

VOLUME 59 ISSUE 1

SPRING 2021

# QFHSA NEWS

THE NEWSMAGAZINE FOR HOME AND SCHOOL MEMBERS

## English School Boards

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*The Quebec  
Federation of  
Home and School  
Associations*



QFHSA NEWS

*The Voice of the Parent in Education*

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## MISSION STATEMENT

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations Inc. is an independent, incorporated, not for profit volunteer organization dedicated to enhancing the education and general well-being of children and youth.

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations Inc. promotes the involvement of parents, students, educators and the community at large in the advancement of learning and acts as a voice for parents.

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# QFHSA Asks: *How Can We Support our Teachers?*

IN AN EFFORT TO BETTER UNDERSTAND the position of our teachers in 2021, considering the ongoing contract negotiations and the unprecedented working conditions teachers find themselves in under the current COVID-19 challenges, the QFHSA's Board of Directors and Education Committee invited Heidi Yetman, president of the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT), to a special meeting on March 1st, 2021.

QPAT represents 8,000 teachers in the public sector English school boards. QPAT has a small administrative staff of 13 individuals and a board of directors. The organization deals with labour relations and arbitration issues and is associated with the FSE/CSO (Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement). QPAT has several committees, including Pedagogy and Curriculum, Anti-Racism, New Teacher Committee, Human Rights and Social Justice, Vocational Education, and Adult Education.

The QFHSA wanted to know what Home and School may do to support teachers this year. Yetman explained that in a survey done by QPAT, 75% of teachers indicated they did not feel supported by the Quebec Minister of Education.

To start the conversation, Yetman was asked, "How can the QFHSA help the teachers?" Her answer: "You can inform and educate your parents on current issues." Quebec's English and French public sector teachers had been in contract negotiations for over a year when the pandemic hit. (Their contract ended in March 2019.) On March 13th, 2020, the government put a hold on all negotiations (nurses were also negotiating a new contract). Then on March 15th, the government announced the need to get the negotiations completed within 2 weeks. This was followed with some movement until May, and then everything stopped because of the pandemic. By early 2021, a 5-day strike mandate was obtained by all QPAT local unions and some in the French sector. Negotiations have resumed with Quebec's Treasury Board.

According to Yetman, the four main areas of concern for teachers are as follows: **salary; smaller and more manageable class sizes; more investment in and greater support for students with special needs; and workload.**

**Salary:** It is well known that Quebec teachers are the lowest paid in Canada and have the longest path to reach the highest pay level (15 years) compared to other provinces. Quebec teachers have been asking for pay equity with the rest of Canada for a very long time. Indeed, the QFHSA adopted a resolution on this issue almost 20 years ago!

**Smaller, More Manageable Class Sizes:** There is no such

thing any more as a "regular" classroom. Every year, there are more at-risk students in every class. There should be a decrease in physical class size as the number of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) increases.

**More Investment In and Greater Support for Students with Special Needs:** Teachers have observed an increase in students with challenges, especially as a result of the pandemic. Teachers want school boards to use Ministry-designated funds to increase budgets for special needs support. Moreover, the funds designated for special needs support must be used in their entirety for that support. The children have the right to receive support, but the reality is that there can be a 2-year wait between the recognition of a problem to when services can be provided. Teachers are asking for more resources, like speech therapists, to name just one.

**Workload:** A teacher's workload is divided into time in the classroom, personal preparation time (calling parents, correcting), and such assignments as supervision and similar duties. The hours and duties differ for elementary and high-school teachers. While the government seeks to decrease the personal preparation time teachers are allotted, teachers would like it increased.

**Another Concern: *The Teacher Shortage.*** Currently, 25-40% of new teachers leave the profession within 5 years. They cite lack of support, low pay, an overload of duties, and the working conditions. If these new teachers were provided with more support—mentors, fewer hours assigned, less supervision assignments—just as they are starting out and finding their feet, they may be more inclined to stay in the profession.

## What Can Local Home & Schools Do?

**Talk to your teacher union delegate.** Invite him/her to a H&S meeting and have a public discussion about the current situation and the needs of teachers. Your teacher rep will be more than happy to tell you about it.

**Promote the demands** that can be found on the QPAT website: <https://qpat-apeq.qc.ca/>. Add them to your next H&S newsletter.

**Joining the picket line in solidarity** with your teachers if they are picketing on one of the rotating strike days.

*Note: The QFHSA Education Committee is drafting a resolution on the issue of teacher shortages to be voted on at the QFHSA Annual General Meeting on June 3rd.*

Carol Meindl, *Executive Director*

# Message from the President

## *A Time for Gratitude*

WE HAVE COME FULL CIRCLE and have lived with this pandemic now for a full year. What seemed daunting in March 2020 has proven not to be impossible by March 2021.

The best-laid plans of our Home and Schools in March 2020 were side-railed, and leadership had to look to new ways to keep school as normal as possible, maintain traditional activities, and creatively invent new ones. With parents not allowed within the school buildings, Home and Schools depended more and more on the good will and generosity of school staff. At many schools, the staff took up this challenge and helped the Home and Schools in a number of different ways. From lunch monitors distributing pizza to the students, to teachers helping with the distribution of fundraiser orders and communicating with parents on the Home & School's behalf, many lived up to the "We are all in this together" outlook this pandemic really required.

Now is the time to acknowledge the phenomenal efforts of your school staff, not just in keeping the education of our kids on track, but also in the many and varied ways they helped keep the school community together.

I would like to suggest to our Home and Schools to recognize the unsung heroes, as a group or as individuals, who have kept the school spirit going. Recognize the contributions of your teachers, support staff, administration and others, including your bus drivers and lunch monitors. Acknowledge the efforts of your own leadership who have kept a presence in the school even when the regular activities could not be realized.

