



# English Parents' Committee Association



## IN THIS ISSUE

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

IEP Guide, Difficult Conversations,  
and Moving Forward.

### ARTICLES

IEP Guide:

-What is an IEP and How Can it Help?

-Things Parents can do Before an IEP Meeting

-Things Parents can do During an IEP Meeting

- Staying on Top of your Child's IEP

### ARTICLES

Navigating Difficult Conversations:  
Talking to Children about the Current  
Situation in the Middle East

Bill 40 Panel

Alloprof: Free Help Services for Students

### PARENT RESOURCES



*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

## IEP Guide, Difficult Conversations, and Moving Forward.

Dear Parents,

I trust that your children's transition back to school was smooth and that all the essential educational resources are readily available to ensure their academic success. If you encounter any service disruptions in your school, such as issues with resources, transportation, or daycare services, or if you have observed any shortcomings related to your school's Annual General Assembly (AGA), please inform us. The purpose of EPCA is to support student success by serving as a provincial voice for parents' concerns and assisting you in establishing yourself in the educational setting. We have many resources readily available and have many educational stakeholders and partners who are also just a call away who can help as well.

In October, Parents' Committees will hold their first meeting for the school year, where they will conduct elections for their Chairs and representatives on different committees. EPCA also has many resources for parent governance, which offer valuable guidance and tools for members of PCs and other school-based parent participation bodies. EPCA is also available to support you and answer any questions you may have.

This issue of our Newsletter will provide valuable insights on IEPs and offer resources to assist parents in effectively navigating through this crucial process. We will follow this up with information on progress reports and parent teacher meetings in our next edition, to assist you in getting ready to meet with your children's teachers.

EPCA is also aware that our children are deeply impacted by events happening across the world at this moment. We have included in this issue some tips on how parents can navigate difficult conversations at this challenging time.

As parents and guardians, it is important we show our children that we value education through our active involvement in the schools as it is equally important that we show empathy for others and provide a source of strength for them as we move forward with the school year.

Take care everyone.

# Individual Education Plans (IEPs) Guide

## What is an IEP and How can it Help?

### Understanding Individualized Education Plans

An IEP — Individualized Education Program — is required for children to get special education services. If your child has already been evaluated, the process of developing an IEP has begun. But there's still a lot to learn about the IEP process and your involvement in it. This resource is intended to assist you at each stage of your IEP journey. It provides basic facts while also directing you to more in-depth information and insights. The more you understand about the purpose of IEPs, the more involved you can be in ensuring that your child receives the greatest available support.

An IEP builds on the curriculum that a student with a handicap, social maladjustment, or learning difficulty is following. It is designed to set out the strategies being used to meet the student's specific identified needs. This plan is created with short and long term goals to help measure the effectiveness of the interventions used to help your child in his/her school life and beyond.

If you are new to IEPs, you will most certainly hear about numerous things that are strange to you. And you'll almost certainly have a lot of questions. Who receives an IEP at school? What is the goal of an IEP? Answering your questions can help you determine whether or not to pursue an IEP for your child. It can also give you more confidence while advocating for your child.

### What is an IEP?

If you've never seen an IEP before, the various documents can be hard to decipher. They cover many areas, using terms and information you'll likely have questions about. But all of those pieces from testing results to goals for progress add up to the best school program of instruction and supports for your child. An IEP can help you gain a better grasp of your child's strengths and weaknesses. It should also specify how the school intends to assist your child in improving and developing abilities. The IEP is:

- A flexible, working document, helping the school and parent/guardian plan for, monitor, evaluate, and communicate the student's growth.
- An opportunity for schools, students, parents, and external agencies to work together to create a workable record of your child's developmental journey, both academic and social.
- A process embracing the philosophy that success has different meanings depending on the different abilities and needs of the student.
- An identifier of the entire child's needs, how the school will meet these needs, and how the school will measure the child's progress.

# Individual Education Plans (IEPs) Guide

## What is an IEP and How can it Help?

cont.

### How to Obtain an IEP

Obtaining an IEP for your child can be a difficult procedure and it's critical to understand what happens and when. The first step is the teacher or staff working closely with the student may, following interventions, feel that more coordinated support is needed. An IEP may be considered, in collaboration with the parent.

