

practices for Indigenous students likely to experience learning difficulties. Two specific objectives were established: 1) to identify assessment practices taking into account the socio-economic, socio-cultural and linguistic characteristics of these students; and 2) to bring out the issues related to their implementation as well as the favourable conditions in two Atikamekw communities.

The objectives therefore ensure results' relevance of the results for two First Nations communities. In order to be promising, needs' assessment practices must be implementable in their specific context, in line with a model of practices based on informed decision-making (Gambrill, 2013).

Research approach

The first objective required a secondary analysis of scientific literature using descriptive metasynthesis (Beaucher and Jutras, 2007). The analysis focused on 82 papers that explicitly addressed: 1) Indigenous students, 2) School professionals, and 3) Needs assessment practices. The purpose of this analysis was to identify excerpts describing needs' assessment practices which take into account the socio-economic, socio-cultural and linguistic characteristics of these students. To reach the second objective, the excerpts were analyzed to bring out transversal issues to the implementation of the promising practices. Subsequently, the favourable conditions, already established or desired by school professionals involved in the assessment of students' needs in the participating communities, were analyzed in relation with these issues.

In sum, research tasks related to the first objective allowed the identification of 27 promising practices, and the ones linked to the second objective targeted three transversal issues and 40 associated enabling conditions. The next section summarizes the main conclusions of the study.

Key facts

In the following table, the 27 promising practices are organized according to five professional acts that constitute the needs' assessment process. While the number of papers associated to each of those practices is in parentheses, divergent practices are marked with an asterisk and the practices to be substantiated are in italics, the remaining practices are considered consensual in the writings reviewed.

The 40 favourable conditions reported by the school actors involved in assessing student needs in these communities were organized according to three transversal issues in assessing the needs of Indigenous students. Regarding the issue of school-family-community collaboration and school actors, the need to implement mechanisms that better take into account the views of the family was emphasized. With respect to the *attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of school actors towards the student*, the school actors expressed more concerns about under-identification than

to over-identification. With regard to the *service delivery models*, it appears that a better knowledge of the respective mandates of the school actors, in particular the professionals involved in the assessment process, is necessary. In addition, certain obstacles were also identified: the rigidity and the lack of consistency in the modalities of collaboration with the family; the widespread use of formal tests without relevant adaptation; the preeminence of the diagnostic function over the prognostic function of the assessment process; and lastly, the lack of dialogue among school actors and interveners, and the poor harmonization between teachers' practices but also between bilingual and francophone programs.

Key findings

1. The Indigenous student needs assessment process should be based on close collaboration between all actors involved: the student himself, his family, the community and the school actors. This collaboration should not only imply the simple transmission of information from one individual to another. For example, everyone should contribute to the case study, by gathering and interpreting information relevant to understand the student's situation. In this way, each actor can share his or her knowledge and know-how to better identify and respond to the student's needs.
2. The importance of recognizing the cultural and linguistic specificities of Indigenous students was emphasized. School actors are invited to become aware of their own beliefs, attitudes and perceptions about these students. For example, before making any assessment findings, school actors involved must ensure that the student's difficulties are not explained by his or her cultural and linguistic specificities. Using an interpreter or allowing the student to communicate in his or her mother tongue are possible avenues. In other words, school actors must make every effort to develop practices that are culturally relevant.
3. To meet the needs of all students, the service delivery models should be flexible and preventive. Thus, in order for the Indigenous student needs assessment process to contribute to the pursuit of equity in school, it is necessary to ensure that the assessment procedures are comprehensive, which means that they consider the many factors that influence the difficulties of these students; differentiated, which means that they are centered on each student, especially on his/her strengths; and finally, dynamic, which means that they emphasize on the learning process and monitor progress of students by promoting conditions for learning, as opposed to a predictive perspective oriented towards the identification of risk factors.
4. Educational communities are encouraged to examine their own conditions for implementing promising Indigenous student needs assessment practices. This contextualized examination is essential to implement practices based on informed decision-making



| Promising practices | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Screening | Conduct interdisciplinary team screening, including the teacher (11) |
| | Involve student, family and community in the screening (12) |
| | Adopt a preventive standpoint to perform screening (9) |
| Case Study | Always conduct a case study (9) |
| | Collect diverse medical, socio-economic, educational and family information about the student in a holistic perspective (10) |
| | Conduct observations of the student to complete the case study (7) |
| | Conduct an interview with the student to complete the case study (6) |
| | Conduct an interview with the family and community of the student to complete the case study (9) |
| | Learn about the cultural and linguistic specificities of the student before carrying out the case study (7) |
| Assessment Procedures | Use only informal procedures and approaches with Indigenous students * (17) |
| | Use of various assessment procedures* (13) |
| | Make sure that assessment procedures are implemented by people who share the student's language and culture (21) |
| | Train professionals who implement assessment procedures (16) |
| | Develop relevant assessment procedures (18) |
| | Use reliable and valid tests with Indigenous populations * (29) |
| | Be cautious in interpreting formal test results (25) |
| | <i>Inform the student's family about the tests used (2)</i> |
| | Implement comprehensive assessment procedures (22) |
| | Implement dynamic assessment procedures (13) |
| | Implement differentiated assessment procedures (19) |
| Assessment Findings | <i>Communicate the criteria for difficulty identification (1)</i> |
| | <i>Determine the assessment findings collectively, within a team of professionals, including teachers, and in collaboration with the parents (1)</i> |
| | Rely on various information to determine the assessment findings (6) |
| | Make sure your assessment findings of the student's difficulties are not based on his or her cultural and linguistic specificities (8) |
| Recommendations | <i>Formulate recommendations in consultation with school team to foster academic success (2)</i> |
| | Take into account all the information on the student in order to formulate culturally relevant recommendations (5) |
| | Make the recommendations available to parents (3) |



