



# English Parents' Committee Association



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# President's message

## Busy times for EPCA - Survey, Briefs, & Workshops.

Dear parents,

February is the month we celebrate Hooked on Schools.

On February 13, as part of Hooked on School Days, we unveiled the results of our national survey, conducted in collaboration with Dr. MéliSSa Généreux and the FCPQ, aimed at painting a portrait of family well-being in the context of social crises. All parents were invited to this webinar and a follow-up will be scheduled to discuss possible solutions for promoting family well-being.

We are following the implementation of the school catch-up plan, which is currently underway. Considering the large sums of money devoted to remedial education, and specifically to students with special needs, all students should benefit from support measures if students need them.

I'd also like to mention that EPCA was present at the National Assembly to make recommendations on Bill 48, amending the highway safety code. Many of the measures introduced by this Bill concern school zones. EPCA also submitted a brief on Bill 47, an act to reinforce the protection of children. EPCA consulted with parents and provided strong commentary on the priority that must be given to protect the physical and psychological well-being of students. Links to both briefs can be found later in the newsletter.

Finally, EPCA will soon be launching this year's workshops for parents. The topics are directly related to the survey results, and this is our next step in helping parents. To further encourage the implementation of solutions and actions following this survey, we are inviting all interested parties to an online reflection and discussion activity on March 13. Meetings will be held at 2 p.m., targeted at organizations (access meeting registration [here](#)) and 7 p.m., targeted at parents (access meeting registration [here](#)).

Have a great month!



# Discussing Report Cards

When your children bring home 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. Grades improved, but not as much as you expected.

"I was anticipating better grades than this," you might 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.



Continued on next page

# Discussing Report Cards

cont.

3. Grades remained unchanged but conduct and effort improved.

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

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 could 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.

# How to Effectively Praise Children to Boost their Self-esteem

You know how important it is to praise children.

It is particularly important for children to understand the value of their own hard work. Self-esteem is built by putting effort into a goal and taking pride in the accomplishment. When children witness the results of their efforts, it fosters the development of self-appreciation. Your words and tone can guide children to acknowledge their accomplishments.

Here are a few suggestions.

SITUATION	WORDING TO USE	The relationship to self-praise
The thing you're looking at is fine, but you realize more work might have been put into it.	- "That's a good start." - "How do you like it?" - "Do you think it's your best effort?"	This approach helps children consider whether their work meets their expectations. It also asks them to reflect on how hard they worked and whether they are proud of their efforts.
They got a good grade in an exam.	- "I'd like to know how you did it!" - "What strategies did you use?" - "I can see why you are so excited. You worked very hard."	This method reminds children that consistently doing something well requires effort, even if they were confident they could do it. It asks children to consider what they did that resulted in success. It also allows them to recognize and be proud of their efforts and accomplishments.
You know they worked hard but still didn't reach their goal.	- "I'm sorry you didn't quite reach your goal. You came close! Do you believe you can do it the next time?" - "It's nice that you enjoyed the books you did read, even though reading can be hard for you."	This approach encourages children to consider what worked rather than what could be improved. It also helps children learn to be comfortable doing things they enjoy but aren't particularly good at.

Praise can help motivate children. Working hard to achieve a goal, on the other hand, builds self-esteem. It is critical to provide children with opportunities to discover and pursue new interests.

# Childrens' Wellbeing Survey Results

The English Parents' Committee Association of Quebec (EPCA) and the Fédération des comités de parents du Québec (FCPQ) joined forces to find out how families are doing. In collaboration with Dr. Mélissa Généreux, a public health physician and professor at the Université de Sherbrooke's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, and Dr. Clara Morin, a public health resident, EPCA and the FCPQ launched a large-scale Quebec survey aimed at providing a summary portrait of the well-being of children and their parents in the midst of social crises.

The full results of the survey can be found [here](#).

The objectives were to explore the experiences of Quebec families during the education strike in the fall of 2023. We examined parents' concerns about the well-being of their children when they returned to school in January 2024. The survey was to assess the current and trending level of well-being of children and their parents. As well, the survey compared experiences during the strike, concerns about returning to school, and levels of well-being of children and their parents according to specific vulnerability factors. The strong participation of parents testifies to their interest in sharing their experiences. Over 14,000 people responded from throughout Quebec.