Show your thanks and gratitude for all those who have helped your association carry on during these difficult times, keeping the torch burning. This year, we are offering a discount on the **Golden Torch** and **Unsung Hero** pins and certificates so that you can acknowledge the contributions of as many as possible.

Linton Garner, *President*



## Recognize Your Incredible Team!

EACH YEAR, the QFHSA helps local Home & Schools recognize the heroes in their midst—those Home & School volunteers and other volunteers who have made a difference in school life. During this pandemic year, many H&Ss have needed the support of the school administration, teachers, and support staff to accomplish their work in addition to their stellar volunteers. Who would you like to recognize in this exceptional year? We are pleased to offer H&Ss a couple of options:

**1. For individuals: certificates and lapel pins (Cost: \$10)** As in previous years, you can present **individuals** with the **Unsung Hero** and **Golden Torch** awards described below.

**2. For groups: certificates only (Cost: \$5)** You can also **recognize a group** of **Unsung Heroes** from your school that went above and beyond to help your H&S accomplish its activities this year. Perhaps your lunch monitors stepped in to help or a team of teachers?

### *About the Awards*

The **Unsung Hero** award recognizes volunteers, teachers, staff members, and administrators who are actively involved in everyday school life, who have proven to be helpful, reliable and courteous, who honour their commitments throughout the school year and who have been willing to take

on additional responsibilities when the need arose, sometimes even behind the scenes. The dedication of these individuals merits recognition locally and provincially.

The **Golden Torch** award recognizes H&S Association or committee members who have demonstrated active leadership, organizational skills, encouragement of the participation of all volunteers, and whose dedication merits recognition locally and provincially.

The QFHSA Awards Form is available here: <http://bit.ly/3tTGA2I> or you can find it on our website's Home page: [www.qfhsa.org](http://www.qfhsa.org).

*Deadline for submissions: April 30*

## School Board Elections: *Still on the horizon*

FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL, AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS all make the news. A significant percentage of our population regularly goes out to vote in these elections with confidence that their voice matters and that to cast a ballot still makes a difference.

School board elections are usually a tougher sell. This is especially true for citizens whose children are no longer in the system—most do not bother to exercise their right, although there are some exceptions. Our seniors, for example, still hold strongly to the belief that voting is a right and must be exercised. Even though their own children have long since graduated, they still feel the pull to cast a vote if and whenever they can. Some are immigrants that have come to Canada and Quebec from countries where universal suffrage and confidence in the voting process were not a given. They are the generation with the strong work ethic, the strong sense of civic responsibility and charitable support.

Although English school board elections have traditionally shown a higher voter turnout rate than their French school board counterparts, both turnouts have been anemic for decades. This is partly due to the fact that school board elections are expensive, and have to be paid for out of the school board's general budget. Unlike municipal and provincial elections, school board elections are not paid by Elections Quebec. This limits the amounts of money that can be spent on campaigning. Some school boards

are happy enough to have only one candidate run in a ward. This means that the election can be completed by acclamation, without anyone having to set up polling stations and hire polling staff. Where budgets are tight, it is far more preferable to put every available dollar into classroom and student support services.

And yet, school board elections are important, as we have seen this past year with the on again, off again English school board elections. As late as November 27th, it looked like the government was going to force



Photo by Wokandapix from Pixabay

an election and rub its hands with glee at the dismal turnout. We have seen the real advantage of having our English school boards in this time of COVID: our boards had the power to make important decisions and act on them without delay.

In this issue of the *QFHSA News*, you can read more about our beleaguered English school boards. You will find an article on Bill 40 and another on the work the QFHSA has done through the years to advocate for our English boards.

The QFHSA will join its voice together with the English Parents' Committee



Association (EPCA) and the Alliance for the Promotion of Public English-Language Education in Quebec (APPELE) to call on the government to hold English school board elections in June of this year and **to allow mail-in ballots for all those who request them.**

After Bill 185: *an act to defer the next general school election and to allow the Government to provide for the use of a remote voting method* was adopted in 2018, the Chief Electoral Officer proposed to conduct a study on the partial or complete introduction of internet voting in provincial, municipal, and school elections within the space of two years. Although the study deemed it possible to introduce internet voting, it acknowledged that a significant percentage of the population would be challenged either by internet inaccessibility, limitations of individual personal devices, or a lack of familiarization with the system. In general, computer and technical literacy decreases with age, and not everyone has the technical know-how to vote electronically with confidence. The study concluded that if it were implemented, it should be done so as an additional option only, not the main vehicle.

*Continued on Page 6*

## Coming Up – Dates to Remember

Friday, April 30	Deadline for Submissions: QFHSA Unsung Hero and Golden Torch Awards
Wednesday, May 12	Parenting Workshop: Preteen Developmental Stages & Evolving Needs
Wednesday, May 26	Parenting Workshop: Mutually Changing Roles & Responsibilities
Thursday, June 3	QFHSA's 77th Annual General Meeting—Guest Speaker Heidi Yetman
Monday, June 14	Deadline for submissions for the <i>QFHSA News</i> —Summer Edition

### Executive Director's Message

*Continued from Page 5*

However, the general election in the United States last year showed us all how useful and reliable mail-in ballots could be as a vehicle that is low tech enough to be accessible to everyone and secure enough to have the confidence of most people. Therefore, **the QFHSA supports using the upcoming remaining school board elections as a test case for the incorporation of mail-in ballots.** As the number of wards and chairs being voted for is minimal, this might be the perfect time to test a mail-in voting system as a viable option along with in-person ballot casting for school board elections.

