



# English Parents' Committee Association

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October 2021   Volume 7



Katherine Korakakis is the President of the English Parents Committee Association (EPCA). In addition to this vital role in the Quebec educational sector, Katherine has spent most of her life working alongside start-ups in various verticals. For 10 years, she was responsible for the development of entrepreneurial initiatives and projects under the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, a Youth Secretariat program of the government of Quebec. Katherine is Head of Entrepreneurship at ProMontreal Entrepreneurs (PME), an early stage VC fund that has been around for 20 yrs, and is currently the vice-president of PME MTL Centre-Ouest and on the investment committees of PME MTL Centre and PME MTL Centre-Ouest. Katherine has also authored and co-authored guidebooks on entrepreneurship education and has served on the Boards of numerous corporations.

# President's message

## Participating Actively in School Democracy

Being a responsible citizen and taking an active part in the democratic life of your school community means more than simply raising your hand to participate. It is the basis of it all, but it is also just the start.

Do you know what to expect once you've taken a seat at the table and been handed an agenda? Do you understand what those terms imply? Budget-building process? Business arising? Redacting the minutes? A commitment-to-success plan? Do you know where the line is between your organization and, say, a school administration? Do you know the 'chain of command'? Finally, do you understand the effect of your vote when you raise your hand to say yea or nay? Do you have faith in your conclusions?

The questions may seem innocuous, but the answers reveal a lot about your perception of your own effectiveness. A high learning curve confronts many members of parent governance. This, often coupled with a reticence to ask questions about their role can be a daunting task.

That is why Parent Committees frequently question its members, as well as the parent community at large, about governance. If they don't already, they should. A community that is well-informed on what decisions must be made and how to carry out its responsibilities is one that is practicing responsible citizenship.

When you ask parents, whether they are involved or not, if they feel informed enough to confidently face such issues, the most common response is no. But you don't have to wait for someone to approach you; there are things you can do on your own to get started.

Parents must learn to be their own advocates, asking questions and empowering themselves to make the decisions they need to make, rather than acting on or accepting what they don't know. Too many parents believe they are alone, yet this is not the case. All knowledge is new until it is your own. That is where empowerment comes from.

# President's message

cont.

If you've recently joined a Governing Board, you'll probably attend a training session to learn more about your role and how things work. Read the Governing Board manual that is available with every school board. These are crucial since the amount of information available regarding the many aspects of the GB, which is a legal body, can be overwhelming. But you'll discover everything you need to know in it. Consider a place or implication with representative associations like EPCA, read our updates and subscribe to our newsletters, take part in surveys and ask questions of your directors.

You can also read the Quebec Education Act online, which is written in plain English. It does have some arcane aspects, and some of it may be irrelevant if there is no context or if you don't understand specific language, but it is a vital resource that every governance stakeholder should be aware of. A simple Google search for the terms "parent" or "governing board" can turn up a gold mine of information.



To be informed, one does not need to be a member of the Governing Board or Parent Committee. Anyone can seek clarification from their PC leadership on a procedure, rule, or event. If you're on a board and you get the knowledge you need, you'll be able to make more responsible decisions and have more confidence in your decisions.

# President's message

cont.

Too frequently, I encounter parents who are afraid to approach those who are meant to represent them. Never be scared to ask questions. If you don't know what something is, ask, as we often teach our children. It's one of the most basic stages to successful government and responsible citizenship.

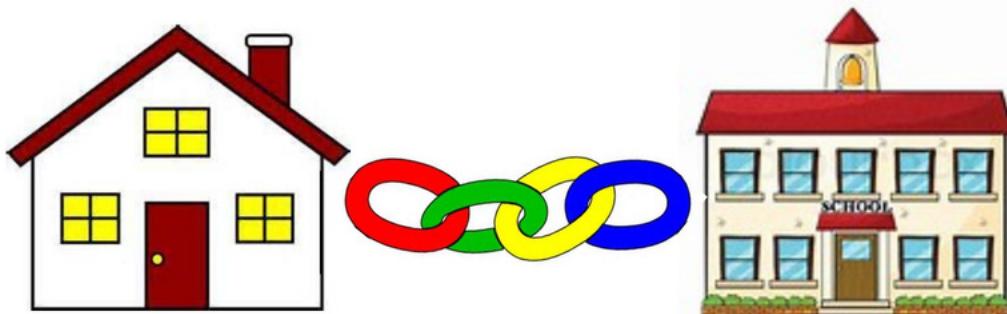
We tend to think about our own children at school as parents, but this is also about us as advocates, because when you become really involved and figure out how you can make a difference, your thinking may expand beyond your own school and into a broader governance viewpoint.

For many, long-term planning or a budget-building process can be very daunting, but these processes are learned. What matters most is your commitment to student success and the betterment of the school community, regardless of your skill set or how much time and energy you have to provide.