A score ranging from 0 to 100 was calculated, where 100 equals excellent quality of life. The average score for participating children was 64. Children were considered to have a low quality of life when their score was 50. In secondary school, children were more likely to have a low quality of life than in primary school (20% vs. 14%).

The main challenges regarding children's quality of life were their relationships with their parents and their relationships with their friends. Children's energy levels and their attention levels were also important indicators of quality of life for our children. While boys show a lesser quality of life in elementary school, girl's quality of life diminishes substantially in high school.

Three in 10 students are classified as having special needs, with more boys than girls and more secondary students than elementary students having special needs.



# Childrens' Well-being Survey Results

cont.



Children classified as having special needs are 2–3 times more likely than others to have a low quality of life, both in primary school (25% vs. 9%) and secondary school (31% vs. 14%). Their parents are almost twice as likely to report fair to poor mental health (24% vs. 14%). These families were also harder hit by the strike.

One parent in 5 reports poor mental health. For many parents surveyed, financial issues also represent a challenge. One in 5 fears food insecurity, and one in 3 is concerned about their financial situation.

There has been a marked jump in screen time for children starting in the 5th grade and this has affected the child's quality of life. More than 4 hours of screen time during the week greatly affects a child's quality of life. Heavy screen users during the week are twice as likely to have a low quality of life. Levels of energy and fun with friends are the two spheres most affected. Screen time is, in fact, the number one concern of parents, followed by learning loss, motivation and psychological well-being.

The teachers' strikes we just went through can be associated with a deterioration of mental health quality amongst parents as well as a rise in screen time amongst children. Strikes seem to be associated with a deteriorating childrens' and parents' well-being, but the cause-and-effect relationship remains uncertain. Increased screen time appears to be most associated with the duration of the strike, being 3–4 times more frequent in children who experienced the FAE strike vs. those who did not.

## Possible solutions

- Maintaining an open dialogue with parents
- Allow for quality family time (without screens)
- Place greater emphasis on social connection
- List existing resources and enhance them
- Consult with partners to find out what's already being done
- Facilitate networking between parents of children with special needs
- Provide opportunities for children to get involved from primary school onwards
- Reinforce the mission of family and youth centers
- Working together on the causes, not just the problems
- Go beyond the catch-up plan to include a plan for the responsible use of screens

As a reminder, EPCA invites all interested parties to an online reflection and discussion activity on March 13 to further activity related to survey results. Meetings will be held at 2 p.m., targeted at organizations (access meeting registration [here](#)) and 7 p.m., targeted at parents (access meeting registration [here](#)).

# Parents Perspective: How to help your child stay mentally strong in winter

As parents, we want all the best for our children. Part of providing them with the best that we can is by supporting them through life's natural challenges like seasonal changes - more specifically the winter blues.

Just as can happen to us as parents, our children can suffer from winter blues. In this article, we have compiled a list of helpful tips that you can use to help keep your child mentally and emotionally strong this winter. These tips can be used by anyone, not just your child... which is great for involving the family in the journey to joy.



**Sleep:** Sleep is important for children's growth, learning, and mood. It is important that you make sure that your child is getting an adequate amount of sleep daily. As a child ages, the hours of sleep a child needs will change as well. Refer to the chart below for hours needed:





# Parents Perspective: How to help your child stay mentally strong in winter.

cont.

**Encourage outdoor activities:** We tend to want to hibernate like bears do, but the reality is that we need to be active during the winter so that we can maintain the positive mental vibes you would have in any other season. Some outdoor activities that can be fun and engaging while meeting your needs are building a snowman, sledding, or walking around the park. Maybe as a family, if there is snow you can shovel together! It doesn't have to be anything specific, but just getting outdoors, being in the light, and breathing in the fresh air can make a world of difference.



**Healthy Diet and Nutrition:** By maintaining a healthy and balanced diet, you are already giving your child a jump start in avoiding the winter blues. Try to avoid processed foods by introducing foods such as fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and whole grains. By avoiding sugary foods and processed snacks, you are helping your child to avoid negative moods and low energy levels.

