



English Parents' Committee Association
Association des comités de parents anglophones

Back to School

Guide to Involvement for Parents



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Annual General Assembly

As children return to classes, you will soon be receiving, if you have not already, an email from your principal notifying you about the Annual General Assembly (AGA) at your school. We urge you to attend.

Whether this all-important meeting is managed by the Chairperson of your Governing Board or rolled into the welcome assembly by your school principal, this is the moment for parent participation that can really make the difference in your child's education.

At these Annual General Assemblies, members of your Governing Board will be elected, as will delegates to your respective Parent Committees. This is the gateway to profound involvement in educational governance and gives you a front-row seat and a voice in decision-making at your child's school.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our community and what drives and supports so much student success. Your time and input are valuable and valued, and as the official voice of parents of students in Quebec's English public system, EPCA implores you to get involved.

We cannot say this anymore emphatically: Parents have power in their respective schools, they need only exercise it. If we are to represent you to the government and our education partners, we need you to do so on behalf of your community.

By standing for Governing Board, you can be part of the important deliberations in your school regarding budgets, programs, initiatives and more. It is an opportunity to really engage with teachers, administrators and other parents, and share your unique insights and perspectives in an official forum.

Considering public health directives, the process will be different and perhaps slightly more complex this year. You should note that schools may be holding in-person, hybrid or virtual assemblies online (via Zoom or other platforms). You should be notified of all the details and procedures by your principal when this is determined.

However, all schools doing so virtually should have a plan in place to accommodate the large numbers of participants, voting, validation of eligibility to vote, and of course dedicated support for those who may have difficulty logging on or participating.

If you feel you are missing information, please ensure that you consult your school, school board, and Parent Committee website regularly.



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Governing Board

A Governing Board is a group of people, either elected or appointed who are genuinely interested in education. Every member has the same goal, which is to promote student success. Governing Boards were created to decentralize powers so that they are concentrated at the school level.

The Governing Board has an important role to play in interpreting and achieving school success through the school's educational project, and its MESA Plan.

In this document, Section numbers in brackets refer to Section numbers in the Education Act.

Composition

The composition of the Governing Board is determined by the school board (Section 43).

The total number of seats for staff representatives must be equal to those for parent representatives (Section 43). Governing Boards must be composed of no more than 20 members including:

- A. At least 4 parents
- B. At least 4 school staff members
 - At least 2 must be teachers
 - At least 1 non-teaching professional or a teacher as a substitute
 - At least 1 support staff or a teacher as a substitute
 - 1 daycare representative (elementary level)
 - 2 students (high school level)
 - 2 community representatives (non-voting member) (Section 42)

NB: The parent members (A) must be equal to the staff members (B)

Quorum

A majority of the members of the Governing Board, who are in office, including at least half the parents, is a quorum of the Governing Board (Section 61).

Term of Office

The term of office for parent representatives is two years; the term for representatives from other groups is one year (Section 54).

Requests for a change in composition must:

- be made in writing to the Board;
- include resolutions from the Governing Board and staff;



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- be approved by the Council of Commissioners; and
- be made prior to May to come into effect the following year.

ALL representatives must be elected by September 30th.

The general assembly of parents:

- elects parent representatives to the Governing Board (Section 47);
- elects a delegate and an alternate to the parents committee (Section 47);
- decides on the formation of a Parent Participation Organization (PPO), including decide on the number of members and how to elect them (Section 96).

Staff members hold meetings in September to elect their representatives (Sections 48, 49, 50).

Students are appointed by the students' council or the association representing the students; if they do not exist, students meet in September to elect their representatives with the principal presiding over the elections (Section 51).

The Governing Board chooses whether or not they want to have community representatives. The community representatives should not be staff members of the school. It is recommended that community representatives not be parents of the school but that the Governing Board look to the people from the community organizations first (i.e. police, church, city hall, etc.).

The principal acts as the resource person. They ensure that the proposals are prepared and submitted to the Governing Board and that the Governing Board is provided with all necessary information before making decisions. The principal by law is responsible for the minutes of the Governing Board ensuring that the minutes are duly completed, signed and stored safe (Section 69).

Substitution

A Governing Board member can be temporarily replaced by a substitute (Sections 54-55).

Any member who is unable to take part in a Governing Board meeting may be replaced by a substitute member (Section 51.1), but the number of substitute members cannot be greater than the number of Governing Board members.

When Does the Governing Board Replace a Member?

A member is replaced only when there is a vacancy created by a resignation or disqualification.