### Meetings of the IEP

Your child's special education program kicks off with an IEP meeting. The full IEP team will be in attendance. You may also hear from school personnel who were involved in the review process. Some may offer services or assistance to your child. That is only the first of many IEP meetings you will most likely attend over your child's school years. Some parents find IEP meetings difficult. Knowing what happens at IEP meetings will help you navigate them more easily.

YOU know your child better than anyone else and can provide critical information to the school team. YOU have the best understanding of your child's social, developmental, physical, and academic history. YOU chart your child's future with every step that they take and are ultimately responsible for your child's development and overall success. As a parent, you are your child's best advocate. Your child will have a greater chance for success when the school and the family work together!

### What else is there to know?

The development of the IEP is a team process, which involves the principal, the parents, the student (where appropriate) and the staff working with the student. Although the principal is responsible for the implementation and periodic evaluation of the IEP, it may be coordinated by a key professional involved with the child (e.g. classroom teacher, resource teacher), and may be facilitated by an aide or technician.

IEP interventions can be expressed as "adaptations" or "modifications"... what is the difference?

- Modified Program, Competency, or Subject: End of cycle objectives will be modified to reflect the student's particular level of functioning (i.e. student will learn to count to ten).
- Adapted Curriculum: Students will be able to meet standard end of cycle outcomes with specific adaptations in place (i.e., preferential seating, adapted materials, etc.).

The IEP journey continues long after your child's plan is implemented. From now on, you'll be responsible for ensuring that the plan is working and that your child is making progress. Along with your child's requirements, the IEP will evolve over time and will follow your child throughout their school career, including into CEGEP... but you will always remain your child's primary advocate!



# Individual Education Plans (IEPs) Guide

## Things Parents can do Before an IEP Meeting

The key to being a successful, confident advocate in your child's IEP sessions is preparation. Here are five things you should do before an IEP meeting.

### 1. Gather and examine your records.

Take out any official documents you have copies of, such as your child's current IEP, recent progress reports, and report cards. Collect samples of your child's homework, tests, and teacher notes. Make your own notes and observations as well. (An IEP binder is a handy method to collect all this information in one spot.)

When you've gathered everything, search for areas that want attention. Where is your child progressing or struggling? What resources and services are (or are not) beneficial? Is there anything fresh to report?

### 2. Invite visitors and supporters.

If you believe you will require assistance at the meeting, request someone to accompany you. This might be a family member or friend, a professional who works with your child, or an advocate. Explain how you believe they can assist you.

You may wish to meet with them before to the meeting to discuss your issues, obtain their perspective, and prepare your approach. If your child is attending an IEP meeting, be sure to prepare them as well.

### 3. Plan your questions and suggestions.

You may have a lot on your mind after reading your records and speaking with your child, family, or invited guests. Making a short list of the points you wish to make during the meeting might be beneficial. Consider the fundamentals: your worries, questions, and ideas. During the meeting, you might refer to this list.

### 4. Inform the school about your visitors and requests.

Inform the IEP team leader of any visitors you want to bring to the meeting. Give their names and explain how they are related to you and your kid. If you or any of your visitors require special accommodations, such as videoconferencing or a translator, please notify the team leader in advance.

### 5. Unwind and think about your child.

Once you've prepared everything for the meeting, try to unwind and concentrate on your child's skills, interests, and problems. Pay attention to what your youngster has to say about school and learning. Remember that you are the only one on the IEP team who knows and understands your child. That frame of mind will allow you to approach the IEP meeting with power and confidence.

# Individual Education Plans (IEPs) Guide

## Things to do During an IEP Meeting

### 1. Discuss your child.

No one on the IEP team is as familiar with your child as you are. Share your thoughts about your child's personality, challenges, and strengths. You are not required to limit your remarks to academics. Discuss your child's performance on sports teams and with other extracurricular activities. This provides the team with further information about your child's strengths and interests.

### 2. Maintain an open mind.

If someone brings up an issue or solution that you are unsure about, hear them out. Sometimes obstacles arise at school that you do not encounter at home. After all, school is a unique setting with its own set of rules and objectives. You can create the best plan for your child if you work together with members of the school team.

