



English Parents' Committee Association



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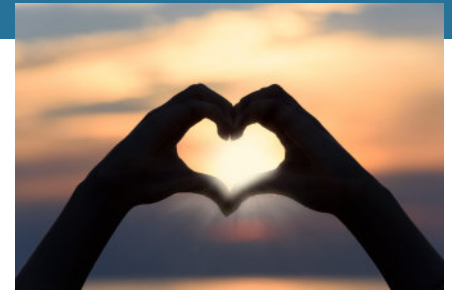
Islam and Islamophobia
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Katherine Korakakis is the President of the English Parents Committee Association (EPCA). In addition to this vital role in the Quebec educational sector, Katherine has spent most of her life working alongside start-ups in various 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 20 yrs, and is currently the vice-president of PME MTL Centre-Ouest and on the investment committees of PME MTL Centre and PME MTL Centre-Ouest. Katherine has also authored and co-authored guidebooks on entrepreneurship education and has served on the Boards of numerous corporations.

President's message

Acknowledging Challenging Times



Dear Parents,

This past month has been an especially difficult time with the invasion of Ukraine. We understand that children and youth may experience a range of emotions when they hear about and process information about these deeply upsetting events.

Adults have a key role to play in helping children to make sense of the world and feel safe. Having conversations can help. Please find [here](#), for use as you see fit, a resource from Media Smarts. It's designed to help support adults with strategies for having conversations with children and teens about troubling events they are hearing about online and through social and traditional media. If you're concerned about how your child is doing, speak to your school principal to see what supports are available in school. Additionally, there is help in the community – for easy reference, a list of online and in-person counseling resources can be found on the parent.quebec website.

While this is a challenging time for so many, I know that some in our community have ties to the impacted region and may be especially worried about their loved ones. My heart goes out to you during this difficult time. This continues to be an uncertain time for all, and we will continue to do what we can to support our entire community.

Our community has also suffered two tragic student losses that completely devastated us and forced us to question safety in our schools. This issue of the newsletter will look at the topic of safety in our schools from a variety of perspectives. This is an important discussion and EPCA has been participating in the “Forum montréalais pour la lutte contre la violence armée : s’unir pour la jeunesse”. We all have a role to play in keeping our children safe at school.

We dedicate this edition of our newsletter to Jannai Dopwell-Bailey and Lucas Gaudet... both boys were taken too soon in senseless acts of murder.



Marisa Consolata Kemper is an alumnus of l'Université de Montréal and a Director for WQSB and parent member of EPCA and has worked for over 25 years on human rights and diversity issues in the Middle East. Her children - educated abroad until three years ago - have attended Chelsea Elementary, Hadley/Philemon Wright and her son just started CÉGEP Héritage in the Outaouais. Marisa was compelled to engage in parental governance to address the myriad of language and education issues in this border region of Québec and hopes to support EPCA in advancing and understanding English parents' challenges and perspectives.

*Marisa Consolata Kemper
EPCA Director, WQSB*

EPCA BOD Editorial: Addressing Challenges in the School Classroom

My family is a bit of a mixed bag - Maltese mother, Dutch father, both post-war immigrants who came to Canada to start a new life. As an adult, my family formed in Palestine, where I met my husband Qassem and we had our two lovely children Nadim (17) and Nadya (12).

Returning to Canada after so many years abroad AND wanting to settle and secure my children in Quebec brought me to a realization that integration to the school system was not as supported as I had believed, particularly in regards to the French language instruction and classe d'accueil. I firmly believe we can all do better and that the challenges and realities of children from all regions of Quebec need to be specifically considered in the interest of a coherent, equitable education system.

My daughter's school in Palestine adopted an excellent system to have children share 'problems' in a comfortable, collective setting with their classmates. The process is detailed in a book called 'Belonging: Creating Community in the Classroom' by Mona Halaby and focuses on having peers support the resolution of interpersonal challenges and problems in a supportive and semi-structured environment. It was a game-changer for bullying and violence in the school and deeply built bonds amongst the children and teens, wherein they were better enabled to understand the challenges of others, empathise, and strategize around resolving conflict before it became aggravated.