A parents' representative whose child no longer attends the school may remain a member of the Governing Board until the next meeting held pursuant to Section 47 (General Assembly).



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A vacancy resulting from the departure of a parents' representative shall be filled, for the unexpired portion of the representative's term, by a parent designated by the other parents' representatives on the Governing Board.

A vacancy resulting from the departure or disqualification of any other member of the Governing Board is filled, for the unexpired portion of the term, according to the mode of appointment prescribed for the member to be replaced (Section 55).

Election of the Chairperson

The Chairperson is elected at the first meeting of the Governing Board by all the voting members. The Chairperson:

- Presides over meetings of the Governing Board (Section 59).
- Has the deciding or casting vote in the event of a tie (Section 63).

The Governing Board does not elect a vice-chair. If the Chair is absent or unable to act, the Governing Board shall designate a person from among the members who are eligible for the office of Chair to exercise the functions and powers of the Chair (Section 60).

What Constitutes a good Chair:

- Is well prepared for the meeting
- Presides over the meeting (starts and ends on time)
- Respects the rules of internal procedure
- Keeps a speakers list
- Keeps order and ensures speakers remain on topic
- Listens attentively
- Encourages all members to speak and explain their views
- Clarifies intervention and summarizes the various opinions
- Speaks no more than is necessary but helps to clarify and gives information
- Ensures that discussions respect the mandate of the Governing Board

Role of the Treasurer

Gives updates on the allocation of the annual operating budget (\$250) given to the Governing Board from the school board.

The Governing Board shall adopt and oversee the administration of its annual operating budget and render an account thereof to the school board. The budget must maintain a balance between expenditures and the financial resources allocated to the Governing Board by the school board, on the other (Section 66).



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Commissioners

Commissioners, when carrying out a mandate by the Council of Commissioners, can take part in Governing Board meetings, but are not entitled to vote (Section 45).

Observers

Observers may attend Governing Board meetings under the following conditions:

- Observers do not take part in Governing Board meetings.
- Observers are able to ask questions addressed to the Chair during question period.
- Copies of the agenda should be made available to observers.
- Governing Board meetings are open to the public; however, it is recommended that the meeting be closed to the public (in camera) if a matter being discussed could cause injury to a person (Section 68).

Governing Board Decisions

The decisions of the Governing Board are made by a majority vote of the members present and entitled to vote (Section 63), noting the following:

- A majority of members including half the parents.
- Abstentions do not count.
- Community representatives are non-voting members.
- Decisions are made in public and recorded in the minutes.

Rules of Internal Management

The Governing Board shall establish rules for its internal management, noting the following:

- The rules should reflect the needs of the Governing Board.
- Rules should be reviewed annually.
- The internal management rules shall provide for at least five meetings every school year.
- The Governing Board shall fix the date, time and place of its meetings, and inform the parents and the members of the school staff (Section 67).

Rules for questions from the public must be determined by members of the Governing Board and should be included in the rules of internal management, including:

- A public question period included on the agenda at the beginning and/or end of the meeting.
- Questions from the public are addressed at question period on the agenda and are directed to the chair.
- Questions do not have to be answered right away. You can come back with an answer at the following meeting.



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The Internal Rules of Management may include the Following:

- The procedures for calling regular and special meetings
- Number of days required to send notice of meetings
- Who sends the notice (e.g.: chair, principal, etc. ...)
- By which means is the notice sent (e.g.: mail, e-mail ...)
- What should be sent (notice, agenda, documentation ...)
- The procedural rules for the meeting
- Location, schedule and duration of meeting, discussion process
- How to bring a proposal forward
- Conduct of the members
- Agenda
- Who is responsible for drafting and distributing the agenda, content: priorities in the choice of items
- Time allocation and nature of the discussion should be indicated beside each item
- Minutes
- Who will record the minutes
- Who is responsible for drafting and distributing them, content, who should receive the minutes (other than the members of the Governing Board)
- The principles and procedures for the management of the annual operating budget that belongs to the Governing Board (allocation of \$250 from the school board)

Following approval, the minutes must be signed by the Chairperson and countersigned by the principal or the person appointed by the principal. The minutes must be kept by the principal or a person specially designated by the principal (Section 69). The minutes must be kept in a register and they are open to the public.

