



English Parents' Committee Association



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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 22 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

EPCA continues to fight for students in Quebec !

Dear Parents,

As we progress into the new year, there are so many things going on in the Quebec educational system. Many new laws are being implemented in Quebec that have a significant impact on the educational system and, by extension, our children. EPCA remains vigilant about the effects of the laws on our students and is working with our partners and parents across the province to mitigate any potential negative impacts to the best of our abilities.

Second report cards are coming out now - if your student hasn't yet received theirs, they should be getting it soon and you can check the Mozaïk portal. It can be a stressful time for both children and parents, but EPCA has provided someone tips and tricks in this newsletter (and in past editions and on our Facebook page and our website) for having conversations around progress with children and teachers in Parent Teacher interviews.

Stay tuned for a survey on educational projects in response to the Minister's priority to increase access across Quebec to educational projects, including things like Sport Etude and Arts. EPCA wants to hear your thoughts on this initiative.

On a personal note, I want to acknowledge that the last month has been filled with tragedy and, as parents ourselves, everyone at EPCA feels the pain as well.

I'd like to wish everyone all the best for the next month. I hope to see you at one of the many events and workshops EPCA is putting on over the next little bit with our partners, including a series of workshops with OMETZ and movie nights with Canadian Parents for French!

Ways to Encourage Your Child to Discuss School

Some students are reluctant to offer information about their school day. Some kids love chatting about school. With others, it's like pulling teeth to get them to reveal even a few details about their day - especially if something is bothering them, such as bullying or academic difficulties. The manner by which you pose questions to children might encourage them to talk more. Instead of asking yes or no questions, ask detailed, open-ended questions.

If your child is silent or highly private, there are methods to ask questions that will start a conversation rather than end it. Here are some crucial points to remember.



1. Use open-ended inquiries. If you pose a question that can be answered in one word - yes or no - you'll get exactly that answer... a one-word response. Instead, ask open-ended questions. "What was the best thing you did at school today?" for example.
2. Begin with an observation. Children frequently struggle to respond to seemingly random inquiries. Making an observation provides your child with something to connect with. For example: "I know you have a lot more kids in your class this year. How does that feel?"
3. Tell your child a little bit about yourself. It's normal to want to tell someone else about themselves when they tell you about themselves. See what happens when you share something with your child. "We always played dodgeball at recess," for example. "What do you and your buddies enjoy doing?"
4. Stay away from negative lines of discussion. If you believe something isn't going well, your queries may be negative, using emotion-laden terms like "sad" or "harsh". Instead, asking questions in a constructive manner better allows your youngster to communicate his or her concerns. "I heard you sat with new students at lunch today," for example. "What did you talk about?"

Ways to Encourage Your Child to Discuss School

cont.

Conversation starters for after school	
Rather than this:	Try this out
Was today's class enjoyable?	What was your favourite thing you did in school?
How was your lunch?	Which kids did you sit with at lunch?
Was your teacher nice?	What did your teacher say today that was very interesting?
Have you received your locker yet?	How easy was it to get to your locker between classes?
Were the kids in your class nice?	Who did you enjoy talking with the most?
Have you received your schedule?	Which days on your schedule will be the busiest?
Do you have classmates you know?	Who are the kids in your classrooms do you talk to the most?
Was your presentation a success?	What was your favourite part of the presentation that you gave today?

This technique of framing your questions encourages your child to respond. However, do not anticipate a long, thorough response to every question. The idea is to have a lot of little talks over time. It helps to identify natural times to communicate, such as at dinner or while driving, when you are not in a hurry. It also allows you to continue to “flex” the conversational muscle and build the rapport that will make it easier over time to have these conversations with your child.

However, sometimes, just like adults, children don't feel like conversing. It is critical to understand when to stop asking questions and leave them for another time. Also, it is important to understand as well that if there is an urgent or critical situation, you will need to ask precise, explicit questions and press for a response.

Upcoming Workshops

EPCA is proud to announce that we will be putting on a series of workshops this spring, continuing our valuable partnership with OMETZ. These workshops are focused on giving parents the tools to help their kids navigate these challenging, post pandemic, times. Though these workshops are geared towards parents, the whole family can benefit from the information.

Consent & Boundaries

These workshops are designed for children of all ages in the school system to learn more about consent at all developmentally appropriate stages. For the younger grades, our Consent and Boundaries workshops help introduce bodily autonomy, choice, and saying no. For older grades, our workshops include information on sexual assault, unhealthy relationships, and how to understand when someone is giving consent.

Body Image & Self Esteem

This program empowers young people to reach their potential through information on healthy body image, nutrition and fitness while focusing on the importance of supporting good health and resisting counterproductive lifestyle habits. Gaining confidence and retaining healthy self-esteem at this transitional time in their lives will be a focus, especially in light of media, peer influences and the potentially long term effects of bullying and relational aggression.

Social Media & Internet Safety

This workshop, for both parents and educators, provides valuable resources for keeping children safe online. Participants will come away with tools for identifying and reporting cyberbullying, an understanding of current online trends, apps and social media sites, strategies for encouraging responsible digital citizenship online and an understanding of the permanent traces and real life consequences of children's online actions.