Every year we repeat the message of how important school board elections are, but this year they will be more important than ever! We will still urge everyone to:

1. **Go to your school board website.**
2. **Find out if you are in a ward/district that will have an election.**
3. **Inquire if you are on the list of electors, and if not, make a request to have your name added and then ...**
4. **Show up at the polls and cast your vote.**

***The Minister of Education will be watching.***

Carol Meindl

***Join us!***



**Quebec Federation of Home  
and School Association's**

## **77th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Featuring Guest Speaker  
**Heidi Yetman,**  
President of the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers

**Thursday, June 3rd, 2021  
7 p.m. on Zoom**

Each local Home and School Association is invited to send one delegate to the meeting. Registration forms are now available. For more information, please contact the office at [info@qfhsa.org](mailto:info@qfhsa.org) or the president of your local H&S Association.

*We welcome your letters!*

Please share your thoughts with us on this newsletter and its contents. We welcome your comments/suggestions!

Email [news@qfhsa.org](mailto:news@qfhsa.org)



## Know Someone Who Would Make a Great QFHSA Board Member?

Help us make an impact in the lives of Quebec children and youth! The QFHSA is actively seeking interested persons to serve on the QFHSA Board of Directors.

Directors are involved in all aspects of the organization, from keeping up to date on issues concerning education and rights, to exploring new projects, to promoting literacy, to offering best practice advice to other local associations. Directors sit at community tables and bring the perspective of the parent to the attention of education stakeholders and decision makers. Directors also help draft resolutions and briefs to the federal and/or provincial governments. Directors assist in the development of new projects for Home and School students and parents. There is plenty to do and the job can be a wonderful and rewarding learning experience.

The QFHSA Board of Directors meets on average eight times a year to discuss Home and School policy and plan such events as the Annual General Meeting, the Annual Fall Conference, as well as the Awards Banquet and Executive Appreciation Events.

If you or someone you know is interested in joining our team, a great first step would be to join us at one of our board meetings as an observer to see what it is all about. If you would like to have more information, please call the QFHSA Office at 514-481-5619 or email [info@qfhsa.org](mailto:info@qfhsa.org).

## Need Help Planning Your Virtual Home and School Elections this Spring?



Photo by Anna Shvets from Pexels

### The QFHSA team is happy to help!

The QFHSA is ready to assist local Home and Schools who are planning to hold elections via Zoom for next year's executive.

Wondering how to go about moving your voting online? We can show you what you need to do and assist on the big day as well.

Please email [info@qfhsa.org](mailto:info@qfhsa.org) for more information.



Outdoor Fun at Grenville Elementary

# Getting to Know You

This is the first in a new series of articles that provide an in-depth look at individual Home and School Associations. Of course, every Home and School is unique, reflecting its own specific set of circumstances. Some have the mandate to provide extensive in-school programming, others focus on boosting school spirit and raising needed funds. All make an important impact in their school communities. We begin with Merton's story.

## No One Is Left Behind *Life at Merton Elementary's Home and School*

"NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND." These are the words Samantha Patel used to describe the inclusive and welcoming nature of Merton's Home and School



Dalia and Samantha

community, a community she knows extremely well. A mom of four and Merton's H&S president, Samantha has been an active H&S volunteer for 15 years. In that time, she has become a much-appreciated part of the school community. For a lot of students, "Miss Samantha" is their mom-at-school, the person you seek out when you can't find your shoes or you decide you don't like your lunch. For our Zoom interview in late January, Samantha was joined by Merton H&S treasurer, Dalia Giorgi. Dalia vividly recalls the day she visited the school for a kindergarten tour led by a friendly H&S volunteer. From that moment, Dalia knew this would be the school for her twins—and a place for her too!

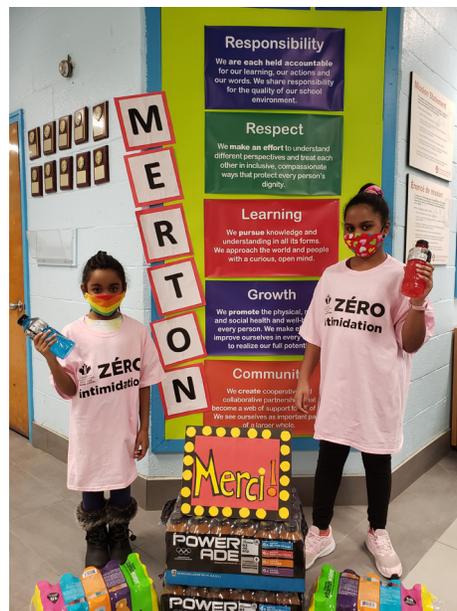
community, a community she knows extremely well. A mom of four and Merton's H&S president, Samantha has been an active H&S volunteer for 15 years. In that time, she has become a much-appreciated part of the school community. For a lot of students, "Miss Samantha" is their mom-at-school, the person you seek out when you can't find your shoes or you decide you don't like your lunch. For our Zoom interview in late January, Samantha was joined by Merton H&S treasurer, Dalia Giorgi. Dalia vividly recalls the day she visited the school for a kindergarten tour led by a friendly H&S volunteer. From that moment, Dalia knew this would be the school for her twins—and a place for her too!

### A Short History of Merton and Its Home and School

Merton School is located in the City of Côte Saint Luc on the island of Montreal. Built in 1952, Merton existed as an English school within the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal until 1970. The building then housed the United Talmud Torah School in the '70s and '80s. Merton reopened as a French immersion

school in 1993 and has been going strong ever since. Merton is a mid-sized school; its current enrollment stands at 301. Merton families live in Côte Saint Luc or the neighbouring communities of Hampstead, Montreal West, and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

Merton H&S joined the QFHSA during its early years, from 1953 to 1970. When the school reopened in 1993, the newly-reconstituted Home & School resumed its QFHSA membership, a membership that continues to this day. While Merton may not have the largest student population, its H&S membership is phenomenal. According to Samantha, membership this year is down a little at 190, but it is an excellent number nonetheless.



Merton parents are an eager bunch. Dalia smiles when she remembers meeting new parents who are always quick to ask what they can do to help.

