

World Mental Health Day

October 10, 2025

For World Mental Health Day, FPPE-CSQ is highlighting the contribution of education professionals to students' mental health.


The Fédération du personnel professionnel de l'éducation du Québec (FPPE-CSQ) represents 18 unions bringing together 13,000 members across all regions of Quebec (69 of the 72 school organizations). There are 37 job categories of education professionals providing student services, as well as educational and administrative services, in support of the mission of Quebec's public schools.




School: Students' daily environment

Although the professions of many FPPE-CSQ members are often associated with the health and social services sector, what sets education professionals apart is their expertise, which is firmly rooted in the school environment.

Professional intervention within the school network makes it possible to act directly in the student's daily environment, in close collaboration with the school team.



"What I like about working in schools is that I have access to everyone around the student—teachers, special education technicians, parents and friends. Everyone is there. If we need to refer someone to external psychological services (MSSS, private), there's a significant loss. We should be doing more within schools because that's where things happen. School is a window of opportunity. It's their second home."
Alain, Psychologist



"Unlike speech therapists in other settings, we follow the students over several years. School is an important part of their daily lives, and we have privileged access to it. Collaboration with other professionals in the school is part of our daily work."
Audrey, Speech Therapist


Note: All quotes are from focus groups conducted by the FPPE-CSQ in June 2024.

World Mental Health Day


Recognizing professional expertise and its impact

FPPE-CSQ members want their expertise in mental health to be better recognized. University education in several job categories prepares them to work in mental health. We need to promote the development of new knowledge and expertise in the school environment.


The specific contribution of each profession must be given the recognition it deserves.



"As social workers, we assess students' social functioning to influence their environment. We look at the structures that affect our students' mental health, among other things, so we can take direct action to address them."
Méli-Rose, Social Worker



"Language disorders are about much more than mispronouncing words. We still have a long way to go in terms of public awareness when it comes to recognizing their impact on children's development, behaviour and mental health. As speech therapists, we have a major role to play in prevention."
Anne-Josée, Speech Therapist



"As occupational therapists, our goal is to find the 'right challenge' for the students. It's essential that what we ask of students in all their activities—taking the bus, moving around the school, following their routine, sitting, writing... all those little daily tasks—matches their abilities. We help teams adjust the level of tasks and the environment so that children can participate to their fullest potential. It's directly linked to their sense of self-efficacy, well-being and mental health."
Camille, Occupational Therapist



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A diversity of expertise to meet a wide range of needs

There are 17 professional job categories in direct student services. All involve advising, assessing, responding and collaborating with the school team to promote students' educational success and well-being. The school network must provide a range of services to ensure access to the right professional at the right time.

The roles and areas of expertise complement each other and cannot be replaced.



"We work as a team to see who's best placed to respond. When there's a lack of motivation at school or concerns arise, I'm often the one who gets involved, including for the individualized education plan."
Stéphanie, Guidance Counsellor



World Mental Health Day

The school environment must foster a caring and safe climate. Several categories of professionals are there to proactively support all students through universal services.



"Guidance counsellors are often the first people students open up to. We're non-threatening, so the conversation often begins with, 'I didn't think I'd be talking to you about this, but...' I'm often the one who creates or strengthens that bond of trust."

Audrey, Guidance Counsellor

Professionals work more specifically with students who have special needs or complex issues.

Their interventions are often coordinated with the health and social services network and other partners. The goal is to promote students' educational success as well as their well-being and inclusion at school and in society.



"I cover a variety of mental health topics in my classroom, such as gender identity, sexual identity, cultural diversity, mental health disorders and food security. I have a drop-in room where students can come see me, for example, if they're new to the school, feeling isolated or having friendship problems. It's a space where young people can make friends or break out of their rut. Others stay because they struggle with social skills and feel it's a safe space for them. I also work with students in small groups, and we have peer helpers..."

Catherine, Personal and Community Development Facilitator



"I work with students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities and find that their relationship to language, especially comprehension, has a big impact on how secure they feel in the world. Working on language strategies can help ease anxiety. Before turning to medication, you can try speech therapy."

Amélie, Speech Therapist



"Students with psychopathology diagnoses have often been through regular schools and then special education classes before arriving at our specialized school. They're trying to find their place in the school community. We want to help rebuild that relationship, which is why we're so committed to supporting positive mental health."

Véronique, Psychoeducator

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MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS: FIVE FINDINGS

1. Schools have a responsibility when it comes to mental health.
2. Mental health is linked to school success.
3. School is a key place to promote mental health.
4. School years are a defining period of development.
5. The mental health of adults and youth is interconnected.

(Table régionale en santé mentale de Montréal, 2021)

Actions that deliver results

Despite the challenges, in some settings, staff are seeing the positive impact of the measures put in place and of the work done by school teams to better support students' mental health.

Some initiatives are particularly meaningful and can serve as inspiration.



"We set up a committee this year to promote mental health practises. As a psychologist, over time, you develop expertise in school-related issues like reassurance, emotional difficulties and attachment. I try to step back from assessments and focus more on prevention, counselling and supporting the teams. I find that, in schools, things are really starting to take shape. It's great to see people becoming more and more open about it."
Éliane, Psychologist



"In regular classrooms, we're very involved in promoting positive mental health. We're working to introduce stress and anxiety management programs starting in kindergarten. We're already seeing improvement among our Grade 3 and 4 students who have completed the programs!"
Jacynthe, Psychoeducator

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Adequately funding the public school system and recognizing the importance of mental health

The increase and growing complexity of students' needs for mental health support is well known and well documented ([ISQ, 2024](#)). Unfortunately, the chronic lack of funding and the Ministère de l'Éducation's disengagement from mental health issues (e.g. abandoning the "Strategy to provide academic assistance and support well-being at school") are hindering the ambitions of school teams.

As the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation ([2020](#)) aptly said: "To ensure children's well-being in school, let's do our homework."



*"We know what the solution is, we know what needs to be done to improve students' mental health, but we don't currently have the means to make it happen."
Chantal, Psychoeducator*

The mental health of school staff

In February 2025, the Institut national de santé publique du Québec ([INSPQ](#)) released the results of a study on mental health and exposure to psychosocial risks among staff in Quebec's public school system. More than 21,800 teachers, professionals, support staff and administrators took part in this extensive survey, which revealed an alarming situation: more than half of school staff across all job categories experience high or very high psychological distress.

Professional staff are exposed to several psychosocial risks:

- 72.99% report an excessive workload
- 47.21% feel a lack of recognition at work
- 32.46% struggle to balance work and personal life
- 31.96% lack a sense of purpose at work
- 29.15% receive insufficient support from their supervisor
- 24.62% lack flexibility in decision-making

In this context, the INSPQ recommends placing greater emphasis on preventive measures and on coordinated efforts by stakeholders in the relevant fields to reduce exposure to psychosocial risk factors in the workplace and their impact on health.

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Conclusion

FPPE-CSQ wants to help improve the well-being and mental health of students and staff in schools.

Some of the first courses of action that can be implemented include increasing knowledge and recognizing the role and work of education professionals, valuing their expertise in mental health, and improving collaboration within the school team and with partners in the health and social services network.

A broader reflection on the role of schools is needed: How can we give students all the tools they need to foster their success and well-being?

How can we provide schools with the resources they need to fulfil their threefold mission of instruction, socialization and qualification?



“When I think of a school, I think of a house—a place that fosters a caring and supportive environment.”
Véronique, Psychologist