We always hope that our children have a safe, nurturing environment – free of conflicts – to allow them to learn and grow and develop into well-rounded humans. The reality, however, is much different. Many current events – both overseas and closer to home in our own province – have really brought home to me how much we need to prepare our children how to effectively deal with conflict. Having seen what happened at my daughter's school, I know that it can be done!

support ~ community ~ equitability

Youth Violence: It's Everyone's Responsibility

Over the course of a K-11 education, our kids will go to school over 2,000 times. Each time we send our loved ones out the door, we have the expectation that they will come back through that door at the end of each day. Undoubtedly there will be ups and downs, challenges to overcome and opportunities to take, difficulties to endure, and successes to savor. There will be these ups and downs... but there will always be the potential that tomorrow will come and new opportunities will be presented. However, in the last five months, we as society have come face to face with a worst nightmare - and two families have had to live through it directly. Two terrible, tragic, violent incidents which each resulted in the loss of life of a child while away from home on a school day. Lucas Gaudet and Jannai Dopwell-Bailey would never get to go home after their school day ended.



As parents our natural reaction is to ask how this can happen. Where is the gap, the flaw that we can fix? This is so exceptionally out of the ordinary that we try to find something to ground us. We expect that there must be something the schools can do; there must be something the school boards can do. We believe that there has to be something that can be done to prevent these horrible events, which are so terribly wrong, from happening to another child.

There is something that can be done. And the responsibility begins in the home.

The role of parents is more important than you think

How many parents are currently burnt out after raising kids during two years of a pandemic? How many parents are disconnected these days and have resorted to letting kids go unsupervised, be it with peers or online? Our children are engaging with others constantly and they are learning behaviors, learning value systems, and learning how to act. They are picking up cues as to what is acceptable and what isn't from everything that they are exposed to. And if there is no parent there to be the arbiter of behavior, if there is no one to help them through their decisions, kids are naturally going to look elsewhere for direction and reinforcement.

Youth Violence

cont.

As we all emerge from two years of very irregular times, our kids are taking whatever freedom they can and following the example of those who are there for them and with them. It is so fundamentally important for parents to instill proper behaviors in their child, to give that child an unwavering sense of what is right and what is wrong, and to let that child know that they are not alone in that sense of right and wrong. If a child sees something or hears something that they know is wrong, parents need to ensure that they understand they have to go to an authority at school or at home to report it. This step is so very important so that they can get help from an adult to step in to stop a situation from happening and escalating to tragic proportions.

As we look at the behavior of our children, let's also look at our own behavior. When we are with our children, are we presenting them with behaviors we would want them to model? After all, they are looking to us for guidance even though they may seem to be unaware or not paying attention. As a society we have fallen into a culture on incivility, where the behaviors we are modelling to our kids are not behaviors we would want to see back from them if we really stopped to think about it. Often, we are setting bad examples for our children – maybe without truly understanding what we are doing. This incivility is then brought into the schools, and onto the school grounds, where the behaviors are reinforced.

What is the best way forward?

We believe that there is something that can be done to help prevent these situations – such as those we have recently experienced – from happening in the future. It does not involve metal detectors at schools, or locker searches. It involves parental responsibility. It involves being an engaged parent, teaching our youth how to act with each other. It involves setting the right example for our children. It involves teaching our children right from wrong and how to be brave enough to act on that. And it involves treating each other in a way that we would be proud for our children to emulate.

The tragedies that have happened recently do not have to become a pattern of behavior... but they likely will continue to happen if limits and boundaries are not set in the home. Schools are a meeting place for education, where positive behaviors can be reinforced and negative behaviors can be corrected. But schools are not responsible for instilling a value system into a child.

As a community, we are outraged by these tragic events. But have we each done enough to create a culture where this behavior cannot happen? Both of these tragic events occurred off of school grounds, where the students had only their judgment and their sense of right and wrong to guide them. All involved in these senseless acts of violence made decisions that led to terrible consequences. There needed to be a lot more done that wasn't done. We can do better.