**Stay connected and get help when needed:** This is particularly important because when you are connected, you will be able to see signs of your child going in a downward spiral and be able to help them before it goes too far. You can also stay connected with other friends and family by inviting them to virtual board games or even get together in person. Through these engaging activities you will be able to have a better idea of where your child is at mentally and emotionally. Remember, if at any point you find that your child's mood has worsened due to depression or feelings of loneliness, it is always best to seek help from your family doctor. In any situation, you can always call 811 and discuss it to see if your child needs professional help.

**Take care of you:** The most important thing for the health and wellbeing of your child, and at the core, is you. So, remember to take care of yourself during this time as well so that you can be there as best as possible for your child. If you or your family member is suffering from mental blues, do not be ashamed to seek help. The fact is that although only 35% of Canadians experience winter blues, 65% of people feel the change in the levels of moods and energy during the fall and winter. It's what you do for yourself and your child that makes the difference.

# alloprof



## How You Can Support Academic Perseverance

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



Difficulty getting ready for school, resistance to homework, or even a drop in grades— this time of year often signals a decline in the academic perseverance of many children. For parents, this can be quite alarming. We know that perseverance is an important skill for our children to develop in order to succeed in their education (and beyond!). As parents, we need to nurture their ability to stay focused and motivated, even when faced with setbacks. With this in mind, Alloprof Parents has some useful tips to help promote academic perseverance.

### Get Involved

One way to help your child stay the course is to show an interest in their school life. Here are some suggestions:

- **Attend school events.** If possible, make an effort to attend your child's school events, such as parent-teacher meetings and performances, or even chaperoning a class trip.
- **Ask questions.** Instead of simply asking your child how their day went, ask a specific question. For example, you could ask, "What was the most interesting thing you learned today?" or "What was your favourite part of the day?" You can also use this fun Alloprof poster to help you.
- **Help with homework.** Take the time to ask your child what they need to complete for homework. Offer advice on setting up an effective routine, and provide help when they really need it.
- **Celebrate progress and achievements.** Recognizing and appreciating a child's dedication and progress contributes to their sense of self-worth and belief in their abilities, both of which will help them when faced with more challenging situations. This could involve taking them out for a treat, baking a special dessert together, displaying their work, or simply writing them a note.

# alloprof



## How You Can Support Academic Perseverance cont.

### Establish a Positive Learning Space

Another way to foster academic perseverance in your child is to create a positive and supportive learning environment at home. This can be done by providing a quiet and well-organized work space, free from distractions. And remember: your child will focus more if they're comfortable, so a chair, table, and proper lighting are good ideas. Did you know that by asking a question on Alloprof's Help Zone, your child could win a \$350 gift card to spruce up their study space?

A positive learning environment also involves nurturing a growth mindset in your child. A growth mindset is the belief that you can develop skills and intelligence through hard work, practice, and commitment. Help them understand that setbacks and failures are a part of the learning process, and it's important to not get discouraged by them.



### Encourage Goal-Setting

It's important to remind your child that motivation can fluctuate. It's normal to have doubts and moments when you feel discouraged. You could even share stories about when this has happened to you. Then, help your child establish some realistic and attainable goals using the SMART strategy. Alloprof has an article for teens to help them do just that! The practise of SMART goal-setting will help them take ownership of their learning and will increase their motivation to persevere and reach new milestones.

### Free Help from Alloprof

Remind your child that Alloprof is also here to help. Our resources and help services are additional ways for kids to improve, find new ways to learn, and get some handy advice. Share Tommy's Story and learn how he used Alloprof to help him achieve his goals. Finally, Alloprof has extended its Ask a Teacher opening hours into March Break this year. Your child can receive guidance and assistance, free of charge, from a qualified teacher, allowing them to explore subjects more thoroughly, or seek clarification on challenging concepts.

# March Break Ideas

Spring is just around the corner, and with it comes the highly anticipated spring break for Quebec students. From March 4 to 8, 2024 is the March/Spring Break for almost all English School boards in Quebec. All elementary schools, secondary schools, and daycares are closed for spring break which brings about some challenges with keeping children busy and engaged for parents - especially working ones.

As parents worry about screen time and its increase during school breaks, it is important to provide a balance between social life and virtual life for our children. With a full week off, this can be the perfect time for families to relax, recharge, and enjoy some quality time together.

