible, respectful and inclusive personal and on-line discourse.
- B. In many cases, this may require a change in thinking, practice and leadership to ensure that the appropriate resources (both human and financial) are available, accessible and well-utilized as set out in the specific recommendations below, and a focus on *consistent and sustainable planning, monitoring and evaluation of programs and school practices in support of proactive and preventative approaches*.
- C. *The task force supports the need for appropriate discipline or consequences along a trajectory of minor to serious cyber-bullying offences.* For instance, in cases where a law has clearly been broken, the Task Force fully understands that law enforcement authorities must become involved. That said, overwhelming research evidence indicates the need for a mind-set and policy shift away from *reactive* responses that fail to address the root causes of negative discourses (both in school and cyber-space). Responses will fail if they do not recognize that cyber incidents happen within a complex social framework that is not limited to the instance of abuse. Discipline without context is not the answer. A lack of attention to root causes of student behavior and expression, or sensitivity to levels of student participation (from perpetrator, to supporter, to victim) can compromise the overall school environment because it models lack of interest and intolerance to students' needs and learning.
- D. Moving from the prevalent paradigm of reactive control of cyber-bullying to a more proactive educational policy perspective need not involve a significant investment of additional time on the part of teachers and school administrators. The Task Force is convinced that the shift can reasonably be made by developing practices

and collaborative networks that engage all relevant stakeholders, including students.

- E. Students can and must be the essential agents of change in the recommendations below if educators are to fully recognize and encourage them to demonstrate and model respect and accountability on-line, and to accept personal responsibility for their on-line behavior and that of their peers.
- F. Similarly, parents can and must be active partners in better understanding the dynamics and impact of new technologies on their children, and in engaging and guiding them in the responsible and accountable use of those technologies.
- G. And finally, there is the potential for a vast array of organizations – both in the private and public sectors – to help educate and model proper uses of technology. These organizations include but are not limited to the news media, private corporations, libraries, law enforcement authorities and the vast array of on-line sites and services. Each of these stakeholders, acting in thoughtful and ethical ways that strive to support and model responsible use of technologies, can enhance the effort to help young people use technology responsibly.

***Based on the above considerations, the Task Force offers the following recommendations:***

## **1. Educate and involve community partners in responsible and informed Internet use**

### ***Possible actions:***

- Involve students, teachers and parents directly in developing and delivering (as well as receiving) information, skills and approaches on rules of Internet use, conduct and respect for privacy.
- Develop strategies to help students understand the forms of traditional bullying and cyber-bullying, the power imbalances that distinguish it from friendly teasing, and the impact of their discourses on and off-line on other people.
- Empower and encourage students to become active agents of change towards inclusive, accountable and respectful communications by modeling respect and standing up to perpetrators.
- Develop supportive approaches and techniques to help students recognize the serious consequences of cyber-bullying, and respond to and report cyber-bullying when it occurs.

- Enhance on-going and open communications between school and home on these issues. Seek to involve the co-operation, collaboration and participation of parents who are a key source behind the possibility for action and change.
- Provide accessible materials, interactive training for interested parents on Internet use and abuse, appropriate supervision techniques and modeling behavior for their own consideration.

## **2. Initiate and support programs and materials to integrate Internet use effectively in teaching and learning practices**

### ***Possible actions:***

- Intensify efforts to teach students strategies to search for, evaluate the quality of, and cite correctly on-line material. Implicate to a greater extent school librarians in this key process.
- Encourage all partners – students, parents, teachers, administrators, library and support staff and commissioners to pursue progressive and responsible learning opportunities about the Internet.
- Encourage young technology users to work with adults to teach them more about the technologies, and show confidence in their expertise.
- Re-think curriculum delivery in a digital age by taking advantage of the new pedagogical opportunities that technology offers. Be especially mindful that this involves giving teachers the time, resources and professional support needed to be successful in transforming their teaching practices.
- Adapt and implement traditionally successful instructional approaches and policies that encourage learning and positive interaction in today's technologically-evolving environment (i.e. the information tools might have changed; human nature and behavior hasn't necessarily changed).