Samantha says that all the letters the H&S sends out to parents share the same message: "Don't worry. There is always something for somebody to do, so don't ever feel left out." In a normal year, the Merton H&S Office is a popular drop-in spot for parents, staff, and of course, children who can't find their shoes.

### Activities Galore

Why do so many families join Merton H&S? It has a lot to do with the extensive programming the H&S offers to the school community. For one thing, Merton H&S manages the after-school daycare service available from 2:45 to 6 p.m. each day. And this daycare keeps students busy! A variety of fun activities are offered each week—a nice mix of active indoor and outdoor play and quieter games (with some time for the older students to get their homework done). On one February afternoon, some children built snow forts and created snow art with food colouring outside, while others played charades, soccer, and other games inside. Merton's H&S has one employee, who assists the volunteer team with administrative tasks.

Parents can also enroll their children in the after-school enrichment program organized as a fundraiser for H&S. Offered Monday to Friday, the courses include sports and physical fitness activities as well as workshops on the visual and performing arts, science, and technology. Samantha says parents like signing up their children for H&S

# Getting to Know You

extracurriculars because it means less running out to activities in the evening.

In a typical year, Merton H&S organizes a variety of fundraising initiatives, including hot lunches, Fundscrip, Lovable Labels, and book fairs.

## The Impact of COVID-19

When the lockdown began in March 2020, life changed drastically for Merton H&S (as it did for everyone). So much for the best-laid plans! In the early weeks of the pandemic, Merton H&S had to figure out how to shift its in-person extracurricular enrichment activities online. And teacher/staff appreciation had to wait: Dalia recalls handing out last spring's teacher appreciation gifts at the beginning of this school year. And with so many parents working from home, enrollment in Merton's daycare program has dropped significantly during the pandemic. Currently, 50 to 60 children attend the daycare in contrast to the 200 children the daycare served in pre-pandemic times. Other fundraising activities, like Merton's popular book fair, have been moved online, but with less success.

In spite of these challenges, Merton H&S volunteers are doing what they can to make this exceptional time a good one for students and staff. Samantha says, "Our biggest challenge has been trying to find some kind of normal feeling for the kids in our school." Dalia explains that in a typical school year, students have lots of opportunities for fun and play before the December holiday break. This year, students could not mingle outside their bubbles. Still, H&S made sure to organize in-class pancake breakfasts. Decorations for every festive occasion also help lighten the mood. Samantha explains: "It's the little things this year that matter to them (the children)." Thankfully, the school's lunch monitors have stepped in to ensure the pizza/

pasta/soup lunches could go ahead this year without the usual army of volunteers. In keeping with the goal of making things upbeat and lively, Merton H&S plans to organize a comedy night soon.



## The Rewards for the H&S Volunteer

What makes volunteers like Samantha and Dalia keep coming back year after year? It is because they feel valued. They feel that they are appreciated for the role they play, in partnership with the school staff and administration, in the overall well-being of the school. Samantha describes feeling very much a part of the school's team.

For both Samantha and Dalia, seeing the children smile and show their appreciation have been some of the greatest benefits of volunteering for H&S. Samantha smiles when she thinks about all the students coming to the H&S Office and "giving you that smile and knowing your name" or that time she attended a kindergarten graduation ceremony and a child stood up and announced she wanted to be Miss Samantha when she grew up. And it is clear that when parents volunteer at the school, it does not go unnoticed by their own children. Dalia explains

that the smallest thing, like helping out during Orientation Day, makes her a superhero in her children's eyes.

It is probably no secret that fellow H&S volunteers can become lasting friends. Dalia explains, "It's not very often later in life that you make those close new friends... But I can tell you I've sincerely, honestly made a few friends that have become so near and dear to me, they're best friends now." Samantha echoes the sentiment, saying that not only have Merton Home & Schoolers made a lot of friendships, but H&S alumni are happy to return to the school to help out at big events. With all of these benefits, it is no surprise that volunteers like Samantha and Dalia have come to cherish their time with Merton H&S.

During our conversation, Dalia and Samantha shared their memories of a Home & School event that had all the makings of a disaster, but instead turned into something the children and their families talked about fondly for years. The story goes like this: Like many H&Ss, Merton hosts an annual end-of-year barbecue, a popular outdoor event attended by Merton families and new families registered for the coming year. A few years back, the event was well underway with families socializing and children playing on the inflatable play structures when the rain started, and it poured! Quick-thinking volunteers and school staff jumped into action, moving most of the party indoors. The merry-making continued; it just got more interesting as children ran between the outside "water park" and the inside gym dance party. It is a great recipe for life, isn't it? When the unexpected comes your way (a COVID-19 pandemic, a rainstorm at a barbecue), you find a way to thrive in the mayhem—and no one is left behind!

Karen Henchey, *Communications Officer*

# ▶▶ BILL 40: What it Means for Our Schools ▶▶

IN 2019, THE COALITION AVENIR QUEBEC, under the leadership of Premier François Legault, introduced Bill 40: *An Act to amend mainly the Education Act with regard to school organization and governance*. This controversial bill was forced to a vote by invoking closure after 70 hours of debate. Opposition parties, teachers' associations, advocacy groups such as the QFHSA, school boards, and parents were all against this bill and its 160 last-minute amendments. Yet despite all of the opposition, day dawned on February 8th, 2020, and all French school boards and the nine English school boards were abolished and replaced with school service centres. While the English school boards and the council of commissioners were allowed to remain until the November 1st elections, all 700 of the French school board commissioners were sacked to avoid litigation against the closure of their school boards. On that day, 175 years of history were wiped out.

However, the English school boards evoked Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees minority official language communities the right to control and manage their educational institutions. A request for a stay on Bill 40 was granted. As a result, the elections scheduled for November 1st, 2020, would again be for school board commissioners instead of school service centre directors. When the elections were postponed, and with more than 90% of the candidates acclaimed, English school boards were again told to resume their duties. Incumbent commissioners were asked to fill the

undecided wards and it was business as usual.