Homework 101

This presentation offers strategies to make homework a more pleasant experience for children and parents. Homework is presented as a means to enhance self-reliance and foster motivation in children. The concept of "mindsets" will be explored as it impacts the ability for children to understand that through "effort" they can "grow" their intelligence.



Upcoming Workshops

cont.

A Parent's Role In Their Child's Friendships

Parents often wonder what they should do to ensure their children have good friends. Participants will learn practical strategies for identifying the boundaries of their involvement and how to teach their children to effectively navigate their social relationships. Issues related to exclusion, bullying, fostering healthy relationships and encouraging independence in conflict resolution and relationship maintenance will be examined.

Risky Business: Protecting Your Kids

Part of the transition to adolescence is the searching for identity, while at the same time trying to separate from parents and be a member of the peer community. Parents will have the opportunity to discover the “protective factors” which keep children from risk taking behaviours and learn how to use them in the everyday lives of their family.

Other workshops EPCA is offering are Transitioning From Elementary school to High school and an Information session on Bill 96 - see link **HERE** (registration is required).

If you have any topics you would like to explore, feel free to message us on our Facebook page or send us an email. We are here to answer your questions and to help you, the parent.



Homework Anxiety

Why does homework anxiety occur and how may it be alleviated?

It's not always easy to detect when a child is anxious about schoolwork. When you ask, some children may communicate their feelings. Others, however, are unable to define their feelings or are unwilling to discuss them.

Sometimes children simply do not want to finish their homework. They whine, postpone, or speed through their task in order to do something enjoyable. However, it is not that straightforward for other children. Homework may really cause kids stress.

Any youngster can be affected. However, it is an especially serious issue for children who are suffering in school. They may believe they are incapable of completing the task. Or they may lack the necessary resources to complete the required activity.

Remember that some children may appear nervous about their schoolwork but are truly anxious about something else. That is why it is critical to keep note of when children become worried and what they were doing just before. The more you are aware of what is going on, the more you will be able to assist.

What homework anxiety looks like

Children who are anxious about their homework may:

- Make up reasons to avoid doing their assignment.
- Lie about having completed the assignment (or even having any homework at all).
- Become continuously irritated with schoolwork.
- Be unpleasant or cranky after school, or shutting down and refusing to communicate.
- Complain about feeling ill after school or before doing homework.
- Cry frequently or appear too sensitive.
- Be careful of making even little errors or become overly reactive when an error is pointed out.
- Before ever trying, will declare "I can't do it!"

What can you do

When children have homework anxiety, families, educators, and health care professionals should collaborate to figure out what's going on. Begin by discussing your observations and look for trends. Working together will give you a better understanding of what's going on and how you can assist.

Parents and primary caregivers: Begin by asking questions to encourage your child to talk about school. However, if children are having difficulty with the assignment, they may not want to tell you. You'll need to also speak with your child's teacher to gain insight into what's going on at school and determine if your child requires assistance in any particular area. If issues are serious enough, you can seek an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for your student as well.

Discussing Report Cards

When your children receive their report cards, they may be concerned about how you will react. And you might not always know what to say. The truth is that there is no one correct response. Nonetheless, it is critical to look beyond grades.

Here are five common report card scenarios and discussion points.

1. Their grades improved, but not as much as you expected.

"I was anticipating better grades than this," you might be tempted to say. Instead, say something like, "Nice! How do you believe those grades improved?" Why: Higher grades indicate that your child is progressing. And even a small amount can require a significant amount of effort. Keeping this in mind allows you to discuss what is functioning effectively. It also opens the door to discussing what might help improve the rest of your child's grades.

2. Grades and behaviour 'need to be improved'.

"You're grounded until your conduct and grades improve," you could remark. Instead, try saying: "I need to take some time to think about this. We'll discuss it tomorrow." Why: When the news isn't good, you could be tempted to resort to retribution. Nevertheless, punishment rarely motivates children to perform better the next time. Take some time to consider what "progress" would entail for your child. Be practical and discuss it with your child. Then devise a strategy to help make it happen.

3. Grades remained unchanged but conduct and effort improved.

"I'm delighted you're putting in more effort," you could say. If only your grades were higher." "It's nice to hear you're getting the hang of what you need to do to work hard and behave in class," try stating instead. Let's figure out how to improve our grades as well."

Discussing Report Cards



What you say (and how you say it) in each situation matters.

There are different reasons you might be disappointed in your child's report card

Don't just look at the grades – read the teacher's comments, too.

If your child improved in one area, talk about what your child did to make that happen.

If your child is working hard but still struggling, make sure your child knows that you see the effort.



www.epcaquebec.org

Discussing Report Cards

cont.

