NURTURING SUPPORT CENTRE (NSC)

Conditions for Successful Implementation and School Readiness

Purpose

The successful implementation of a Nurturing Support Centre (NSC) requires several essential conditions to be in place. These conditions help ensure that the NSC is not simply an alternative space within the school, but an integrated, sustainable support structure that responds to students' evolving needs while strengthening school-wide practices.

The following questions are intended to help school leadership and staff reflect on their current context, assess their readiness, identify existing strengths and resources, and determine the conditions that may need to be developed or strengthened before implementation.

1. Existing Support Structures and School Context

1.1 - Does the school currently have an alternative support space or program (e.g., Oasis Room, Engine Room, or another designated support setting)? If so, please describe its purpose, organization, staffing, and current functioning.

1.2 - How long has the current school principal been in their leadership role at the school?

1.3 - To what extent does the school leadership team demonstrate a shared vision and sustained commitment to implementing an NSC?

2. Resource Allocation and Physical Environment

2.1 - Is the school willing and able to allocate the necessary human, financial, and physical resources to establish and sustain an NSC?

2.2 - Is there a dedicated space within the school that can be designated for the NSC and adapted to meet students' diverse needs?

2.3 - Are funds available within the school budget to purchase the materials and equipment needed to support effective interventions (e.g., regulation tools, flexible seating, alternative workstations, furniture, and instructional resources)?

2.4 - Can the school assign at least one full-time staff member, or the equivalent of two part-time staff members, to provide consistent, predictable support to students within the NSC?

3. Collaborative Leadership and Team Structure

3.1 - In addition to a school administrator (principal or vice-principal), are at least two staff members available and willing to participate regularly in NSC collaborative consultation meetings? These individuals may include special education technicians, teachers, resource teachers, consultants, or other school professionals.

3.2 - Can dedicated time be allocated for resource teachers to contribute to the development and implementation of individualized tools, strategies, and instructional supports for students accessing the NSC?

3.3 - Are school administrators and designated staff prepared to establish clear roles, shared responsibilities, and consistent communication and collaboration practices to support the effective functioning of the NSC?

4. School Board Support and Ongoing Accompaniment

4.1 - Does the school have access to a school board consultant or professional who can provide guidance and accompaniment during the initial planning and implementation of the NSC?

4.2 - Will ongoing consultation and professional support be available to assist the NSC team in reviewing practices, addressing emerging challenges, and making necessary adjustments over time?

5. Professional Learning and Capacity Building

5.1 - Are school administrators and staff willing to participate in initial and ongoing professional learning to develop the knowledge, understanding, and practical skills required for successful NSC implementation?

5.2 - If professional development activities are scheduled during the school day, are funds available to provide staff release time? Can the school board contribute additional resources to support participation?

5.3 - To what extent are school staff familiar with an attachment-based, neurodevelopmental approach to understanding and responding to students' needs? If applicable, please identify any relevant professional development or training previously completed.

5.4 - To what extent are school staff familiar with trauma-informed approaches and neuro-affirming practices? If applicable, please identify any relevant professional development or training previously completed.

6. Sustainability and Long-Term Commitment

6.1 - Is the school prepared to engage in an ongoing process of implementation, reflection, evaluation, and adjustment to ensure that the NSC remains responsive to student and school needs?

6.2 - Are school leadership and staff committed to ensuring coherence between NSC interventions, classroom practices, and the school's broader continuum of support?

6.3 - Is the school willing to invest in building the collective capacity of staff so that the NSC contributes to sustainable improvements in school-wide practices rather than functioning as a separate or parallel support system?

Final Reflection: Assessing School Readiness

Based on the questions above:

- What strengths, resources, and existing practices will support the successful implementation of an NSC in your school?
- Which essential conditions are already in place?
- Which conditions require further planning, development, or additional resources?
- What initial actions should be prioritized before moving forward with implementation?

Key Consideration

The successful implementation of an NSC depends not only on the availability of space, personnel, and financial resources, but also on engaged school leadership, a collaborative school culture, coherent educational practices, and a sustained commitment to professional learning and continuous improvement.