Anecdotal evidence seems to indicate that parents, teachers, and directors in the French school service centres are unhappy. They are feeling, more and more, that the decision-making power is not in the hands of the community after all, despite what the Minister of Education kept telling them. Rather, the power was in the hands of the Minister of Education himself.

One need not look further than the issue of air purifiers in classrooms to see the vast difference between the power of a school board's council of commissioners versus that of a school service centre's board of directors. By February, both the English Montreal and Lester B. Pearson school boards were installing air purifiers in their schools. Meanwhile, the French schools, now overseen by service centres, were told that air purifiers were unnecessary and would not be forthcoming.

If that was not enough to convince us of the need for school boards and their commissioners, who have the best interest of the students and wider community at heart, think about what happened with last year's on again, off again English school board elections. Despite the call from all sides to postpone elections during a global pandemic, the government was intent on "punishing" our community (for it truly cannot be seen as anything less) by forcing electors to go to the polls during the second wave of the pandemic to vote in person. At the last minute, cooler

heads prevailed and the December 20th elections were postponed. Talk about trying to set up an election to fail!

If we lose our school boards and their commissioners, we as parents and members of the wider community lose direct influence on the kind of education our children will receive and the kind of school environment in which it will occur.

All that said, often school board commissioners are under-used and do not hear from their constituents as much as they would like. It may very well be a case of "use it or lose it."

If the English school boards lose the court challenge, appeals, and the eventual Supreme Court of Canada ruling, elections will then be held for directors of school service centres. School boards will be abolished along with the council of commissioners.

What would a school service centre look like? It would be composed of representatives from the following groups: parents, the community, and school staff. But make no mistake: many members of our community, including parents, would be excluded from serving on these new boards.

There would be **between 8 and 17 parent representatives**. These are parents of students attending an institution under the school service centre's jurisdiction **who also sit as parent representatives on the governing board of a school or vocational training centre**.

*Continued on Page 11*

## Bill 40...

*Continued from Page 10*

The people filling the **community representatives** positions would need to fulfill one of the following requirements:

1. Have expertise in governance, ethics, risk management, or human resources management;
2. Have expertise in finance, accounting, or in financial or physical resources management;
3. Be from the community, municipal, sports, cultural, health, social services or business sector;
4. Be 18 to 35 years old.

The **four staff members** would include one teacher, one non-teaching professional staff member, one support staff member, and one principal of an educational institution. In the past, teachers and professional staff members were represented by the director general at the council of commissioners' table. Most troubling is that the director general becomes the official spokesperson for the school service centre, not the chair of the board of directors, **and it must be noted that the director general answers to the Minister of Education.** That will leave the board of directors off on the sidelines.

Bill 40 does not affect the activity of Home and School Associations. Where we are active and invited by the administration to be involved in the life of the school, there is nothing in Bill 40 that precludes Home and Schools from carrying on business as usual. Granted, the pandemic has severely restricted parent access to schools, but this is a temporary problem. Although Home and School has been around for 100

years, we must remain vigilant and read between the lines of legislation that addresses education, for school boards were around for 175 years until February 2020, and the last of them are still under threat.

The merits of the legal challenge to Law 40 will be heard in April 2021. We will likely hear a decision on the case by the end of the summer. At that point, we will see if the English school boards will remain as well as our council of commissioners. If the decision is in favour of English school boards, the government may appeal the decision. If so, it is very likely that the case will end up at the Supreme Court of Canada.

No matter which system we end up with, we will always be an afterthought. The centralization tendencies in the French sector may not be what is best for our English sector. As a minority community, we will continue to face a battle for survival. We will need the involvement of as many

people as possible to man the lines.

The first step is to find out if there is an election in your area (important for Lester B. Pearson and Wilfrid Laurier parents because there is an election for chair). Next, make sure your name is on the electoral list. The boards' websites have a section where you can confirm that you have the right to vote. If you are not on the voters' list, the site provides information on how to get your name on the list. Then consider contributing a small amount to the Go Fund Me campaign to support the challenge to Bill 40. To do this, you can visit [gofundme.com](https://gofundme.com) and search for **Quebec Bill 40** or use this link: <https://gofund.me/3f69f150>. And then, of course, show up at the upcoming school board elections.

This is where we can start.

Carol Meindl, *Executive Director*



## In Memoriam Joan Dougherty 1927-2020

The Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations was saddened to learn of the passing of Joan Dougherty on December 18th, 2020. Although perhaps best known for her work as a member of the Quebec National Assembly, Dougherty made a positive impact in many organizations, including our own. Dougherty's history with the home and school movement began in the 1960s, when she was part of the Carlyle School community. Her husband, the late Donald Dougherty, held the position of vice president of the Carlyle H&S in 1964-65. Joan was

the QFHSA's Regional Director for the Town of Mount Royal area from 1964 to 1967. She was also a member of the QFHSA Board of Directors, a position she held from 1966 to 1967.

Joan Dougherty made a significant impact in the field of education, from her days as a H&S volunteer, a board member with the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, a parliamentary assistant to the Quebec Minister of Education, and as a member of McGill University's board of governors. The QFHSA salutes Joan Dougherty for her incredible service to our community.

*A life well lived indeed.*

## The Commemoration of Yom HaShoah 2021 in Quebec and Canada

*A Commentary By Brian Rock*

MANY QUEBECERS AND CANADIANS OBSERVE YOM HASHOAH, which is also known as **Holocaust Remembrance Day**. This year, the remembrance **begins the evening of Wednesday, April 7th, and concludes the following evening, on April 8th.**

The Knesset, the parliament of Israel, established Yom HaShoah as a memorial to the six million Jewish people who died at the hands of the Nazis from 1933 to 1945. The full name of the day is Yom HaShoah Ve-Hagevurah, which means the “Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust and the Heroism.”