## **3. Contribute to enhanced public awareness of key Internet issues**

### ***Possible actions:***

- Advocate for a paradigm shift from the Internet as “threat” to “opportunity” in media coverage, public discourse and teaching approaches.
- Develop and expand networks with parent and community groups, library associations and public libraries, media, law enforcement authorities and social service providers to create greater involvement in and awareness of the potential as well as the risks associated with Internet use.

- Be aware of the power of the media to frame the issue of cyber-bullying and work with them to provide accurate facts, context and to report positive achievements by young people as they work with technologies.

#### **4. Develop and adapt clear and pertinent policies on Internet use**

***Possible actions:***

- Assess and modify, where necessary, school board Internet policies to make sure they help students understand and respect the balance between freedom of expression, reasonable limits and ensured respect for others.
- Provide and encourage attendance at workshops that provide school administrators, teachers and parents with an improved understanding of their roles and responsibilities relating to on-line interactions, the extent and limitations of those responsibilities, particularly as they pertain to students' free expression, privacy, protection and supervision in cyber-space.
- Develop and publicize protocols or modify existing ones for prompt response to and identification of incidents that require police or legal intervention. Ensure a readiness to respond promptly to any technical questions arising from a possible police investigation, (ie: Internet infrastructure in the school, usernames and passwords, etc) and other enquiries from parents and staff members.
- Invite students to contribute to the development of codes of conduct and policies to address on-line abuse that divides peers or pits students against authority, so that they have a vested interest in ensuring such codes of conduct are applied.

#### **5. Undertake necessary measures to ensure safety and security**

***Possible actions:***

- Engage Internet portal and content providers in developing voluntary strategies to combat abusive behavior on the Internet and to raise awareness.
- Seek new approaches to counter problems such as permanency of information on the Internet, its infinite audience and anonymity.
- Craft well-informed, consistent and pedagogically sound disciplinary measures.
- Listen to and act on reports from students, parents and others; monitor and follow up such reports until there is no doubt that the bullying has ended.

## **6. Institute training of teachers and other school personnel in information literacy**

### ***Possible actions:***

- Advocate for compulsory Information Literacy Skills courses in pre-service teacher education programs.
- Enhance in-service training and other professional development opportunities within schools to promote information literacy.
- Incorporate proactive training programs delivered by police services on Internet use, similar to those now offered on drug and alcohol abuse.

## **7. Encourage the Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sport (MELS) to recognize and respond actively to the impact of new technologies**

### ***Possible actions:***

- Incorporate technology as an important component of new and existing policies.
- Take a leadership role in promoting the integration of technology in the classroom
- Require pre-service training in information literacy and related issues of technology use; and support on-going in-service school training on these same issues.

## **A final word**

The issues that the Task Force has considered in this report are, of course, pervasive and complex. As we have noted, public education is but one player in the addressing the wide-ranging objective of responsible, positive and accountable Internet behavior. Nevertheless, the members of the Task Force trust that this report will provide a catalyst for further thinking and fruitful action by QESBA, its member boards and their schools as well as its students, teachers, parents, principals, administrators and other stakeholders.

With a view to facilitating the impact of the report, the Task Force invites QESBA to undertake a review and evaluation of progress made on its implementation 24 months after its presentation to the QESBA Board and the public.

## **Annex 1**

### **Biographies of Task Force members**

#### **CLAUDE LAJEUNESSE (QESBA Internet Task Force Chair)**

Dr. Claude Lajeunesse is the former President of Concordia University and Ryerson University and a past-President and Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. He holds a PhD and MSc in Nuclear Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy, New York, and a BSc in Engineering Physics from the École polytechnique de Montréal. He is currently the President and CEO of Aerospace Industries Association of Canada.