### 3. Make inquiries.

Laws and programs governing special education are complex. Even if you're well prepared, new terminology may be introduced at an IEP meeting. When this occurs, request an explanation. You have the right to be informed about every aspect and choice. You can also request ahead of time that someone take notes during the meeting. Then, at the end of the meeting, request a copy of the notes.

### 4. Concentrate on the end result.

Verify that the staff is aware of your expectations and goals for your child. This puts everyone on the same page while you work on a plan together. Inquire about the team's proposals. You can also make changes. Share your concerns if you're not sure how something supports your child's objectives.

### 5. Advocate for your child's - and your own - rights.

The following are examples. If you are told that the school would not cover specific services, request to see a copy of the section of the Education Act that supports that claim. If you are hesitant about the IEP draft, do not feel obligated to sign it. And finally, you have the right to take the IEP draft home and think about it. Be polite yet firm and ensure that you have what you, and your child, need from the IEP.



# Individual Education Plans (IEPs) Guide

## Staying on Top of your Child's IEP

Your involvement in the IEP process does not cease once your kid has a plan in place for special education services. In fact, the IEP's actual work is only getting started. Here are five methods to remain on top of your child's IEP and ensure he or she is receiving the necessary help.

### 1. Maintain your involvement and awareness.

Managing the IEP is a collaborative endeavour. You'll want to collaborate with the school and your child's teacher to stay on top of your child's plan. It is easier to ensure that your child's supports and services are effective when you are more involved. Ensure that all components of your child's IEP are communicated to the instructors. And that the IEP is being used correctly.

For example, the goals set in the IEP will be used to assess your child's progress. Knowing what these goals are (and that they are SMART) allows you to keep track of how much your child is improving. Every year, the team will create new goals to meet your child's changing needs.

It may appear like your child's progress has stagnated at times. You might also notice a drop in grades in one or more subjects. You have the option of meeting with the IEP team to discuss your concerns and questions. Keep in touch with the teacher so that she can give specifics about what's going on in the classroom.

### 2. Be ready to speak up if necessary.

The more you know about your child's IEP, the easier it will be to manage it. Write down any questions you have about how the IEP works. It has the potential to make your meetings more effective. As an example:

Is extracurricular activity covered by the IEP? How are IEP objectives reinforced during the summer? Sometimes a child's IEP must be revised. You might want to bring up an issue that isn't working.



# Individual Education Plans (IEPs) Guide

## Staying on Top of your Child's IEP

cont.

### 3. Put together an IEP binder.

When your child has an IEP, there is a lot of paperwork to keep care of. First and foremost, there is the plan itself. Other documents, such as evaluation findings and report cards, should be kept on hand for when you meet with the team. Make an IEP binder to reduce stress. It's an excellent tool for keeping everything in one place and organized. You won't have to hustle to find something crucial during an IEP meeting or at any other time.

### 4. Learn how to handle IEP disagreements.

It's probable that you'll dispute with the school at some point regarding your child's IEP or specific supports. Should the school decide to cut or refuse services, for example, it is likely to cause conflict. There are a few options for resolving disagreements.

- **Informal negotiation:** This means working directly with the school to come to an agreement.
- **Mediation:** This involves an outside professional who helps you and the school settle a dispute.
- **Due process:** A formal way to resolve disputes; however, this is only for disagreements that have to do with rights to special education. This process can take a while, and it should only be used as a last resort.

### 5. Become an effective advocate for your child.

Having an impact on your child's IEP requires you to be a strong advocate. Some parents find it difficult to do so. There are, however, ways to develop those skills and be a voice for your child when necessary. This guide was just a start of ways to educate yourself and take the first step on that journey.





# Navigating Difficult Conversations: Talking to Children about the Current Situation in the Middle East

## Introduction

In these tumultuous times, it's essential for parents to engage in open and honest conversations with their children about the situation in the middle east. EPCA members attended a webinar hosted by The Jewish Education Project, featuring the expertise of Dr. Samantha Vinokor-Meinrath and Dr. Sivan Zakai. This article aims to provide parents with essential insights and best practices for discussing complex issues with their children, as presented at the webinar.