When parents exercise their democratic roles, they are frequently thrown in without a 'life jacket,' and learning and being effective takes time. However, many parents do not have enough time or are 'burned out' and leave. As a result, there is a major and ongoing knowledge deficit at the table, which is not conducive to efficient governance and certainly not to democracy and responsible citizenship.

Governing Boards, Parent Committees and associations like EPCA working together will strengthen parent governance, rather than working in silos. Your first task is to know yourself, and reach out when you are uncertain. That is how you attain a friendly, collaborative environment of people working together.

Any institution's information should not be held by a single person. That is not democracy.



# Parental Governance

Parents have taken a much more involved role in the running of schools since 1 July 1998, when linguistic school boards were formed in Quebec. Having control over our English schools is a very important safeguard for our community. Despite the government's attempts to control our school boards through Bill 40, the English Parents' community still has representation and ultimate decision making power.

It is now more important than ever for parents to take an active role in Parental Governance. The Education Act allows us to be involved in the running of our schools and school boards. Not using our full allotment of rights and responsibilities only gives away our control.

For the parent who is curious as to what is involved in Parental Governance, you can sit in and observe your school's monthly Governing Board meeting. Here you can see how the meetings flow and what kind of issues are discussed and voted on. Governing Boards (GBs) bring together parents, school staff, senior high school students, and community members who work in partnership towards a primary goal of making decisions that benefit our students. GBs encourage cooperative action between parents, students, staff, community and enterprise representatives to foster academic success for all students.

Each GB elects their school's representative to the Parents' Committee (PC), an advisory committee at the School Board level. As a representative or alternate, you are the legal bond between the parents of the school and the School Board, acting as an agent for the needs of your school. In addition, a representative from the Special Education/Needs Advisory Committee sits on the Parents' Committee to provide representative perspectives. The main responsibilities of the PC are to: encourage the participation of parents in School Board activities and committees; advise the School Board on many different matters of importance to schools; suggest ways to increase the efficiency of operations; and inform the School Board of any other needs identified by the parent representatives.

There are many roles that a parent can assume beyond Governing Board and Parents' Committees. There is the role of School Board Commissioner, EPCA Director, or participant on various committees at the school, school board, and provincial parental governance levels... it is really up to you how involved you want to get. Do not hesitate to ask questions... your school's administration and parental governance representatives will be happy to answer your questions. Remember too that each position usually has an alternative who is there to replace the representative if he or she cannot fulfill their function in the short term... this is a great place to start and see if Parental Governance is for you.



# FCPQ WEBINARS 2021-2022



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## 2021-2022 Webinars Schedule<sup>1</sup>

OCT. '21	13	Le conseil d'établissement	FCPQ
	20	Le plan d'intervention	FCPQ
	21	The Governing Board	FCPQ-EPCA <sup>2</sup>
	28	Le comité de parents	FCPQ
NOV. '21	1	<b>Gratuit! / Free!</b> Conférence du Dr Eli Lebowitz	FCPQ-EPCA <sup>3</sup>
	3	L'orientation au cœur de la motivation scolaire	OCCOQ
	11	Rôle de l'orthopédagogie	ADOQ
	17	Gérer les comportements difficiles de son enfant	C. Quarré
	23	The Parents' Committee	FCPQ-EPCA <sup>2</sup>
	25	Les droits des enfants au travers des âges	Éducaloi
DEC. '21	1	Coéducation à l'ère du numérique	École branchée
	7	Teaching in a Parent Way	École branchée <sup>2</sup>
	9	Régie interne et fonctionnement	FCPQ
	15	Améliorer la concentration et la mémorisation chez son enfant	Institut TA
	12	Discipline et leadership	N. Doyon
JAN. '22	18	Espace parents: Tools to Support Your Child in Their Orientation	OCCOQ <sup>2</sup>
	20	L'apprentissage des tables de calcul mental	ADOQ
	28	Accompagner son enfant dans la progression de ses apprentissages	École branchée

**Cost: 25\$ per connection  
Save by subscribing!**

	FEB. '22	MARCH '22	APR. '22	MAY '22
2	La douance: pour aller plus loin			ADOQ
10	Les fonctions exécutives			Institut TA
16	Le comité EHDA			FCPQ
22	The Special Needs Advisory Committee			FCPQ-EPCA <sup>2</sup>
24	AIMER: Pour l'épanouissement positif de votre enfant			C. Patenaude
9	Réussir ses examens et présentations sans stress			K. Trudel
16	The Secrets of the Code			ADOQ <sup>2</sup>
17	Le projet éducatif: préparer le renouvellement			FCPQ
23	La facture-école			FCPQ
31	Améliorer la motivation de votre enfant			Institut TA
7	L'influence des médias sociaux sur les choix de carrière des jeunes			OCCOQ
13	Budget des établissements			FCPQ
20	The School's Budget			FCPQ-EPCA <sup>2</sup>
21	Définir ses règles de vie numérique			École branchée
27	Soutenir les compétences sociales de son enfant			Institut Pacifique
5	L'assemblée annuelle des parents			FCPQ
10	Parents' Annual Assembly			FCPQ-EPCA <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> New dates and topics may be added through the year.