A Safe and Supportive School

Parents frequently believe that they have no say in what happens within the walls of their children's schools. However, this does not have to be the case. You can and should be a powerful force for change, especially when it comes to ensuring that your child and other students feel safe, supported, and respected.

Asking the principal or other school leaders specific questions about how the school handles issues like social and emotional learning, ensuring students treat each other with respect, and bullying, harassment, or exclusion is a good place to start.



When you have concerns about your child's safety and well-being, you may first consider asking questions regarding your own child, such as what the school is doing to penalize the student who is harassing your child. However, physical and emotional safety are school-wide concerns. The way your child is treated is part of a larger set of relationships and interactions at that school; this is commonly referred to as school climate in the educational realm. Every day, school leaders must commit to making the school climate positive, supportive, and caring so that all students feel safe and are treated respectfully by their peers and teachers. As a result, it's often best to ask these questions at the start of the year. Even though everyone is busy, it helps to bring up school climate issues before they become a problem.

When you ask specific, concrete questions, you are expressing your expectations for the school. It sends a message to the school that you hold them accountable: that they must recognize and address the issues, including making any necessary changes. Being proactive in improving the school climate sends powerful messages to your child. It demonstrates that you care about how she feels at school and are taking steps to make it a better, more supportive environment. It also demonstrates...

A Safe and Supportive School

cont.

...to her that when she encounters a problem, she can take action to resolve it — and it demonstrates to your child the importance of caring about everyone in the school community, not just themselves.

First, speak with the principal, as he or she is ultimately responsible for what occurs at school. If the principal does not respond to your request for a meeting after repeated attempts, contact the vice principal, a teacher, or another member of staff. Even if the principal is very receptive, you may require assistance. Although your voice is powerful on its own, it is amplified when combined with the voices of other parents. Encourage a few more parents to join you in approaching the principal. Alternatively, you might ask the school's parent group (PPO, GB) to pose the queries you want answered. It's critical to show you're serious while remaining polite and calm, no matter who asks. Make it clear that your goal is to collaborate to improve the school. Pointing fingers rarely accomplishes this goal; however, being firm but respectful often does. Plan out when and how often you'll meet with the principal to that end. Also, try to work around the principal's busy schedule so you can get the necessary follow-up without being labelled as overly demanding, unreasonable, or a helicopter parent.

Here are four key questions to get the discussion started with your principal:

- How do teachers and other staff know what to do when they witness violent, nasty, or other harmful behaviour? From whom and how do they receive training?
- Who is in charge of keeping an eye on what happens in the restrooms, hallways, and other locations outside of classrooms?
- Is there a curriculum at the school that teaches social and emotional skills like conflict resolution, emotional awareness, empathy for others, and ethical issue resolution? If so, what program is it, and are there any studies proving that it works?
- For high schools, does the school conduct regular surveys to determine whether students feel safe, respected, and cared for? How are the responses used to help the school? And how are these responses communicated to students and parents?

You may work with your child's school to ensure that all children feel secure, supported, and respected with greater information and communication.

Government Resources



Bullying Resources:

- [Info-Social 811](#)
- Your [CLSC](#)
- [LigneParents](#) or 1-800-361-5085 (in French only)
- [Ligne Aide Abus Aînés](#) or 1-888-489-2287
- [Tel-jeunes](#) or 1-800-263-2266 - Helpline for young people 5-20
- [Kids Help Phone](#) or 1-800-668-6868
- [Sport'Aide](#) or 1-833-211-2433
- [Interligne](#) or 1-888-505-1010
- [Cybertip.ca](#) - Canada's tipline to report the online sexual exploitation of children.
- [NeedHelpNow.ca](#) - Canadian Centre for Child Protection



Cyber-Bullying Resources:

- [CyberTip.ca](#)
- [NeedHelpNow.ca](#)
- [Cyberbullying](#) (SPVM)
- [Tel-Jeunes](#)
- [Kids Help Phone](#)
- [The Sûreté du Québec- Cybercriminalité](#) (French only)

Conflict Resolution: Casual Conversations for Parents & Kids

Conflict Resolution in the Moment - Toolbox for Kids

Conflicts are uncomfortable. Kids – not unlike adults – tend to shy away from dealing with drivers of conflict for this reason, or alternatively be driven to verbal or physical aggression to express their disagreement rather than deal more effectively with the actual reasons for the conflict. Too often, we put conflict in a context of good/bad, black/white, right/wrong. In fact, conflict is ALWAYS situated in the grey zone.