## Understanding the Age-Appropriateness of Conversations

Parents often wonder when to initiate difficult conversations with their children. The consensus among experts is that it's never too early to start. Even toddlers as young as two-years-old can benefit from age-appropriate discussions that provide a sense of safety and understanding. Remember, you don't need to have all the answers to their questions, but you should be willing to engage in meaningful conversations that help calm their fears.

## Acknowledging Emotions

Children are perceptive, and they can sense when adults are anxious and upset. Therefore, it's important not to hide your feelings. Share your emotions with them, explaining that your sadness or worry is not because of them. This reassurance helps children understand that their safety is a top priority.

## Ensuring Safety and Vigilance

To reinforce the sense of security, remind your children that various institutions, including schools, have security measures in place to protect them. These may include armed guards and specific policies to ensure their well-being. This information can go a long way in calming their concerns.



# Navigating Difficult Conversations

cont.

## Setting the Stage or Cleaning it up

Children often overhear discussions among adults and peers. It's advisable to either proactively frame these discussions or be prepared to address them when your children approach you with questions. Always assume that kids will hear things and may have queries about what they've heard from others.



## Teens and Social Media

Teens, as mentioned above, may be asked to limit their exposure to disturbing content on platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Remind your teens that while they should understand what is happening around them, they don't need to do so by watching traumatizing videos. Encourage them to rely on reliable sources for information and to come to you to discuss the situation and for help should they see something they don't understand or are having trouble processing.

## Establishing Routines

Maintaining regular routines, such as mealtimes and bedtimes, is crucial. These routines provide a sense of stability and normalcy during uncertain times. Additionally, offer emotional support through hugs and encourage family members to support each other.

## Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Approach

When discussing difficult topics, adopt a cognitive, affective, and behavioral approach:

- **Listen:** Ask your children what questions or concerns they have. Avoid telling them what to think or feel. Instead, acknowledge their inquiries and work through them together.
- **Children as Teachers:** Remember that children can teach us as much as we teach them. Allow them to take the lead in discussions.
- **Collaboration and Learning:** Emphasize the importance of collaboration across organizations and access to resources to support your child's education.

# Navigating Difficult Conversations

cont.

## Addressing Hate

When discussing antisemitism with your children, assure them that it is not their fault. Offer age-appropriate responses to questions about why people hate Jewish people. Share historical resilience and emphasize that Jews have overcome challenges in the past. Explain the irrationality of terrorism and the tendency to scapegoat minority groups.

## Interacting with Muslim Friends

For children with Muslim friends, offer guidance on how to interact and maintain these friendships. Encourage understanding and empathy for diverse backgrounds.



## Dealing with Anger

Teach your children that they cannot control other people's feelings but can express their own emotions. Encourage them to share their feelings with others.

## Advocating on Their Behalf

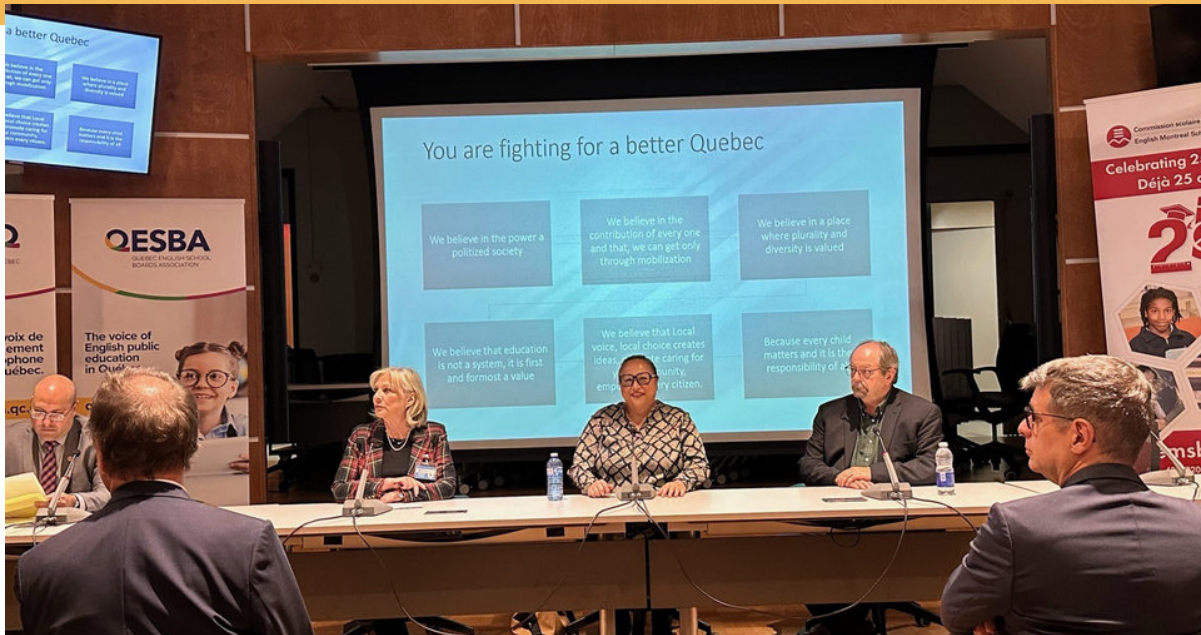
Finally, ask your children when they need your help in advocating for their concerns. Keep a network of families to stay connected and offer support.