The NSC should be understood as a school-wide approach to supporting students and strengthening adult capacity, rather than simply the creation of an additional support space.

COMMITMENTS FOR HAVING A NURTURING SUPPORT CENTER (NSC) IN YOUR SCHOOL

HUMAN RESOURCE DEDICATION	REQUIREMENTS	ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER	EXAMPLE OF TIME COMMITMENT
Administration Vice-Principal or Staff Assistant must be informed and updated on practices and communications	▪ Stable administration (has been in position at least 1 year) ▪ Be on board with the mandate and philosophy of an NSC ▪ Be committed to leading and supporting the school team with the implementation and sustainability of the NSC (e.g. into presentation to staff, intro presentation to parents, including NSC items in staff meeting)	▪ Regular and ongoing communication with NSC Tech. At least brief check-ins on a daily basis (or every other day) ▪ Regular touchpoints (ideally every week) with the different individuals who are part of the NSC Core Team ▪ Regular touchpoints with the parents of the students who attend the NSC (frequency will depend on the student). This role can be shared in part with the other members of the NSC Core Team, as well as the student's teacher. ▪ Scheduling and participating in NSC Core Team meetings ▪ Attending scheduled board-wide NSC meetings with the support of CEBM (PD, troubleshooting, student cases, etc.) ▪ Periodic consults with Board Consultant(s)/Professional(s) through Complementary Services Interdisciplinary Team meetings	🕘 2-10 min/day 🕘 10-30 min/week 🕘 variable/week 🕘 30-60 min/2-3weeks 🕘 2hr 5x/year 🕘 3x/year (30-45min)
At least 1 Full-Time NSC Technician	▪ At least 1 Technician dedicated to the NSC room everyday (this role could be a shared between 2 Technicians who rotate) ▪ Additional adults should be regularly involved in use of room, or coordinating with NSC tech	▪ Tech must be available for regular meetings (NSC Core Team meetings, Special Needs Committee meetings, staff meetings) ▪ NSC must be open at critical times of day (recesses and lunches) ▪ Tech must have daily breaks/lunch periods ▪ Tech should not operate in isolation all the time - consider additional staff to use room or check in regularly with tech (e.g. Resource Teacher; other support staff), for breaks, additional support, otherwise room is closed ▪ Release-plan for Tech to participate in Special Needs Committee meetings, NSC Core Team meetings, staff meetings ▪ Release-plan for Tech to participate in Professional Development, scheduled board-wide NSC meetings with the support of CEBM (along with self-paced training on CEBM websites)	(during Ped Days or release-plan) (compensation required)
NSC Core Team	▪ NSC Core team required for regular communications and meetings (ideally: Principal, NSC Tech, Resource Teacher, Board Consultant(s)/Professional(s) assigned to NSC, and possibly other relevant staff, such as teachers and support staff)	▪ Regular weekly check-ins (e.g. Monday a.m. or Friday pm) ▪ Meeting every 2-3 weeks (may need to meet more often at first) with NSC Core Team (reviewing NSC scheduling; NSC troubleshooting; intakes for new students; creating student Action Plans; following up on current student progress; staff issues; etc.), or scheduled Special Needs Committee meetings for regular NSC users ▪ Attending scheduled board-wide NSC meetings with the support of CEBM (PD, troubleshooting, student cases, etc.) ▪ Periodic exchanges and consults with Board Consultant(s)/Professional(s) through Interdisciplinary Team meetings	🕘 15-30 min/week 🕘 30-60 min/2-3weeks 🕘 2hr 5x/year 🕘 3x/year (30-45min)
All Staff	▪ Be on board with the mandate and philosophy of an NSC ▪ Understand how the NSC fits into the Pyramid of Interventions ▪ Available for Professional Development from Complimentary Services, from Centers of Excellence (2-3 occasions throughout year), or from other external trainings	▪ Staff must periodically attend Special Needs Committee meetings and NSC Core Team meetings that involve their student(s) ▪ Open to reviewing the CEBM Pyramid of Interventions (checklists, considerations, etc.) and receiving accompaniment in classroom for Tier 1 and Tier 2 practices ▪ Open to staff-wide exchanges and workshops for specific topics (1-3 times per year) ▪ Attending online training offered by CEBM or viewing webinars, resources, and materials on the CEBM websites.	(during staff meetings or designated times, such as Ped Days)