#### **MARIE-ANNA BACCHI**

Marie-Anna Bacchi is a Senior Director of Bell Canada in Quebec, responsible for managing the workforce of some 2,000 technicians. Ms. Bacchi is a former Board member of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Canada and a former Vice-President of the Executive Council.

#### **NIRMALA BAINS**

Nirmala Bains is pursuing her MA in Social and Cultural Anthropology at Concordia University. She is an active and interested Internet user.

#### **RONALD CANUEL (*ex-officio*)**

Ron Canuel is the Director General of the Eastern Townships School Board. He is also the President of the Association of Directors General of the English School Boards of Quebec. Ron is the first School Board Director General in Canada to initiate a 1:1 computer laptop program for all students from Grade 3 through Secondary V.

#### **PETER CÔTÉ**

Peter Côté has been Director of the Office of Rights and Responsibilities at Concordia since 2002. In that capacity, he assists members of the university community who are dealing with various forms of conflict: harassment, discrimination, violent and threatening behavior.

## **FRÉDÉRIK GAUDREAU**

Captain Frédérick Gaudreau is the Officer in charge of the Sûreté du Québec Cybercrime Unit.

## **JASWANT GUZDER**

Dr. Jaswant Guzder is the Head of Child Psychiatry at the Institute of Community and Family Psychiatry at the Jewish General Hospital.

## **DEBBIE HORROCKS (*ex-officio*)**

Debbie Horrocks is the newly-elected President of the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) and the Vice-Chair of the Riverside School Board. She has been actively involved in the English school public network for over 20 years.

## **ANTONIO LACROCE (*ex-officio*)**

Antonio (Tony) Lacroce is the Director General of the English Montreal School Board, a former Physics and Mathematics teacher, principal and Director of Human Resources. The English Montreal School Board serves some 37,000 students in English elementary and high schools, adult and vocational centres in the centre and eastern sectors of the Montreal Island.

## **ROBERT LIBMAN**

Robert Libman is an architect, consultant, former MNA, Mayor of Côte St. Luc and City of Montreal Executive Committee member. He has also served as Executive Director of the B'nai Brith- Quebec Region League of Human Rights.

## **ELIAS MAKOS**

Elias Makos is a contributing journalist on Information Technology (IT) to CTV News in Montreal. He is also a technical instructor in the Concordia Journalism Program and a former media relations co-ordinator for the Montreal Expos Baseball Club.

## **CATHERINE McKEOGH**

Cathy McKeogh is a former Governing Board member and Chair and has also been Chair of the Central Parents' Committee at the Lester B. Pearson School Board and is currently an independent website master.

### **ROSEMARY MURPHY** (*ex-officio*)

Rosemary Murphy is a member of the Board of the Quebec English School Boards Association. She is also a school board commissioner at the Lester B. Pearson School Board and is currently the Vice-Chair of its Human Resources Committee and Chair of the Intercultural Advisory Committee.

### **CATHY NGULI**

Cathy Nguli is a former Information Technology (IT) technician at Lower Canada College and also worked at Youth Employment Services (YES) Montreal as an entrepreneurship services coordinator.

### **HOWARD SHAPIRO**

Howard Shapiro is a retired Teacher, Principal, and Director of Complementary Services in the English public school network. He is currently involved with the Namuwongo Literacy Project, which is responsible for creating and building a school in this small town in Uganda, Africa.

### **SHAHEEN SHARIFF**

Dr. Shaheen Shariff is an Assistant Professor at McGill University in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education. Dr. Shariff is the Principal Investigator for two projects funded by the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) one of which is to study school policy and legal boundaries involving cyber-bullying and internet harassment. She is a widely published author on cyber-bullying and related topics, and has been featured in numerous media interviews on these subjects.

### **RENÉE SUTTON**

Renée Sutton is a McGill University student in English Literature, majoring in Cultural Studies. She is the former editor of the Dawson College student newspaper.

**David Birnbaum**, QESBA Executive Director and **Angela Rosa**, QESBA Administrative Officer, provided staff support to the Task Force, as did **Andrew Churchill**, researcher. Mr. Churchill is currently a PhD. student at McGill University.