## Conclusion

Engaging in conversations with your children about the current situation can be challenging, but it is crucial for their emotional well-being and understanding. By adopting these best practices and insights from experts like Dr. Sivan Zakai and Dr. Samantha Vinokor-Meinrath, you can navigate these difficult conversations effectively and provide your children with the support they need during these uncertain times.



# Bill 40 Panel



Several stakeholders recently came together to discuss Bill 40. To start, an overview of the Bill and the legal case was provided, and a discussion was held on how the law has impacted the French sector. The panel discussion focused on what the community can do now, specifically in relation to:

- what our response should be to the concerted attack by this government on our institutions;
- how we ensure our voices are heard by government;
- what parents should do to promote the interests of their children; and
- what the community at large should do.





# alloprof



## Free Help Services for Students

**Mission:** Alloprof helps students in Quebec to transform academic challenges into successes, thanks to its free, professional, and stimulating services.



In today's fast-paced academic environment, students often find themselves navigating a complex web of challenges, both inside and outside the classroom. Trying to juggle it all can be difficult. In addition to its [website](#) full of online resources, Alloprof has developed 2 free help services for students who may need some extra support or get a quick explanation to an academic question: The Help Zone and Ask a Teacher.

### The Help Zone

Like many parents, you likely hold your breath each day, hoping that homework will proceed smoothly for you and your child. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, homework can quickly derail with difficult questions or problems which cannot be answered easily. Why not introduce your child to Alloprof's [Help Zone](#)? Inspired by social networks, The Help Zone provides [free homework and study assistance](#), 24/7. How? Students simply type in their question and they will receive a complete and verified explanation approved by our education professionals.



# alloprof



## Free Help Services for Students

cont.