SPACE, FUNDING AND TIME	ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER
<u>SPACE NEEDED</u>: parameters and fundamentals	▪ Ideally, an NSC has its own dedicated space rather than being shared with daycare, library, resource, etc. ▪ Space needs to be intentionally designed and divided into clear sections with each their own specific purpose (respite/cocooning, movement, emotions, sensory, individual and groupwork, academic support, etc.) ▪ Academic is a big part of the NSC, especially for those students who spend regular blocs of time in the space and those on reverse integration where the NSC is their homebase (will require the support of the Resource Teacher for those students) ▪ Can accommodate several students with a variety of needs (not just 'trauma' profiles) – this will depend on the size of the school and the number of needs. Other Support Staff with their students are welcome to join (ideally scheduled) ▪ Can be temporarily closed to have Tech on floor, or deal with crisis (ideally, a school would count on a second adult to replace the main Technician during these times, or have 2 par-time Techs on rotation) ▪ Space is NOT meant for meltdown/crisis interventions (ideally, a school would have an Emotions Room to operate in tandem with the NSC) – students should me mostly scheduled to attend the NSC on a preventative basis (being proactive in fulfilling needs and discovering what support measures work, rather than waiting for the problems to arise to address them) ▪ Should NOT be used as a dumping ground, as a reflection room, as a consequence, as a reward (school staff and parents must be informed on the mandate and philosophy of an NSC, including that the NSC does not replace general classroom management, but it is meant as an additional support measure to practices in Tiers 1-2-3 – see details in the CEBM Pyramid of Interventions) ▪ If a school has more than one alternative space in their building with different mandates, the roles and responsibilities of the different adults involved must clearly defined and differentiated. Also, the approach in these multiple spaces must be aligned/coherent and reflect the overall philosophy of the school to not confuse the staff, students, and parents. ▪ Materials and activities in the NSC are designed as tools and strategies with a specific purpose in mind (NOT as random toys and games), which have been intentionally selected to answer a need that has been identified in the student's Action Plan.
<u>BUDGET NEEDED</u>: Minimum funding	▪ Additional staff to run the NSC (1 full time Tech, or 2 part-time Techs) ▪ Ideally, allocate a percentage of a Resource Teacher to support the academic portion of the NSC ▪ Funds for the furniture, materials, books, supplies, food (breakfast club, snacks), etc. ▪ Release funds (or compensation) for Professional Development ▪ Training literature for the staff (books *Reclaiming Our Students*, by Hannah Beach, and *Beyond Behaviors*, by Mona Delahooke)
<u>TIME NEEDED</u>: On an everyday basis	▪ Communication between Principal and NSC Tech ▪ NSC room open daily – especially for recesses and lunches ▪ Additional staff to check-in/support/work with NSC Tech ▪ Flexibility in schedule of day (availability of NSC Tech to assist with crisis management; daily triage according to needs)
Weekly	▪ Set time for check-in with school NSC team (review schedule; cases; teacher issues; personal issues, etc.)
Every Two Weeks	▪ NSC Core Team meeting; Intervention Planning/ Special Needs Committee meetings for NSC students
At Regular Intervals	▪ NSC Core Team consults with Consultants/Professionals assigned to NSC (with the support of CEBM) ▪ Discussing NSC items during staff meetings
Periodically	▪ Tech may spend some time outside of the NSC room (in the schoolyard for supported recess, in the classroom the help an NSC student re-integrate, etc.) ▪ Tech may attend staff meetings (especially when NSC items are on the agenda) ▪ Tech may attend Special Needs Committee meetings (especially involving NSC students) ▪ Consults with Complementary Services Interdisciplinary Team (for brainstorming)