## **Annex 2**

### **Internet Survey of QESBA Constituency**

#### ***Goals***

The primary purpose of this research initiative is to provide the QESBA Internet Task Force specific findings on the impact of the Internet and other technologies on three of its major constituencies: parents, teachers and students. Specifically, the purpose was to gather opinions on the impact of these technologies, in order to:

- Validate, to the extent possible, the observations and recommendations of the Task Force in data from QESBA's own constituencies,
- Compare and contrast generally available research to that collected within the QESBA constituencies, and
- Answer specific questions about beliefs that the Task Force deems critical.

#### ***Methodology***

The following is an outline of key steps undertaken in the development and implementation of the survey:

1. Development
  - a) The surveys were developed by the Task Force members and contained questions that emerged either from research being reviewed by the Task Force and/or recommendations being given consideration.
2. Execution
  - a) The survey was available online from February 15<sup>th</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008.
  - b) A link to the survey was publicly accessible on the QESBA website.
  - c) The existence of the survey was announced at a news conference in February 2008 and in formal correspondence from QESBA to all member school boards, many of whom publicized the survey to their schools, who in turn, advised their communities about the survey. People also became aware of the survey through informal communication networks such as Listservs.
  - d) The survey was hosted on-line by Infopoll.
  - e) All survey responses were made anonymously without IP address tracking.
3. Analysis
  - a) The analysis of the survey was done by the Task Force's contracted researcher with oversight from Task Force members.
  - b) Both quantitative frequency analyses of the closed-ended questions as well as a qualitative thematic analysis of the open-ended ones was conducted. The quantitative analysis was done using Infopoll's

reporting software; the qualitative analysis by thematic coding of responses and analyzing for range of attitudes towards each topic.

### ***Survey Overview***

The survey asked a number of questions addressing issues of:

- a) Internet access and use
- b) Perception and understanding of Internet technologies
- c) Risks and challenges
- d) Pedagogical opportunities
- e) Personal attitudes towards technology
- f) Beliefs about role of schools in teaching about and monitoring technologies
- g) Miscellaneous other issues deemed important for the work of the Task Force

### ***Survey Results***

Who responded: The survey was completed by 572 parents, 273 teachers and 176 students for a total of 1,021 respondents. Respondents were distributed between all nine school boards, with the largest coming from English Montreal (423), Lester B Pearson (160) and Riverside (116) and the fewest from Eastern Township (9), New Frontiers (18), and Sir Wilfred Laurier (23). The teachers responding were distributed relatively evenly throughout all grades (Kindergarten through Secondary V) and taught in a wide variety of subjects. Parent responses included talking about their children from pre-kindergarten through Secondary 5. The Task Force believes it is important to note that over 25% of the students about whom parents were responding were in Grade 3 or less. Student responses were heavily concentrated in Secondary I, II and III.

What they said: Following are the specific survey results from which the research assertions are made. Each result is preceded by quoting the statement made in the research chapter. The results are listed in the order the assertions appear in the research chapter. (Additional data from the survey can be made available by contacting the Quebec English School Boards Association.)

Please note the following:

- The key for answer codes is: SA= Strongly Agree, A=Agree, U=Unsure, DA = Disagree and SDA = Strongly Disagree.
- All questions are written in this report as they were asked of parents. To conduct this work, we used three surveys and adjusted the questions appropriately for each constituency.
- The Survey answers are color coded by constituency as follows:

PARENTS	TEACHERS	STUDENTS
---------	----------	----------

1. Access and Use:

- a. Over 95% of respondents have at least one computer in their home.
- b. Over 80% of respondents have high speed Internet access.
- c. Over 85% of respondents report young people spending at least 1-3 hours on-line per week.
- d. Almost 60% of parents (and 90% of students) report young people having their own e-mail address.