Photo by Anthony Scanlon from Pixabay

The Masorti, a Conservative Judaism movement in Israel, created Megillat HaShoah, a scroll and liturgical reading for Yom HaShoah. The Masorti was assisted in this task by Jewish leaders in Israel, Canada, and the United States. Synagogue services are held during Yom HaShoah and activities may include the lighting of memorial candles and a recitation of the Mourner’s Kaddish, a prayer for the departed.

Schools often introduce educational programs about the historical events associated with Yom HaShoah around this time of the year, particularly to students learning about Jewish history. These programs may

include documentaries featuring the stories of Holocaust survivors or Holocaust-themed films.

In November 2005, the United Nations General Assembly officially named **January 27th** the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. The date holds particular significance as it was on that day in 1945 that Russian troops arrived at the gates of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the notorious Nazi concentration and extermination camp, to liberate the prisoners.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seeks to build peace through international cooperation in education, the sciences, and culture. Every year around January 27th, UNESCO pays tribute to the memory of the Holocaust and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to counter antisemitism, racism, and other forms of intolerance that may lead to group-targeted violence.

The profound impact of the Holocaust has not been limited to those countries in which Nazi crimes were perpetrated. **All nations share the collective responsibility** of addressing the residual trauma; maintaining effective remembrance policies; caring for historical sites; and promoting education, documentation, and research seven decades after the genocide. This responsibility includes educating our youth about the causes, consequences, and dynamics of such crimes so as to **strengthen the resilience of young people against**



**ideologies of hatred.** As we witness the global rise of anti-Semitism and other hateful discourse, as we witness forced detentions, violence, and even genocide in different regions of the world, the education of our youth has never been so relevant.

*“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”*

— Barack Obama

*Brian Rock, B.A., M.Ed., is the Chairman of the QFHSA Education, Rights, and Resolutions Committee and the Immediate Past President of QFHSA. A former secondary-school history teacher and school principal with the Eastern Shores School Board, he is also the Chairman of the Committee for the Enhancement of the Curriculum of the History of Quebec (ComeECH-QC). Brian writes a monthly column, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place,” that delves into the mysterious dealings in education, politics, and history, and other subjects of current interest. The column appears in several Quebec newspapers.*

*Note: The opinions expressed in this commentary are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the QFHSA.*

## The Long Defence of Democratically-Elected School Boards in Quebec *A Look at QFHSA Resolutions Through the Years by Carol Meindl*

I WAS ASKED to do some research into the QFHSA's work regarding school board elections and community involvement. As part of my research, I went through all the **resolutions adopted by Home and School over the years** that dealt with school board elections and electors. Some of what I saw surprised me and I shook my head in wonder at how narrow the access to decision-making in education was in the past and how far we have come. How much has changed, and yet how little.

 **1969: Non-Catholic/ Non-Protestant Property Owners Should Have the Right to Vote in School Board Elections; Parents Should Be Able to Vote For/Hold Office in School Boards Where their Children Are Registered**

In 1969, the QFHSA adopted **Resolution 1969/9 Right of non-Catholic, non-Protestant property owners to vote etc.** that petitioned Quebec to enact legislation to permit non-Catholic, non-Protestant property owners to vote for and hold office in those areas where they pay school taxes. At that time, Jews or Muslims who owned property, despite the fact that they paid school taxes, were not eligible to vote or run as candidates (a clear case of taxation without representation). The QFHSA also adopted a resolution to request the National Assembly of Quebec to enact legislation... permitting parents whose children attend elementary and secondary schools to vote for and to hold office as members of the school commission or school board

*having jurisdiction over the schools which their children attend.*

 **1976: Local School Boards Should Have More Autonomy**

By 1976, the QFHSA had turned its attention to **Resolution 1976/13 Local Autonomy for School Boards**. The QFHSA felt that given the diverse nature of Quebec society, the conditions under which school boards and schools had to operate differed widely across the province and that the priorities of the boards and schools differed accordingly, some flexibility would be advantageous to the boards, enabling them to meet their chief responsibilities in accordance with local conditions. Therefore, the QFHSA resolved that the Department of Education give more local autonomy to the regional school boards by decentralizing and transferring to the boards certain powers so that the boards might meet their priorities and obligations within very broad outlines and objectives previously agreed with the Department.

 **1978: Candidates for School Commissioner Should Be Announced a Full 4 Weeks Before Election Day**

Now let us consider **Resolution 1978/01 School Board Elections**. The QFHSA recognized that the Department of Education was officially committed to a policy of parental involvement in the operations of schools, their educational policies, and financing. We also noted that school com-

missioners [who] were elected from the population at large were elected representatives of the citizens and those elected representatives were playing an increasing role in the governing of the education in the province. Therefore, the QFHSA called for the existing law under the Education Act, which only required candidates be nominated one (1) week in advance of a school board election, to be changed to allow more time for nominations, thereby giving the electors additional time to meet the candidates and discuss issues. The QFHSA called for at least a 4-week interval prior to Election Day for candidates to file for election as school commissioners.

 **1983: School Board Election Campaigns Should Be Longer**

In 1983, the QFHSA adopted resolution **1983/2 School Board Elections** to address the extremely short campaign period for candidates of school board elections indicated in the Education Act. The QFHSA affirmed its support for the principle of democratically elected school commissioners by universal suffrage, and reminded the Quebec Government that it had made concrete suggestions after the 1980 school board elections to amend the Education Act as a means of increasing voter interest and participation in the elections. The QFHSA considered the 7-day campaign period far too short to allow candidates to hold meetings and highlight issues. The QFHSA recom-

*Continued on Page 14*

# News for You

mended that the time span between the closing of nominations and Election Day be extended to 21 days.