Spring break is a good opportunity for children to take part in adventurous outings with a little planning and creativity. While specific activities might vary depending on the school board and individual schools, there are plenty of exciting possibilities to explore throughout the province. Here are some ideas to inspire your spring break plans:

**Embrace the Winter Wonderland:** Spring break offers a unique opportunity to experience the end of the season. Hit the slopes for some skiing or snowboarding, go ice skating or sledding, or build a snowman and have a snowball fight.

**Explore the Great Outdoors:** Spring break is a perfect time to reconnect with nature. Hike or snowshoe through scenic trails or have a picnic in a local park.

**Immerse Yourself in Culture:** Visit museums, historical sites, or attend cultural events like traditional music performances or maple syrup festivals.

**Plan a Staycation:** Sometimes, the best adventures happen close to home. Explore your city or town with fresh eyes, visit local attractions you haven't been to before, or simply relax and enjoy some downtime at home. Organize game nights, movie marathons, or have a family cooking competition.



**Unwind and Recharge:** Spring break is also a time to prioritize relaxation and well-being. Catch up on sleep, indulge in hobbies, or simply enjoy some quiet time reading a book. Disconnect from technology and reconnect with yourself and your loved ones.

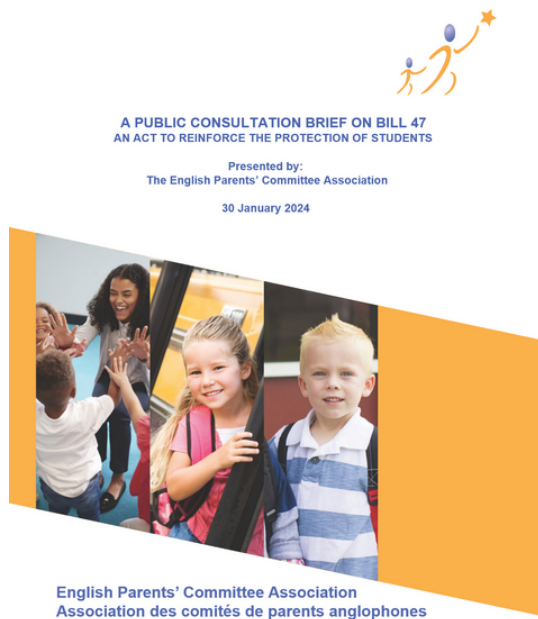
Here are some links to help you plan a family activity

- <https://www.mtl.org/en/experience/spring-break-montreal-family>.
- <https://milesopedia.com/en/guide/experiences/march-break-activities/>
- <https://www.homeexchange.com/blog/spring-break-canada/>

# Important Information

## EPCA Briefs

EPCA has developed two recent briefs on Bills – Bill 47 & Bill 48.  
Click on the images below to read the full briefs.



## EPCA Upcoming Workshop Dates

March 20 – Homework 101

March 25 – Transitions: Leaving High School

April 3 – Internet Safety

April 17 – Mental Wellness of the Family

May 6 – Financial Literacy

May 15 – Alcohol, Smoking, and Drug Awareness

May 27 – Transitions: Leaving Elementary School

# Important Information

## Key elements for evaluating, assessing, or submitting a school project -Accompanying tool-



*Click on photo for a tool for individuals or groups wishing to submit a project or organize preventive and awareness-raising activities in a school in Quebec.*

The educational mission of Quebec schools is to instruct in a knowledge-driven world, to socialize in a pluralistic world and to provide qualifications in a constantly changing world. In the pursuit of this mission, the collaboration of various players is important to the extent that such a collaboration remains both contributive and complementary to the actions planned by the school community. For this purpose, an assessment tool is proposed to facilitate the evaluation, modification or submission of a project, ensuring that it is in line with the school's objectives, while addressing a specific need.

This tool is designed to support individuals or groups wishing to submit a project or organize preventive and awareness-raising activities, particularly with regard to bullying and violence, in line with the educational network's orientations. More specifically, it is aimed at:

- School staff wishing to initiate a project in their school or centre;
- Organizations wishing to contribute to their community's educational mission;
- Students who would like to submit a project, supported by a member of the school staff;
- School administrators and members of the governing board who have to analyze various projects.

This document does not guarantee the acceptance of a project, but rather constitutes a preliminary checklist in line with the needs of the school environment and thereby having a greater chance of being coherent with the school's educational project and mission.

# 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.