FUNDAMENTALS	ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER
Philosophy Some key points	▪ The best approaches are systemic, not piecemeal. There must be general buy-in where all the stakeholders share a common vision and language. It has to become an everyday thing that is integrated into every part of a school. ▪ The best efforts are proactive, not reactive, which means that we don't wait for a problem to arise to deal with them. Interventions have a greater impact/benefit when done preventively rather than in crisis management. ▪ Adults must adjust their expectations of the student, depending on their maturity level, individual differences, degree of emotional defendedness, ability to cope with stress, etc. ▪ All designed spaces and selected tools/strategies are intentional with a specific purpose in mind (nothing is left up to chance). ▪ Safety and connection are the starting point (must consider the student's stress response, emotional/cognitive availability in the moment, openness to connect and orient towards the adult, readiness to learn, etc.) ▪ It's not about changing and controlling the behaviour, but relying on the structures/routines and compensating/scaffolding for the student's challenge(s) to help them become more successful (with the support of these favorable conditions) ▪ Many students have not yet developed the ability to self-regulate and arrive at school already activated in their stress response. They need us to anchor them, act as a co-regulator, and be mindful to not trigger them further. ▪ If stress and emotions are not expressed/released, they will not dissipate on their own, but rather accumulate until they overflow. Adults must create times and spaces in the day to acknowledge them and make room for their expression.
Professional Development to open and run an NSC Core themes to cover	▪ Introduction to the developmental approach (maturation, emotion, vulnerability, attachment) ▪ CEBM Pyramid of Interventions (Tier 1 universal practices, Tier 2 targeted practices, Tier 3 individualized practices) ▪ NSC mandate and philosophy; NSC Tech roles and responsibilities; maximizing the NSC space; procedures; documentation; tools, resources and materials; etc. ▪ Nature of emotions; nurturing emotional health and growth; role of play and emotional playgrounds; etc. ▪ Frustration/Aggression ▪ Trauma/Stress/Anxiety ▪ Counterwill Instinct (opposition/resistance) ▪ Alpha Instinct (dominance)/Bullying
Towards success and viability of an NSC Fundamental elements to a sustainable a flourishing NSC	▪ Stable administration that has a clear vision and a strong leadership to help bring the core staff on board. Buy-in and consistent involvement of the members of the NSC Core Team. ▪ Working towards staff buy-in and creating a culture of change on a macro level (e.g. CEBM Pyramid of Interventions) before imposing a space/service that staff don't understand or believe in. Having staff on board with reallocating space, personnel, and financial resources to create an NSC. ▪ Being clear and explicit with all the school staff and the parents about the mandate and philosophy of an NSC. Ongoing two-way communication among staff who are involved with students who attend the NSC (through a One-Note, a shared drive, or a Teams folder). Creating Action Plans that include the tools, strategies, and goals within the NSC, so people understand concretely the 'why-when-what-how' of the involvement of a student in an NSC. Having the students and their parents involved in the Action Plan process to increase engagement. ▪ Regular and consistent involvement of a Consultant/Professional that accompanies the NSC Core Team (who can also act as a connector between the school-board-CEBM) – Ideally, each school has their own assigned individual rather than assigning one person to hold this dossier board-wide (the more people speaking the same language and are on the same page, the greater the promotion and sustainability) ▪ Ongoing training of the staff (practices that are developmentally appropriate based in the neurosciences, trauma informed, attachment friendly, and honours neurodiversity) ▪ Shared commitment/responsibility towards the NSC (teamwork and collaboration; sharing the weight; increasing the chances of viability if staff leave/retire) ▪ Networking and collaboration between the different NSCs within the same school board



Exploring together

Developing a shared understanding of the current situation and needs

1) Why implement an NSC in your school?	
What events, data, or observations have led the school to consider establishing an NSC?	
What current tensions or concerns are the most prominent?	
What would be different if the situation improved (share concrete examples)?	
2) How are the students – and adults – in the school doing?	
What are the observable factors regarding well-being, engagement, and school climate?	
Are there particular areas or cohorts where the needs are more significant?	
Where can we already observe favorable practices (sources of hope/areas of strengths)?	
3) What practices and structures already support inclusion and student regulation?	
What is working well that should be preserved or strengthened?	
Which previous initiatives have been challenging, and why?	
What have you learned from previous attempts?	