<sup>2</sup> Only webinars marked in orange are presented in English.

<sup>3</sup> Conference in English with simultaneous French translation.

## FCPQ WEBINARS 2021-2022

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25 connections/webinar	600\$	750\$
50 connections/webinar	1000\$	1250\$



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# Advocating for Students

## A Parent's Perspective

First and foremost, there is no better advocate for your child than you because you know your child best. Your child deserves to have the best education possible. And if you find that your child's needs are not being met, then it may be time to start advocating for your child.

What that means is that, although your child's teachers and other staff in the school try to have your child's best interest at heart, it doesn't mean that they have all of the answers or know what will work best for your child. Oftentimes it is our responsibility as parents to speak up for our children. It is up to us parents to inform and educate ourselves of the options that we have to ensure that we are giving our children the best chance possible to have a successful educational journey.

If you feel that your child could use extra support, have needs that are not being met, or the school is simply not able to accommodate your child, check out these simple and helpful ways you can start advocating for your child.

- First, speak with your child and ask "How can I help?".

- Connect with the school... the teachers, the Principal, guidance counselors, and other specialists. They have a wealth of information that can save you time and energy. But it is also important to do some of your own research. Consult literature and speak with other parents. Many school boards/service centers have community groups that give you the option to post inquiries about what other parents are doing to advocate for their children.

- All public schools are obliged by specific laws and regulations to support students with special needs in order to ensure the overall success of your child's educational journey. All of which protects and entitles them to specific services. Find out which services can best help your child.

- You can speak directly with your child's teacher... communication is key. If you don't feel that the teacher is taking your concerns seriously, you should then email the principal.



# Advocating for Students

## A Parent's Perspective

cont.

- Ask questions and know your rights and responsibilities. Many parents are shy to ask questions; however, you don't know what you don't know.
- It is imperative that you document everything. Keep a folder or a book on your child. This means to make a note of each time you meet with a teacher, or each change that may happen where your child is concerned. Every little bit counts.
- If you do speak with the school administration, make sure that you are being direct and to the point yet respectful. Be willing to accept that neither you nor your child is a failure because they need additional support to help them achieve better success!



· Always encourage your child. While you are there fighting the good fight, don't forget the real reason you are advocating for them. They may have some feelings that come up and it is best to let them have the space to talk about it and remind them all the reasons you are doing this. They are amazing, they are capable, and they have as much right as any other child to have the best education.

· Request that your child have an evaluation done. There are four phases of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP):

- Data collection and Analysis
- Planning of Interventions
- Application of the interventions
- Review of the plan

Parents should be part of the whole process!

- All you need to know about an IEP (in more comprehensible terms) can be found in this link [http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site\\_web/documents/dpse/adaptation\\_serv\\_compl/19-7053A.pdf](http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/dpse/adaptation_serv_compl/19-7053A.pdf). Note that the "IEP is a legal document which permits adaptations and/or modifications to the QEP to be incorporated into the student's learning and evaluation activities," RSB School board.
- Your Child's IEP can and will follow them from primary, to secondary, and even to CEGEP and University! Isn't that fantastic to know? The support does not end after graduation from secondary school.
- If you feel overwhelmed and are still not sure where to start, you can contact the school board directly; they have plenty of staff available to lead you in the right direction.

# Advocating for Students

## A Teacher's Perspective



- Establish a positive relationship with your child's teacher at the beginning of the school year to build trust.
- Ask your child's teacher to share positive feedback (when possible).
- Express your gratitude when you have positive experiences with your teacher and other school staff.
- You know your child best, so share any essential information with your child's teacher at the beginning of the year (strengths, interests, as well as skills that your child still needs help to develop... please be honest).

- Politely ask for more details from the teacher when there is an issue before jumping to conclusions because your child's perspective of a situation might not be accurate.
- Please be patient when waiting for a response to an email. If a teacher has not responded within 48 hours, then you may send a gentle reminder. It is always optimal to attempt to resolve any issues with the teacher before going to administration. Of course, you have every right to seek help from the administration if you believe that the teacher did not adequately respond to reasonable requests or provide sufficient information.
- Remain professional in conversations and model effective communication skills to your child (you can be firm and respectful).
- Collaborate with the school (remember that we all have the same goal: your child's success).
- Read every night with your child to build every aspect of their development (will also promote strong language skills).
- Attend all scheduled meetings and reply to messages and emails promptly.
- Seek resources and ask for help when needed (schools want to help so please don't be afraid to ask for anything that you or child might need).