Conflicts are most often a result of varying opinions, interests, and thought processes. They can be healthy if one is prepared for the feelings of anger, frustration, and anxiety that they evoke. With the right conflict resolution skills, they can strengthen relations and help us to develop empathy and an acceptance that all opinions do not coincide with our own... and that that is OK!

The dinner table and the car are two wonderful venues for gently evoking thinking about conflict resolution with children and teens. Don't necessarily think of it as 'a conversation' – it probably won't be. A calm, gentle approach to the topic is important to not get nerves rattled or raise suspicions, followed by casual sharing of information. Even if your child seems not to be listening, is not acknowledging or engaging in discussion, the message is most certainly being received at least passively. This – in concert with them witnessing YOU practicing conflict resolution and careful, non-preachy reminders and associations with real-life situations – will go a long way.

These discussions – as well as the practice of conflict resolution – can be highly stressful. Below are a few tools to share for when that adrenaline rises, your stomach constricts, and you feel conflict or aggression coming on.



Conflict Resolution

cont.

Tools for Resolving Conflict: Do

STOP

Give yourself a minute to let it subside. Don't let things get out of control. Step back, calm down, breathe deeply. Close your eyes – this helps! And remember, if you let the anger continue to be the driving force, the conflict becomes much more difficult to resolve.

SAY

Verbalize what the conflict is about. This helps both parties identify exactly what is causing the disagreement and clarify what each of you wants or doesn't want.

CHOOSE

Try to find positive options. What are the needs of the other person? What is a fair solution that meets both of your needs? What is really important to you and what can you let go?

THINK

Select a positive option that each of you can agree on. It is not about one party winning, but about finding a common ground to end the conflict.

RESPECT

Value the opinions of others, even if you can't totally agree. A formative lesson in life is understanding that you can't 'win' all the time – the math simply doesn't work out that way.

Instant Triggers for Conflict: Do Not Do

Name calling is a personal attack. It takes the focus away from resolution of the real problem and redirects it to guaranteed or increased conflict, as the other person now feels they need to defend themselves.

Let the parties each have their say. **Interrupting prevents that communication**, frustrates the person who has not been permitted to speak, and FOR SURE results in them not listening to you.

There is always a different point of view from your own. **Listening carefully to another person's viewpoints will build your understanding** of the reasons for the conflict and support your ability to think through a solution. It is best to learn this one early in life to avoid certain disappointment.

No one responds well to insults (just think of how you react!). This is a certain path to escalation and should be avoided.

Call Names

Interrupt

Refuse to Listen

Insult

Conflict Resolution

cont.

As my Maltese Nanna frequently reminded me:

*A drop of honey gathers more flies than
a bucket of vinegar*

- Marisa C, EPCA Director



In short, it is important to learn to manage and value conflict. It truly can be a valuable experience that **BUILDS CHARACTER** if addressed and overcome through positive conflict management skills and strategies.

In helping to build a capacity in our children to manage conflicts effectively, we will not only have strengthened the parent/child relationship, but will also have given our kids skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. This process will allow our kids to:

- Learn about themselves, their beliefs, and values;
- Build self-confidence and an ability to understand how to express and assert themselves;
- Develop solid communication and negotiation skills;
- Learn to accept criticism gracefully and be open to new ideas;
- Understand when to stand up for their beliefs and when to re-evaluate them;
- Choose battles wisely;
- Respect the views of others, whether or not they agree; and
- Strengthen relationships with others by finding common ground.