Minutes

Minutes should include:

- Date, time, and location of the meeting
- Names of the members present
- Names of members who sent regrets or are absent
- Time the meeting was called to order
- Adoption of the agenda
- Adoption of the previous meeting minutes (with modifications)
- Corrections should not change the sense of what was recorded but should clarify any factual or clerical mistake
- Exact wording of a motion with the vote
- Brief summary of items discussed
- Items that have tabled or deferred
- Time of adjournment



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Conduct

Members of the Governing Board must act within the scope of the functions and powers conferred on them, and exercise the care, prudence and diligence that a reasonable person would exercise in similar circumstances.

They must also act with honesty and loyalty and in the interest of the school, the students, the parents, the school staff and the community.

Conflict of Interest

A Governing Board member who has a direct or indirect interest in an enterprise that puts that member in conflict of interest with the school must disclose the interest in writing to the principal. In such a case, the member should withdraw from the meeting while the issue is being discussed and voted on (Section 70). Having a conflict of interest is not prohibited, but not declaring it could lead to forfeiture of office.

Role of the Governing Board

The Education Act defines the powers and responsibilities between the Governing Board and principal. The Governing Board powers are defined in Sections 74-95. The principal's powers are defined in Sections 96.12 - 96.26.

The Governing Board is the focal point for decisions that affect the life of the school.

The Governing Board members should consult the relevant policies and by-laws on the school boards website. It determines what the school should achieve through the educational project. It seeks collaboration of persons having an interest in the school. It encourages communication and dialogue between all parties in order to achieve students' success.

The Governing Board shall analyze the situation prevailing at the school, principally the needs of the students, the challenges tied to student success and the characteristics and expectations of the community served by the school. Based on the analysis and taking into account the commitment-to-success plan of the school board, the Governing Board shall adopt the school's educational project, oversee the project's implementation and evaluate the project at the intervals specified in it. Each of these stages shall be carried out through concerted action between the various participants having an interest in the school and in student success. To that end, the Governing Board shall encourage the collaboration of students, parents, teachers, other school staff members, and community and school board representatives. (Section 74)



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Collaboration

In exercising such functions, the Governing Board shall seek the collaboration of persons having an interest in the school.

Concerted Action

To that end, the Governing Board shall encourage the communication of information, dialogue and concerted action between students, parents, the principal, teachers and other school staff members and community representatives, and their collaboration in helping students to achieve success. The Governing Board has to be consulted by the school board and the principal on certain issues related to the operation of the school. The Governing Board may also take the initiative to advise the school board.

What are the Powers & Functions of the Governing Board?

The powers and functions of the Governing Board are related to four areas: general, educational services, community services, and physical and financial resources. The following outlines the responsibilities in each area and identifies the related sections in the Education Act.

General Functions and Powers

- analyses the school's situation and, taking into account the commitment-to-success plan of the school board, adopts the educational project and oversees its implementation and evaluate the project at the intervals specified in it (s. 74)
- approves the rules of conduct and safety measures (s. 75 and 76)
- approve the anti-bullying and anti-violence plan (s. 75.1)
- establishes the principles for determining the cost of documents in which students write, draw or cut out and approves a list of materials such as pencils, paper, etc. (s. 77.1)
- advises the school board on certain matters (s. 78 and 79)
- may pool goods and services or activities with other schools (s. 80)
- prepares and adopts an annual activity report and transmits a copy to the school board (s. 82)
- informs the community of the services provided by the school (s. 83)

Educational Services

- approves the approach for implementing the basic school regulation (s. 84)
- approves the approach for enriching and adapting Ministry programs and the development of local programs (s. 85)
- approves the time allocation for each subject and ensures that the compulsory objectives of the programs of studies will be achieved and that the rules governed by the certification of studies are complied with (s. 86)



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- approves the schedule of educational activities which changes the students' regular schedule (s. 87)
- approves the approach to implementing student and special education services (s. 88)
- is consulted on the textbooks and instructional materials required for teaching programs
- (s. 96.15.3)

Community Services

- may organize educational services (outside teaching periods), social, cultural or sports activities (s. 90)
- may, in the name of the school board, contract with persons or organizations for goods and services (s. 91)
- may require a financial contribution from users of these goods and services (s. 91)

Physical and Financial Resources

- approves the use of school premises and enters into agreements regarding their use (s. 93)
- may, in the name of the school board, solicit and receive voluntary contributions from persons or organizations to support school activities (s. 94)
- adopts the school's annual budget and submits it to the school board for approval (s. 95)
- is consulted by the principal regarding the school's needs for goods, services and repair/improvement of the premises (s. 96.22)

Consultation by the School Board

In addition to the functions and powers outlined above, the school board must consult the Governing Board on two items (section 79), namely:

- the amendment or revocation of the deed of establishment of the school, i.e., school closure, change of program, change of building, etc. – the deed of establishment, prepared by the School Board, includes the name and address of the school and the level(s) of instruction.
- the selection criteria for the appointment of the principal – the Governing Board members are not involved in the appointment but must have the opportunity to submit a description of the characteristics, qualities and experience that they judge to be essential in an administrator for their school.