## 1994: Electoral Divisions Need to Be Fair and a Democratic Process Must Exist to Handle Disputes

Once we were through addressing the campaign and nomination processes, we turned our attention to the electoral divisions. **Resolution 1994/06 Fair and equitable school board electoral divisions in response to Bill 106** expressed the opinion that Bill 106 did not provide adequate criteria to guide school boards in establishing fair and equitable electoral divisions or dispute resolution processes or appeal mechanisms when electoral divisions were contested. Moreover, the QFHSA believed that clear guidelines were required to support the smooth implementation of linguistic school boards, which were to be introduced in 1996. Therefore, the QFHSA requested the Minister of Education amend Bill 106 to define an electoral process consistent with established democratic practices, including: 1) criteria for electoral divisions such as physical barriers, population distribution, municipal boundaries and size; 2) an acceptable variance rate in the average size of electoral divisions within the school board territory and; 3) an appeal process to a neutral third party in the event that disagreements arise regarding electoral divisions proposed by a school board.



## 1997: Quebecers Must Have the Right to Vote in the Linguistic Board of Their Choice

Then in 1997 in response to *Bill 109*

*Law amending the Education Act, the act respecting school elections and other legislative provisions*, the QFHSA was concerned about the specifics regarding the drawing up of electoral lists for the then still proposed French and English school boards. The QFHSA adopted **Resolution 1997/06 Rights of citizens with regard to the electoral lists for linguistic school boards** in which they indicated that the law limited the rights of some members of the English-speaking community to freedom of association with regard to the English-speaking community's control and management of the English school system. The Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Article 3 states "every person is the possessor of the fundamental freedoms, including freedom of conscience... and freedom of association." Given that Minister Pauline Marois stated in an April 24th, 1997, press conference that one of the very specific objectives of the establishment of the linguistic school boards was "to ensure the English-speaking community of the full management of its schools," the QFHSA demanded that the Minister make changes to the proposed law to ensure that every potential voter whose name is on the permanent electoral list and who wishes to vote be required to register to vote in the language board of their choice (in essence, to be associated with the English rather than the French school system).



## 2005: A Call for a Permanent Voters' List

By 2005, the QFHSA was still calling for a permanent linguistic voters' list. **Resolution 2005/02 Permanent Lin-**

**guistic Voters' List for School Board Elections** brought the problem to the attention of its members. The only way to be automatically placed on an English voters' list was to have a dependant child attending an English-language school. When the youngest dependant child graduated from the English school system, the parents were automatically transferred to the French voters' list. In addition, when they turned 18 years of age, all Quebec citizens were placed on the French voters' list regardless of the language of their secondary education. During the 2003 school board elections, not all voters who had requested in writing to be moved to the English voters' list were registered on the English list in time for the vote on November 16th, 2003. Therefore, the QFHSA *urged the Minister of Education to take action to establish a permanent linguistic voters' list for all future school board elections and that in cases where there are no dependant children in school, the following rules should apply:*

- *Parents remain on the linguistic list they were on when their youngest child leaves the secondary school system.*
- *Upon turning 18 years of age, voters are placed on the linguistic list based on the language of education of their last year of secondary school.*
- *If no such information is available, the voter will be placed on the French voters' list.*

This resolution was re-affirmed in 2007 and again in 2012 as permanent linguistic voters' lists still had not been established.

*Continued on Page 15*



## 2012: Educational Matters Must Remain the Responsibility of School Commissioners and School Boards

**Resolution 2012/01 Responsibility for Education: School Boards and Local Autonomy** addressed the concern about the renewed talk of abolishing school boards. Released in April 1999, the Bedard Report had recommended the establishment of mega-municipalities throughout Quebec and the eventual abolition of school boards. The report recommended that these mega-municipalities eventually assume the management and control of schools within their jurisdictions. The QFHSA felt strongly that the sole responsibility of school boards and school commissioners was education, and this would not be the case with mega-municipalities. The existing linguistic school boards were the only guarantee of education in the English language at that time. Since 1976, the QFHSA had supported the idea that the responsibility for education must be kept in the hands of democratically-elected school commissioners dedicated exclusively to matters related to education.



## 2016: Opposition to Bill 86—A Threat to the English-Speaking Community

Bill 86 *An Act to modify the organization and governance of school boards to give schools a greater say in decision-making and ensure parents' presence within each school board's decision-making body* was tabled in 2016 and the QFHSA took immediate exception to it. In the summary of their brief to *La Commission de la culture et de l'éducation*, the QFHSA stated:

*To say that the English-speaking community dislikes the proposed Bill 86 would be a gross understatement. To say the English-speaking community views Bill 86 as an attack on its continued existence in Quebec is the more accurate view of the community's feelings about this "projet de loi." The community senses, with this bill, a fundamental shift that seeks to completely submerge and eradicate any public sign of the presence of the English-speaking community in Quebec.*

*The community feels threatened not only about the future of its schools, but equally about its continued existence as an entity. The impression is that the present government is pursuing a systematic dismantling of the public institutions serving the English-speaking community and increasingly diminishing its role in the public life of the province. The importance of the presence of our public institutions cannot be understated either, as they are an extremely important social construct acting as central pillars or anchors on which our community is built.*

The QFHSA concluded the brief with 16 recommendations. At the May AGM, the QFHSA membership adopted **Resolution 2016/01 School Board Governance: Bill 86** in which we demanded that the Quebec government acknowledge its duty to support, defend and respect minority language educational rights and recommended that the Quebec government withdraw Bill 86. Further, we insisted that the government of Quebec formally enter into a comprehensive consultation with the English linguistic minority community to identify and address our legitimate right to control and manage our institutions. In the end, Bill 86 was withdrawn by the government.