Parent Resources

The Parents' Role in Education Symposium 28 May 2022

EPAC, in collaboration with The Federation of Parents' Committees of Quebec (FCPQ), will be hosting a Symposium 28 May 2022 on "The Parents' Role in Education."

The symposium will be offered in hybrid mode at the Hôtel Le Victorin in Victoriaville. The Symposium will kick-off with Patricia Paquin and Louis-François Marcotte, Quebec personalities adored by the public who will share their experience of involvement in the education of their children. After the opening conference, a youth panel will discuss their expectations of their parents in terms of their success and personal development. During the day, participants will be able to take part in reflection workshops focusing on the role of parents in education. Workshops offered in English will include:

- *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in our Schools*
- *Exerting influence: how parents can play an active role in school governance*

Many partners will also be on hand at the Exhibitors' Fair to present their services and products. The complete program is now available on the [FCPQ website](#). To register for the Symposium, click [here](#). Note that all the English content will be virtual. This is an event not to be missed!



[Parents.Quebec](#) is a unique portal that offers parents one-stop access to services and organizations providing support for their children - from bullying and homework help to nutrition and psycho-social support.

As you receive your child's report card this year, the usual scramble for support services is compounded by the pandemic and uncertainty in our school network. We are hoping that this initiative will make that process a little bit easier.



Newsletter Annexes

Islam and Islamophobia

Judaism and Antisemitism

ARSC FAMILY TOOLKIT

ANTI-RACISM SUBCOMMITTEE OF EMSB PARENTS COMMITTEE



THEME: ISLAM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA



ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

- **One Green Apple** by Eve Bunting
 - Borrow from local library
 - Watch read aloud [video](#)
 - Discussion: How would you feel if you were in Farah's place?
- **The Proudest Blue** by Ibtihaj Muhammad
 - Borrow from local library
 - Watch read aloud [video](#)
 - Discussion (K-1): What colour would your first hijab be?
 - Discussion (gr. 2-6): How are you the same as or different from other people? How can you learn more about other people?
- **Bilal Cooks Daal** by Aisha Saeed
 - Borrow from local library
 - Watch read aloud [video](#)
 - Discussion (K-1): Have you ever eaten daal? Would you like to try?
 - Discussion (gr. 2-6): Can you make daal using the recipe in the book? What sports are played in Pakistan?

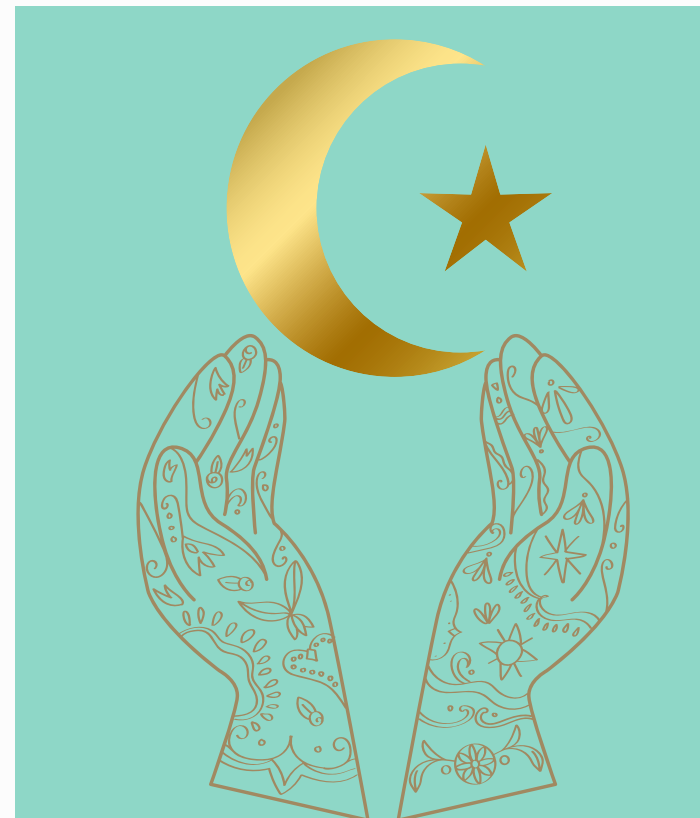


HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- **Trying to be a “Perfect Muslim” in an Islamophobic World** by Sidrah Maysoon Ahmad
 - Read the [editorial](#)
- **Discussion:** Have you noticed any microaggressions towards your Muslim classmates?