# BETTY AND BERNARD S. SHAPIRO FAMILY LECTURE SERIES



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RENNOWNED YALE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE PROFESSOR  
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In this overview, you will gain valuable skills and tips to help your child with anxiety, OCD or related problems.

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# Reminders!

## TUTORING

If your child needs help, you can hire a tutor if you think one would be helpful for your children. Remember, receiving one-on-one support from professionally trained educators is the best way to ensure that your children understand important concepts.



## CONTACT TEACHERS

If you have any concerns about your children's academic progress, email their teachers and ask for resources that you can use to help support your child at home. Remember, working collaboratively with your child's teacher is one of the best ways to promote academic success.

## UPCOMING EPCA NEWSLETTER TOPICS

- Resources for special needs
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Best practices across school boards
- Resources for helping kids do better in school
- Insights into administrative processes



# The QFHSAs 2021 Fall Conference:

## *Advocating for Education*

**Free Evening Workshops on Zoom**

**November 8, 11, 17, 18**

**Open to All!** For more info/to register, visit [www.qfhsa.org](http://www.qfhsa.org) or use this link: <https://bit.ly/3la5HMy>.



### **Vocational Education: Follow Your Passion**

**Mon., November 8  
7 p.m.**

Learn about vocational training programs across the province of Quebec with Maggie Soldano, Director of Continuing Education at the Lester B. Pearson School Board. From high-school students to adults seeking a career change, vocational training is well worth considering. Find out more in this informative workshop, which will be especially interesting for parents of students in Secondary IV and V. Their teens can attend as well!



### **LEARN Quebec: Resources to Help Your Child Catch Up**

**Thurs., November 11  
7 p.m.**

Need resources to get your child up to speed? LEARN Quebec offers students, parents, and school/school board staff free resources to support learning continuity. This workshop will introduce the three LEARN teams: Virtual Campus, Pedagogical Services, and the Provincial Resource Team—and what they are doing to support families, schools and communities.



### **Protecting Yourself Online: Advice from a Professional Hacker**

**Wed., November 17  
7 p.m.**

In a world of digital technology, it is easy to forget one sobering fact: our identity can be stolen with one click of the mouse, propelling us into nightmares in a matter of minutes anytime, anywhere, and on any one of our gadgets. This workshop with Terry Cutler of Cyology Labs will provide practical tips on how you can protect yourself and your children online. Topics include how to create an undecipherable password; secure your information on social media; and detect threats and frauds.



### **Understanding Interpersonal Conflict Styles**

**Thurs., November 18  
7 p.m.**

Social scientists have identified five specific ways people respond and engage with conflict. What is your go-to conflict style? Your partner's? Your child's? In this presentation, Family Life Educator Karen Delage (ParenTeenFocus) will explore the pros and cons of each conflict style and provide tips on how to communicate with those who exhibit the various styles. This lively presentation will include time to share our thoughts and questions. Together, we'll discuss ways to manage conflict for the next time it comes around.



# EPCA MISSION STATEMENT

The English Parents' Committee Association (EPCA) is a coalition of parents' committees of Quebec's English-language public school boards, representing more than 100,000 students in the youth sector.

EPCA advocates for a strong and sustainable English-language public education system to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for our children, while respecting the culture and language of anglophone Quebecers.

To do so, EPCA seeks to engage and motivate parents across Quebec to contribute to strong, representative and effective parent governance, to foster positive relationships with stakeholders across the educational spectrum, and to provide guidance and support to all member organizations.

What would you like to see in  
our upcoming editions?

TELL US HERE

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(514) 778-3722 - [epcaquebec.org](http://epcaquebec.org) - [president@epcaquebec.org](mailto:president@epcaquebec.org)

# EPCA STRATEGIC PILLARS

INFORM

Using all communications tools at our disposal, offer up-to-date information on public education initiatives, parent governance interests, best practices and issues management to ensure a healthy, well-engaged anglophone parent community.

CONSULT

Ensure strong, high-quality and consistent feedback mechanisms with members and partners across the English-language public school network through both electronic and in-person methods.

SUPPORT

Provide training and professional development at all levels of parent governance, optimize the sharing of best practices and provide multiple support services for parent committees, governing boards and parent delegates in need.

ADVOCATE

Push for appropriate policy change and improvement through enhanced partnerships with like-minded organizations, Government working groups/tasks forces, and related organizations, through well-considered political positions on behalf of English- Language parents committees across Quebec, taking into account regional difference and the urban/rural divide.