© Catherine Korah, Charles Lefebvre, Julie Lapierre and Valérie Girard (2026)



Exploring together

Developing a shared understanding of the current situation and needs

4) How does school administration currently exercise its leadership around school climate and support?	
During which circumstances is the school team on the same page and moves forward ‘together’?	
In what contexts does the shared sense of purpose become lost or fragmented?	
What leadership approaches would you like to strengthen through this the NSC initiative?	

5) What organizational conditions influence the day-to-day functioning	
Routines, rituals, transition management, calming spaces—what is remains stable and what varies?	
What actual constraints (time, resources, logistics) must we consider from the outset?	
What is within our control—and what is less so?	

© Catherine Korah, Charles Lefebvre, Julie Lapierre and Valérie Girard (2026)



Building a Shared Vision

Clarifying the vision, purpose, and collective commitment / Reaching an agreement and determining a direction

1) What purpose do you wish for the NSC to serve in your school?	
If you had to summarize the project's intent in one sentence, what would it be?	
Which school values does this project embody?	
What would you hope the NSC could achieve for students? For adults?	
2) What vision of success would you like to share with the school team?	
In 12 to 18 months, what are you hoping to be able to say regarding what has changed?	
What indicators of success would lead one to say, "it was worth it"?	
What early, achievable wins could help build momentum?	

© Catherine Korah, Charles Lefebvre, Julie Lapierre and Valérie Girard (2026)



Building a Shared Vision

Clarifying the vision, purpose, and collective commitment / Reaching an agreement and determining a direction

3) What role would you like collective participation to play?	
Who should be involved from the very first stages—and why those individuals?	
What opportunities for co-creation or dialogue would you like to establish?	
what role would you personally like to play as the school leader guiding this project?	
4) What risks do we anticipate—and how can we address them?	
What could weaken buy-in or engagement?	
What resistance can we anticipate—and what might it tell us?	
What safeguards or guiding principles would reassure the team?	

© Catherine Korah, Charles Lefebvre, Julie Lapierre and Valérie Girard (2026)



Building a Shared Vision

Clarifying the vision, purpose, and collective commitment / Reaching an agreement and determining a direction

5) What conditions for success do we want to establish before starting?	
Which decisions need to be clear from the outset (framework, common language, priorities)?	
What communication will be needed to build a shared sense of purpose?	
What flexibility or room for decision-making do we want to protect for the team?	

Meeting Conclusion

If we were to focus on only two realistic priorities during the first year, which ones should they be?	
What absolutely needs to change—and what needs to remain status quo?	
What does the team need in order to feel secure during this change?	
What would you like to hear a staff member say one year from now?	

© Catherine Korah, Charles Lefebvre, Julie Lapierre and Valérie Girard (2026)

ACTION PLAN

Priority actions to be carried out following the initial meeting

These actions aim to establish shared purpose, consistency, and buy-in before implementation.

1) **Co-develop a statement of purpose for the NSC project**
   (3-4 clear sentences: why, for whom, and what it aims to achieve)

2) **Develop a brief shared portrait of the school**
   (key observations; existing strengths and resources; priority needs; areas requiring attention)

3) **Clarify expectations, roles, and responsibilities for all stakeholders**
   (school team; complementary services; external partners; students/parents – depending on the context)

4) **Identify one or two quick-start pilot initiatives based on priorities**

5) **Define simple, meaningful indicators for monitoring progress**
   (indicators of well-being / school climate; behavioural indicators (e.g. nb. of classroom removals, nb. of suspensions, nb. of interruptions to schooling, nb. of major ‘code of conduct’ incidents, nb. of successful full reintegrations into the classroom, etc.); indicators related to the experiences of the adults involved)

© Catherine Korah, Charles Lefebvre, Julie Lapierre and Valérie Girard (2026)

ACTION PLAN

Priority actions to be carried out following the initial meeting

These actions aim to establish shared purpose, consistency, and buy-in before implementation.

6) **Develop an internal communication plan**
(consistent message from school administration; what is changing/ what is remaining status quo; why it matters to everyone)

7) **Plan a shared project-engagement session with the school team**
(project launch activity focused on purpose, values, and intentions; space for staff to express hopes and concerns)

© Catherine Korah, Charles Lefebvre, Julie Lapierre and Valérie Girard (2026)