- **14 & Muslim** directed by Wendy Rowland
 - [Read about](#) the documentary and [watch the trailer](#)
 - Watch for free on CBC Gem
- **Discuss** your thoughts and feelings about what you’ve watched

- **What is Islam?** by Cogito YouTube channel
 - Watch the [video](#)
- **Discussion:** Did you learn something new about Islam or Muslim traditions?





ARSC PARENT TOOLKIT

ANTI-RACISM SUBCOMMITTEE OF EMSB PC

- **How Bad is Islamophobia in Canada?**
Report from Global News
 - Watch the [video](#)
- **Being Muslim in Canada**
by CBC's The National
 - Watch the [video](#)
 - Read the accompanying article **How Islamophobia is driving young Canadian Muslims to reclaim their identity**

To learn more, visit PBS Frontline website for information on **Beliefs and Daily Lives of Muslims**, as well as a [glossary](#) of terms.

Listen to one of our parent's express how recent events in Quebec, including the 2017 Quebec City mosque shooting and Bill 21, affect her experience of Anti-Muslim discrimination.

Being Muslim in Quebec by City News
Watch the [video](#)



ARSC Family Toolkit

THEME: Judaism and Antisemitism

Anti-Racism Subcommittee of EMSB Parents Committee



Elementary Students

- Mrs. Katz and Tush by Patricia Polacco
 - Borrow from local library
 - Watch read aloud [video](#)
 - Discussion: How did you feel while reading this book?
- The Christmas Menorahs: How a Town Fought Hate by Janice Cohn
 - Borrow from local library
 - Watch read aloud [video](#)
 - Discussion: How would you deal with a bully?
- Gittel's Journey: An Ellis Island Story by
 - Borrow from local library
 - Watch a [video](#) about the Real-Life Inspiration of Gittel's Journey



High School Students

- Stand with Us Booklet
 - Visit the [website](#)
 - Choose one or more to read and discuss with your teens
- A Bag of Marbles Movie (2017)
 - [Watch the trailer](#)
 - Watch for free on [Kanopy](#) with your city library card number
 - How did Jo and Maurice show courage? What were some of the fears or risks that they faced? Why did they act anyway?
- Antisemitism / Anne Frank House / Explained
 - Watch the [video](#)
- Discussion: Did you learn something new about Judaism and Antisemitism?



ARSC Parent Toolkit

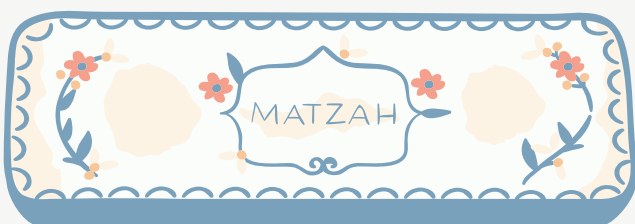
Anti-Racism Subcommittee of EMSB PC

What is antisemitism?

Antisemitism, the judgment and unfair treatment of Jews, comes from a hatred of Jewish people, what they believe, their traditions, culture, and heritage. Antisemitism is an unkind, upsetting, and scary thing for someone to experience and it can happen in many ways, including with hateful or untrue words and comments, bullying, physical aggression, and vandalism.

Antisemitism is a form of racism, as is explained:

- <https://bit.ly/3MFJDFI>
- Antisemitism Education Resources, Center for Jewish Studies, University of California, Berkeley
 - Visit the [website](#)
 - Read at least one article
 - Reflect on what you have read
- Educational Modules Based on Audio Podcasts- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
 - Visit the [website](#)
 - Read at least one article
 - Reflect on what you have read
- Museum of Jewish Montreal
 - Visit the [website](#)
 - Read at least one article
 - Reflect on what you have read



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.