



PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

EPCA questions on report cards, mask policy Insists on simultaneous English rollout

Québec, January 8, 2021 - The English Parents' Committee Association acknowledges the announcements made by Education Minister Jean-François Roberge today regarding the return to school, along with numerous new support and hygiene measures.

Measures to reduce the weighting of the first report cards will give them less prominence in the students' overall annual academic record. As it is generally expected that there will be large numbers of report cards reflecting academic difficulties with many students this year, the announced delay and weighting adjustment are worthwhile measures, albeit no panacea, nor much more than cosmetic.

What Quebec parents are *clearly* asking for is *specific* information on their children's progress, or lack thereof. A simple number along with possibly vague and standardized, repetitive comments will no longer suffice, particularly during this unprecedented period.

Our children are experiencing exceptional difficulties, and it is imperative that parents have a precise *and* global portrait of their children's academic accomplishments and challenges, to help them move forward in this difficult year. Parents need to know where their children are at in terms of learning, and it is time for their report cards to reflect that, an initiative that should be implemented and maintained moving forward.

The announcement of a tutoring regime is welcomed, and we expect that this responsibility – handed to the school boards – will be fulfilled rapidly and effectively. We also laud the development of a mobile app to assist students with psychosocial support, an established and increasingly alarming concern.

These measures and initiatives are only effective insofar as they are accessible to, and welcomed by, our children. The rollout of any such tools must be done simultaneously in English and French. On several occasions over the last year, anglophone students have had to wait for equivalent consideration. As EPCA clearly communicated to the Education Ministry today, such a two-tier system will no longer be acceptable. Our children are worthy of identical consideration as others, and we expect this reality to be acknowledged. This is non-negotiable.

Since the earliest days of the pandemic and hygiene measures in schools, we have also made clear our position favoring masks for all. The announcement that students in Grades 5 and 6 will be required to wear masks is a positive one, but we question why they will not be required to wear three-ply procedural masks. Nor do we understand why they will not be supplied with two such masks per day as will be secondary students. This should be addressed in time for elementary students' return on January 11.

As we send our younger students back to school next week and our secondary students resume their pre-holiday schedule on January 18, we must remain vigilant and ensure that the tools promised by the government and delivered to the boards will get into the hands of our children without delay.

We should all remain focused on student and staff well-being along with our children's academic success. The English Parents' Committee Association remains committed and available to assist the network and our educational partners in any endeavours to support Quebec students. As the official voice of parents in the English public-school network, EPCA will continue to be at the forefront of all discussions about our children's schooling and remains steadfast in support of parents and their children in these trying times.

- 30 -

About the English Parents' Committee Association (EPCA)

The English Parents' Committee Association represents eight Quebec English-language school boards. With a team of Directors chosen by member Parent Committees, it is the official voice of Quebec's English public-school parent community, representing more than 100,000 students. Speaking with one voice for parents and their children, EPCA represents parent interests in all dealings with the *Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES)* and across all levels of government.

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