



## NURTURING SUPPORT CENTRE

*A Support Centre for students with behavioural and emotional challenges*

There are students in our schools who require more support in managing their behaviour than what the classroom teacher alone can provide.

**A Nurturing Support Centre (NSC)** is a flexible in-school resource (not a segregated class) that provides an environment and an intervention plan to meet student needs so they can continue to engage academically. **It is designed to provide emotional, behavioural and academic support to ensure student success.**

Shortened class time, options for dealing with challenging situations, organizational support and adult guidance are provided to those students who have a hard time in class and also during unstructured and transition times. Its use is guided and supervised by an NSC Support Team. NSCs are being implemented successfully in both Elementary and Secondary schools in the English School Boards of Quebec.

What distinguishes the NSC is the **overarching principle** that *deep and caring attachments with significant adults*, and intervention plans that are structured yet flexible, *will, in time, provide the conditions for natural emotional development to occur*, thus creating behavioural change that lasts. Intervention strategies are carefully selected and coherent with an understanding of behaviour that arises from the concepts of maturation, vulnerability and attachment; are based in neuroscience, and are trauma-informed and trauma-responsive.

Having a hard time managing frustration and/or an inability to manage complex demands appropriately in the classroom and the school setting, are not just seen as a failure to learn proper skills, but rather as part of the immaturity and vulnerability of the individual and these are taken into account when creating an intervention plan for the student.

For an NSC to be successful, staff and administration must be informed and supportive of this way of looking at and intervening with challenging behaviours.

The NSC is one support measure within a continuum of interventions available to students and staff at their school.

Each NSC is located in a designated space and has assigned to it two full-time non-teaching staff, e. g. special education technicians, who are available throughout the day to provide the necessary interventions for students referred to the NSC.

The **NSC Support Team** consists of those involved with the functioning of the NSC. This would include the staff assigned to the NSC, the school administrator, the Resource Teacher and the Board or school-based Professional, as well as the classroom teachers involved with the student. The team meets regularly to evaluate and plan the interventions for students. Student progress and difficulties are reviewed in order to make changes and adjustments that will benefit them. New students who appear to require support from the NSC are presented and the team determines if the NSC is the best resource to support them and the type of support that will be implemented.

### **Morning Entry Check-Ins and Sheltered**

**Homeroom** are provided for students who need help at the start of the day to review their daily schedule and ensure that they have the necessary materials. Staff have an opportunity at this time to determine a student's emotional readiness to be in the classroom and may choose to keep the student at the NSC if the student is struggling due to family issues, problems with peers, or other circumstances. This is also a great time to check if they have had breakfast or need to eat something prior to joining their group.

**During Class** Some students have difficulty during certain subjects, at a particular time of the day or when there is a substitute teacher. Such a student will have a scheduled time in the NSC to provide both emotional and academic support. Some students require a calm, quiet environment to be able to attempt and/or complete their work. Being in a space that has less stimulation and distractions can make a marked difference. Some students also benefit from access to sensory materials or an

opportunity to expend physical energy with some of the resources offered in the NSC.

A wide range of academic and emotional and behavioral support materials are available to students in the NSC. When tools are found to be of help, the NSC team will share this information with the student's classroom teachers in order to encourage the use of these tools within the classroom.

If a Resource Teacher is part of the NSC team, students may have scheduled time either individually or in small groups to receive academic support.

**Transitions** Some students become overwhelmed during times of transition. They are unable to manage themselves due to the noise level, the number of others around them and lack of personal space. Coming to the NSC a few minutes prior to a school transition (ex. Recess, lunch hour) can make the difference between being able to manage themselves and becoming overwhelmed and disorganized. Some students will also benefit from a '*calming time*' to decompress after recess or lunch, prior to returning to their class group.

**Supported Lunch and Sheltered Lunch** are for students who become overwhelmed on an emotional and/or sensory level during the lunch hour. Being in the NSC provides students with an opportunity to eat with a smaller group of students so there is less noise and distraction; to play or interact in a calm environment, and to be supported by adults while socializing with other students.

**Supported Recess, Extended Recess and Sheltered Recess** are for students for whom the adults have determined that the lack of structure and the intense peer interactions are

too difficult for them to handle. These students are then assigned to the NSC and may be provided with an opportunity to go outdoors at another time, accompanied by an adult.

**End of Day – Recap and Sheltered Recap** are for students who need adult support to process their day, prepare for the transition home and to receive help with organizing themselves for doing homework and with planning for the next day. This is also a great time to recognize their efforts, provide encouragement and to let them know the adult's support will continue to be there for them.

On-going Professional Development is essential to maintain the integrity of the NSC programme. Training of staff in an attachment-based developmental paradigm such as that of Dr. Gordon Neufeld, along with a solid understanding of the effects of complex trauma on the developing brain, is considered to be essential.

When using a developmental and trauma-informed approach to intervention, it is acknowledged that change is slow, and so the notions of "taking time" and "being patient" are essential to the NSC philosophy. As a result, we promote managing behaviour through changing circumstances and environment rather than by consequences and rewards, and by ensuring that the student feels safe with the adults who are there to take care of them. Students are not hurried in and out of the service.

**Students come to the NSC for intervention and support**, this is not a consequence or a punishment. All interventions in the NSC are done through play, through providing time and space, and with the support and guidance of a caring adult, knowing that these conditions prime the emotional development of our students.

For more information about the **Nurturing Support Centre** model, please contact:

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*"When dealing with the immature, we need to win their hearts to open their minds to our influence."*  
**Gordon Neufeld, PhD**