	Students	Parents	Teachers
<b>How many computers do you have in your home?</b>			
None	4%	1%	1%
1	32%	35%	41%
2	35%	34%	32%
3 or more	29%	31%	26%
<b>What type of Internet access do you have?</b>			
No Internet Access	8%	1%	3%
Dial-up connection	11%	6%	8%
High-speed connection	81%	93%	89%
<b>Does your child have his/her own e-mail address?</b>			
Yes	90%	59%	n/a
No	10%	41%	n/a
<b>How many hours per week does your child spend on-line?</b>			
less than 1 hour / week	13%	15%	n/a
1-3 hours / week	13%	30%	n/a
3-5 hours / week	17%	22%	n/a
5-10 hours / week	24%	23%	n/a
more than 10 hours / week	32%	11%	n/a

2. The majority of all respondent groups do not believe that the Internet negatively impacts students' social lives, is causing harm to positive social development or is the cause of the majority of social problems.

	STUDENTS					PARENTS					TEACHERS				
	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
The Internet and other technologies have a negative impact on my child's social life.	4%	10%	24%	29%	33%	3%	10%	22%	50%	16%	4%	24%	35%	32%	5%
The Internet and other technologies are the source of most of my child's problems.	3%	13%	18%	30%	37%	1%	3%	5%	40%	52%	1%	5%	21%	50%	24%
The Internet and other technologies are causing harm to my child's positive social development.	2%	9%	33%	29%	28%	1%	8%	17%	54%	20%	2%	22%	33%	35%	8%

3. The majority of all respondent groups do not see Internet behavior as inherently more anti-social or more dangerous than face-to-face interactions.

	STUDENTS					PARENTS					TEACHERS				
	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
The Internet and other technologies encourage my child to be meaner than he/she would otherwise be.	4%	12%	17%	20%	46%	1%	4%	11%	38%	47%	4%	17%	35%	32%	12%
My child is more likely to face negative behavior on-line than in the physical world.	7%	19%	32%	19%	24%	4%	15%	22%	40%	19%	2%	24%	31%	34%	9%
Most negative behaviors on the Internet are a result of something that happened in the physical world.	12%	23%	43%	15%	8%	4%	34%	35%	20%	7%	4%	41%	35%	16%	4%

4. Only 4% of teachers surveyed report having been a victim of an on-line incident by students (and only 5% of an incident by parents).

	Yes	No
Have you personally ever been a victim of on-line harassment/bullying from a parent(s)?	4%	96%
Have you personally ever been a victim of on-line harassment/bullying from a student(s)?	5%	95%

5. The majority of all respondent groups do not agree that the Internet and other technologies are having a negative impact on their school culture.

	STUDENTS					PARENTS					TEACHERS				
	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
The Internet and other technologies negatively impact the culture of my child's school community.	3%	14%	32%	25%	27%	3%	7%	19%	54%	17%	1%	11%	26%	49%	13%

6. The majority of parent and teacher respondent groups believe schools and school boards have a right and responsibility to deal with Internet issues regardless of the physical location of their performance. Interestingly, approximately one third of students were unsure of the answer to this question meaning there was not a majority agreement nor majority disagreement.

	STUDENTS					PARENTS					TEACHERS				
	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
Schools should punish students for harrassing/bullying teachers on-line.	27%	24%	31%	8%	10%	52%	31%	9%	5%	3%	55%	32%	9%	2%	2%
Schools should punish students for harrassing/bullying other students on-line.	23%	23%	32%	8%	14%	49%	30%	12%	6%	3%	48%	35%	12%	3%	3%
Schools have no right to punish students for transgressions committed on-line if students committed those acts from their home computer.	15%	19%	38%	11%	17%	9%	15%	18%	26%	33%	9%	9%	25%	29%	28%

7. The minority of respondents believe that schools do enough to educate either students or parents about the potential dangers of the Internet.