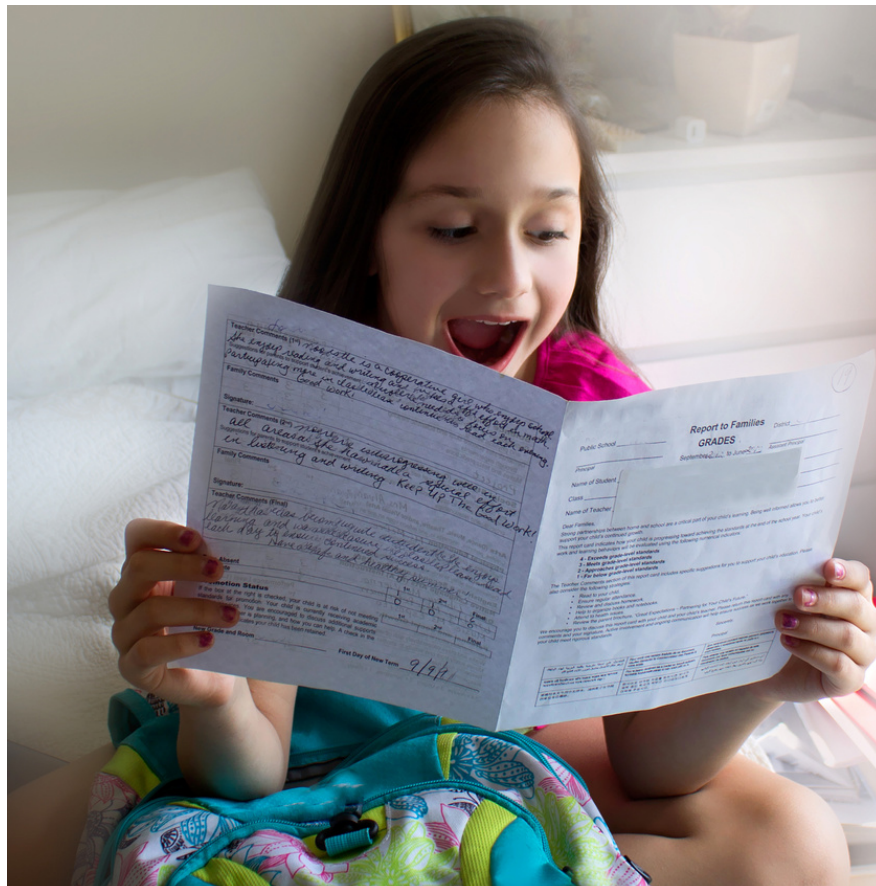
Why? Grades are frequently the first thing we notice when we glance at a child's report card. However, don't forget to read the instructor comments to learn about your child's other achievements. If your child is struggling in school, putting in additional effort is critical.

4. Some grades improved, while others declined.

"What happened with the rest of your classes?" you might ask. Instead, say, "Your math and science grades seem fantastic! How are the remainder of your classes going?" Why: As children grow older, their learning expectations shift. It may be more difficult to meet them in other subjects. Discuss with your child the classes that had lower grades this time around. Inquire whether there is anything difficult about them and what might help. Discussions like those encourage children to advocate for what they require in order to improve.

5. Low grades in most classes, despite your child's hard work.

"You're failing everything?" you could remark. But you're putting in so much effort!" Instead, say something like, "I'm genuinely astonished by these grades. I'm aware of how hard you're working. We're going to work it out." Why: If children are trying hard but still struggling, they are likely to be depressed. Children in this position may be afraid that nothing they do will help. It can be a relief for children to hear that you know they're working hard. It lets them know you know they aren't "just being lazy." And demonstrating that you're committed to figuring out what's going on will enhance your confidence. It shows them you're all in this together.



Canadian Parents for French and EPCA co-host Family Movie Night

Supporting the journey to bilingualism, the Canadian Parents for French has many resources on their [website](#) to foster French second language learning. As well, EPCA will be partnering with Canadian Parents for French to host a movie night in French on 19 April – to register, click [here](#).



Gare aux Gnomes: 5-11 ans

(Gnome Alone)

5:30 PM Eastern Time, French with English subtitles

After moving into a new house with her mom, Chloe discovers a troupe of talking garden gnomes who need her help saving the world.



l'Arracheuse du Temps: 12-18 ans

(The Time Thief)

7:30PM Eastern Time, French with English subtitles

Set in 1927, this is the story of how the inhabitants of the village of Saint-Élie-de-Caxton managed to eliminate the grim reaper, after a flash of lightning struck the apple tree of the church, foreshadowing misfortune.



DEMONSTRATION AGAINST ROAD INSECURITY ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL

Join an existing group at
your school
OR
Initiate a group at your
school!

Invite your elected
officials AND the media
Show them the issues and
dangers you face

MARCH 15, 2023

15 minutes before classes start

Identify safety issues with
parents and citizens in
your area AND plan your
actions together

15 minutes before classes
start, gather around,
make some noise and
remember to take
pictures and
video



#SAFEROADS

Parent Resources



The Quebec Federation of Parents' Committees, with support from various partners – including EPCA's President Katherine Korakakis, has put together a guide to assist parents whose children are facing violence or bullying issues at school – click [here](#).

Tutoring



Homework Help



ENGLISH ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATES

Explainer: What Quebec parents and students need to know about English eligibility certificates: At this [LINK](#) are details on how to apply for a certificate and who is eligible to attend English schools in Quebec.

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 100,00 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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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.