The Governing Board also advises the school board on certain matters, namely:

- any matter the school board is required to submit to it
- any matter that may facilitate the operation of the school
- any matter that may improve the organization of services provided by the board



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Parent Participation Organization

The parent participation organization gives the opportunity to a larger number of parents to be involved in the day-to-day life of a school.

The parents in attendance at the Annual General Assembly will decide whether or not to form a Parent Participation Organization (PPO), which is composed of parents of students attending the school.

In this document, Section numbers in brackets refer to Section numbers in the Education Act.

Should the general assembly choose to form a PPO, it will determine;

- the name
- composition (the number of members is determined by the parents present at the general assembly)
- operating rules, including:
 - o the role of the members (chair, vice chair etc.) and their mandates, resignations, vacancies;
 - o regular or special meetings, quorum, calendar of meetings (dates, times, place, length);
 - o rules of procedure, motions, decision-making, votes; and
 - o content of minutes, conservation of minutes, plan of action, annual report

The PPO executive members (i.e. chair, vice chair, etc.) may also be elected at the Annual General Assembly.

Where under the deed of establishment of the school more than one immovable is placed at the disposal of the school or where the school provides both elementary and secondary instruction, the meeting of parents may establish a parent participation organization for each immovable or each level of instruction, instead of only one (Section 96.1).

The PPO may hold its meetings at the school and use the support services of the school after the principal consults the governing board, such as: distribution of agenda, photocopier, fax, etc. (Section 96.4). The organization may also use the school's administrative support services and facilities free of charge, subject to the conditions determined by the principal after consulting with the governing board.

What are the functions of the Parent Participation Organization?

The PPO has a twofold purpose in law: first, to encourage parents to be involved in fostering their child's academic success and secondly, to collaborate in developing, implementing and evaluating the school's educational project.



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The purpose of a PPO is to encourage the collaboration of parents in developing, implementing and periodically evaluating the school's educational project and their participation in fostering their child's success (Section 96.2).

A PPO may advise the parents' representatives on the Governing Board regarding any matter of concern to parents or any matter concerning which the organization is consulted by the parents' representatives on the Governing Board (Section 96.3).

The PPO can play a valuable role and complement the work of the Governing Board by effectively communicating with the parent body at large by:

- letting parents know about what is going on at the school and what the needs are
- finding out about parents' concerns

There are no regulations governing the size and general operation of a PPO. As well as fulfilling its purpose as defined by law, it has been suggested that sub-committees could be set up within the PPO with specific tasks such as safety, newsletter, book fair, etc.

Each school has the flexibility to organize its PPO to best suit the conditions, i.e., the number of parents who wish to be involved and the tasks that need to be done. Most importantly, the PPO and Governing Board must work closely together to ensure that everyone is working toward the same goals.

Sections of the Education Act Pertaining to the PPO

Division III Parent Participation Organization

96. The meeting of parents called pursuant to section 47 shall decide whether or not to form a parent participation organization.

If the meeting decides to form a parent participation organization, it shall determine the name, composition and operating rules of the organization and shall elect its members.

1988, c. 84, s. 96; 1997, c. 96, s. 13.

96.1. Where under the deed of establishment of the school more than one immovable is placed at the disposal of the school or where the school provides both elementary and secondary instruction, the meeting of parents may establish a parent participation organization for each immovable or each level of instruction, instead of only one.

1997, c. 96, s. 13.



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96.2. The purpose of a parent participation organization is to encourage the collaboration of parents in developing, implementing and periodically evaluating the school's educational project and their participation in fostering their child's success.

1997, c. 96, s. 13; 2002, c. 63, s. 9.

96.3. A parent participation organization may advise the parents' representatives on the governing board regarding any matter of concern to parents or any matter concerning which the organization is consulted by the parents' representatives on the governing board.

1997, c. 96, s. 13.

96.4. A parent participation organization may hold its meetings on the school premises.

The organization may also use the school's administrative support services and facilities free of charge, subject to the conditions determined by the principal after consulting with the governing board.

1997, c. 96, s. 13.