### Ask a Teacher

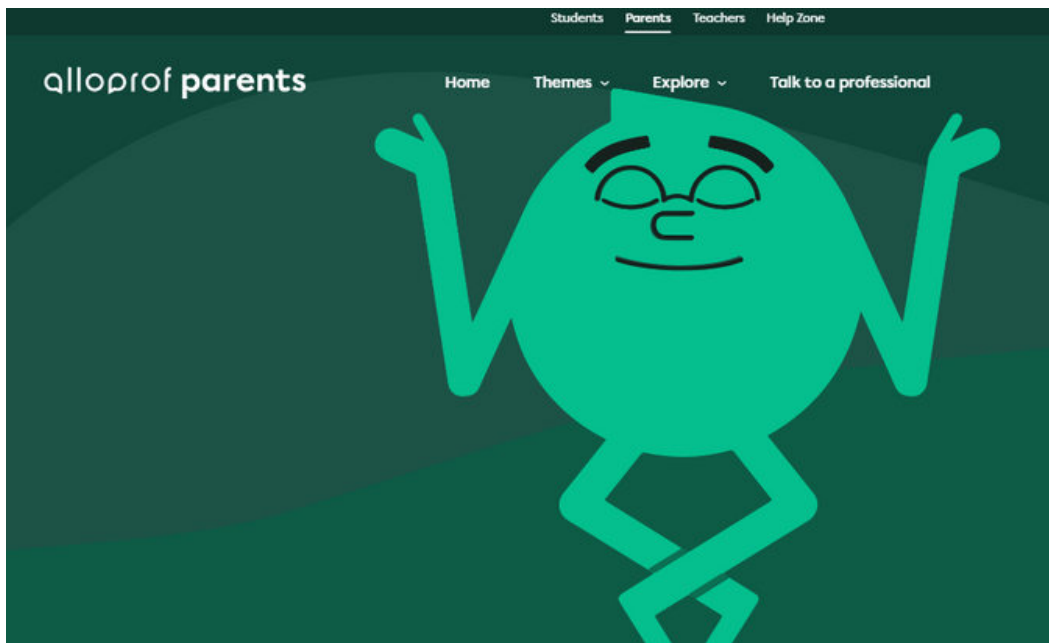
Sometimes, your child might want to get assistance from a real teacher. By using our [Ask a Teacher](#) service, your child can [chat](#), text, and even talk directly by phone to a teacher to get help with a tricky topic or pose a question they may have been afraid to ask in class. Alloprof's Ask a Teacher service is available Monday to Thursday from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., and again on Sundays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

### Create an Account

Both the **Help Zone** and **Ask a Teacher** are free services, but to access them, your child will need an [Alloprof account](#). Rest assured, questions and answers are always anonymous! Plus, having an [account has further benefits](#). Children can save resources (like concept sheets and videos) in their Favourites, enter our [contests](#), and save progress in Alloprof games.

For more information, contact [Lisa Lorenzetti](#).

[Alloprof](#): Waiting to help you!



# Parent Resources



THE QFHSA'S

2023  
Fall Conference

THE TIME IS NOW!

Workshops, Discussions, and More!

**Saturday, November 4th**

**A Half-Day Event**

Event Registration: 8 - 9 a.m.

Opening Presentation, Workshops, Lunch: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

*Plus join us for a short Regional Council get together after lunch!*

**Open to All Parents**

## WORKSHOPS AVAILABLE:

- **Learning with LEARN:** Find Out All About LEARN and Join a Discussion on the Impact of AI
- **Is My Child Okay?** Supporting Your Child's Mental Well Being
- **Winning Homework Strategies for Parents**

## LOCATION:

Merton Elementary School  
5554, ave. Robinson, Côte St-Luc, QC  
H4V 2P8

## COST:

\$25 (Lunch included)

## REGISTER TODAY!



<https://forms.gle/8YMbUMivPKtDY2XW8>



info@qfhsa.org



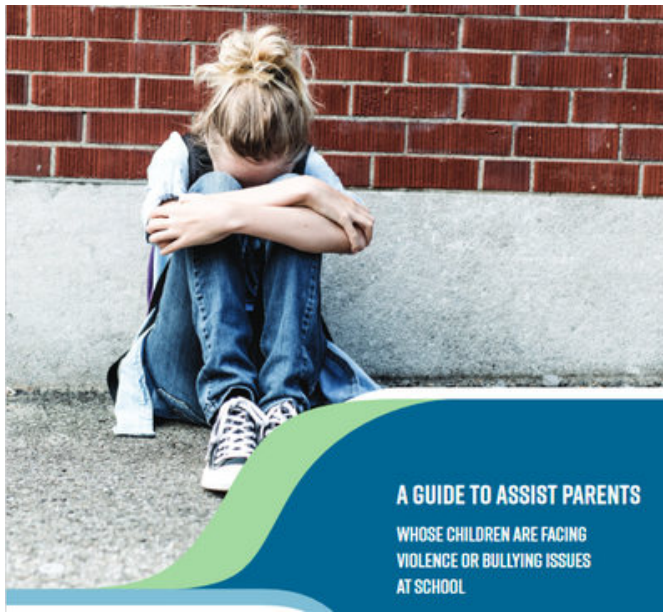
514-481-5619



The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations



# 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.