	STUDENTS					PARENTS					TEACHERS				
	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
Schools do enough to educate students about the dangers of the Internet.	4%	24%	31%	25%	16%	3%	20%	36%	30%	11%	3%	20%	20%	46%	11%
Schools do enough to educate parents about technology and its impact on their children.	6%	14%	39%	26%	16%	2%	17%	28%	37%	16%	1%	7%	22%	53%	16%

8. The minority of teachers responding agree that schools do enough to protect teachers from on-line harassment or bullying and that schools do enough to educate teachers about emerging legal issues.

Schools and / or School Boards...	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
Do enough to protect teachers from on-line H/B from parents.	1%	14%	59%	18%	8%
Do enough to protect teachers from on-line H/B from students.	2%	15%	58%	18%	8%
Do enough to help teachers with emerging legal issues about technology.	0%	12%	22%	41%	25%

9. The majority of all respondent groups believe that the Internet and other technologies have a positive impact on their child's education.

	STUDENTS					PARENTS					TEACHERS				
	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
The Internet and other technologies have a positive impact on my child's education.	22%	36%	24%	11%	6%	16%	60%	16%	6%	3%	17%	59%	17%	6%	2%

10. The majority of all respondent groups were unsure or agreed that students were unsure how to evaluate the quality and/or accuracy of on-line sources and that students are unsure what constitutes cheating when cutting and pasting from on-line sources.

	STUDENTS					PARENTS					TEACHERS				
	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
My child is unsure how to evaluate the quality and/or accuracy of on-line sources.	5%	19%	47%	18%	11%	14%	37%	30%	16%	3%	18%	46%	21%	12%	4%

11. There was perception gap between teacher responses (majority agreed) and student and parent responses (minority agreed) when asked if teachers effectively integrated technology into their teaching practice.

	STUDENTS					PARENTS					TEACHERS				
	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
My child's teachers effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices.	12%	28%	34%	16%	10%	7%	33%	37%	17%	6%	16%	48%	13%	18%	5%

12. The minority of all respondent groups felt that teachers and parents and students use technology to communicate effectively with each other.

	STUDENTS					PARENTS					TEACHERS				
	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
The Internet and other technologies help me communicate effectively with teachers.	8%	28%	26%	19%	19%	12%	34%	16%	28%	11%	12%	37%	20%	22%	9%

13. 83% of teachers surveyed have their students use technology and/or the Internet for school work.

	Yes	No
Do you have your students use the Internet or other technologies for school work?	83%	17%

14. Only 6% of teachers surveyed see technology as “not very important” to their teaching whereas 57% see it as complementary (and either integrated or peripheral) and 15% see it as “central and integrated.”

How would you describe your use of technology in your teaching?	
Central and integrated	15%
Complementary and integrategrated	31%
Complementary but peripheral	26%
Supplementary	20%
Not very important	6%
None of these choices	1%

15. Furthermore the feelings these teachers expressed towards technology in general is reinforced by their related contentions, expressed in substantial majority, that the Internet and related technology does **not**:

- contribute to teachers leaving the profession prematurely;
- contribute to students dropping out of school;
- decrease the quality f the classroom experience,
- decrease job satisfaction of teachers,
- contribute to students performing poorly,
- make teachers less likely to give students a low mark, or
- make teachers less likely to discipline students.

The Internet and other technologies...	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
contribute to teachers leaving the profession prematurely.	2%	9%	19%	36%	34%
contribute to students dropping out of school.	1%	5%	13%	41%	41%
decrease the quality of classroom experience for students.	3%	8%	12%	40%	38%
decrease job satisfaction for teachers	2%	9%	14%	43%	31%
contribute to students performing poorly.	3%	13%	17%	36%	30%
make teachers less likely to give students a low mark for fear of on-line retribution.	1%	4%	20%	33%	43%
make teachers less likely to discipline students' negative behavior for fear of on-line retribution.	0%	3%	19%	36%	42%

## 16. Schools do enough to help teachers integrate technology into their teaching practice.

Schools and / or School Boards...	SA	A	U	DA	SDA
Do enough to help teachers integrate technology into their teaching	3%	22%	15%	40%	21%