## 2019: Opposition to Bill 40—A Clear Threat to the English Community

And then, in 2019, the Quebec government tabled Bill 40: *An Act to amend mainly the Education Act with regard to school organization and governance*, which called for the outright abolishment of both French and English school boards and replace them with school service centres. *(The implications of Bill 40 are described in the article on Page 10 of this newsmagazine.)*

Once again the English community has gathered the troops to defend our rights under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights of Freedoms. Section 23 grants minority language communities the right to control and manage their school institutions. The QFHSA began a collaboration with the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA), the English Parents' Committee Association (EPCA), the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN), and other community groups back in 2018 to form APPELE Quebec (The Alliance for the Promotion of Public English-Language Education in Quebec) to prepare to challenge any effort by the government to abolish school boards. The case will likely end up in the Supreme Court of Canada as a decision will affect not only the rights of the English-language minority in Quebec, but those of French-language minority communities in other Canadian provinces as well.

The school boards of Quebec have been a foundational pillar of society and are worth fighting for, as the QFHSA has done for 52 years and counting on behalf of Quebec parents.

## For Parents: News and Information

### Making that All-Important Transition: *From Child to Tween, from Elementary to High School*

MAKING THAT JUMP from elementary to high school has to be **one of the biggest moments** in a preteen's life. The stress, the nerves, and, oh, the anticipation! The entire final year of elementary school slowly builds to this BIG moment. All of the unknowns, the questions, the golden nuggets of wisdom from older siblings who have lived to tell the tale... And there are so many questions... What is being a high schooler really like? How much homework will I get? What about the teachers? Which ones are scary, which are nice? Where is the best place to hang out? What's the school gossip?



Photo by cottonbro from Pixels

Parents, do you remember what it was like? For some of you, this time of your life may still be quite clear; for most, not so much. Adulthood tends to do that to us. We replace those early struggles with more contemporary ones. As a result, we may forget that for our preteens, this life stage is **an enormous roller-coaster ride** of learning, growth, and **huge changes** in all of their developmental spheres (and don't forget about the hormones!).

The transition to high school tends to be quite difficult, for both parent and child. That is because all of these major shifts call for major adaptations in the parent-child relational status quo. *Where's that parenting manual again?!*

Parents often report feeling that quite suddenly, seemingly overnight, their sweet young child has morphed into

a gangly, irritating heap of a teen who now prefers to communicate in short, mumbled words (certainly not in complete sentences!). Communication can be awkward, unpleasant, and understandably difficult as both sides try to adapt.

How can we as parents support our children through this important life transition? **Join me for the upcoming two-part webinar (May 12th and May 26th) on the transition to high school.** The workshops will offer a space for parents of preteens to learn, prepare, and exchange on best practices for dealing with this important time in their children's lives. Parents will be equipped with tools, strategies, and concrete "how-tos." I will recommend constructive ways parents can adapt to the situation, and I will share the pitfalls of less effective strategies. My ultimate goal? To help parents discover how to best support their children's first steps... towards adulthood. I am looking forward to meeting you soon!

Karen Delage, Family Life Educator, *ParentTeenFocus*

### Struggling to get your Home & School online?

You want a solution that:

- ✓ has an easy to manage website
  - ✓ allows online payments & registration
  - ✓ simplifies fundraising management
- ... all without stressing out your volunteers.



### Your struggle ends here....



**Save Time & Energy**

We've done the research.



**No Trial & Error**

We've built this for H&S.



**Let Us Support You**

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for more info

# For Parents: News and Information

Free Parenting Workshops!

## Building Understanding: Transitioning From Elementary to High School

The QFHSA is happy to welcome back Family Life Educator Karen Delage for this two-part parenting workshop series. With over 15 years of experience working with families and youth under the Youth Protection mandate, Karen Delage shares her wisdom through engaging and informative workshops.

This workshop series is **especially useful for parents of children in Grades 5 and 6**, but parents of Grade 4 students are welcome too. *To get the most out of the experience, parents are encouraged to sign up for both workshops. If that is not possible, please join us for the workshop of your choice.*

### Workshop 1:

#### Preteen Developmental Stages & Evolving Needs

Wednesday, May 12th, 2021  
7 to 8:30 p.m. on Zoom



#### About the Workshop

This workshop will:

- Explore the developmental spheres and changes of this life stage (Ages 10-12)
- Translate changing behaviours into needs and identify how best to respond to them

### Workshop 2:

#### Mutually Changing Roles & Responsibilities

Wednesday, May 26th, 2021  
7 to 8:30 p.m. on Zoom



#### About the Workshop

This workshop will:

- Explore what skills and competencies our preteen must start learning and why
- Identify parental adaptations that help support the development of autonomy in children

REGISTER FOR THE WORKSHOP(S): <https://bit.ly/3szVSsu>

### Supernormal: Understanding Resiliency with Dr. Meg Jay

WHY ARE SOME PEOPLE MORE RESILIENT than others? Are they born that way? No, it turns out that resilience, the ability to adapt well to adversity, is something we can cultivate in ourselves and in our children too. This was the hopeful message Dr. Meg Jay shared in her March 9th web seminar. The event was organized through the collaboration of the English Parents' Committee Association, Ometz Agency, Federation CJA, and the Betty and Bernard S. Shapiro Family Endowment. In her presentation, Dr. Jay also cautioned that resilience is an ongoing process; it takes conscious effort.



Photo by Greerbaby from Pixabay

We know that life presents challenges for everyone and we all need to deal with stressful situations. Many children live with the chronic stresses brought on by poverty, abusive households, or bullying, to name a few. As adults, we have our own major life stressors—everything from divorce, the death of a loved one, to financial insecurity. In recent times, the COVID-19 pandemic, unfortunately, has done a good job at creating stress for adults and children alike. Dr. Jay explained that when a person is faced with chronic stress, it can take a huge toll on his or her mental and physical health. So what should one do? The key to survival is to shift the focus. Instead of seeing yourself as a victim of adversity, you become the main actor, “the superhero” in your survival of this trauma.

#### Understanding Resilience: Fight or Flight, Tend and Befriend

What key attitudes and behaviours do resilient people exhibit in the face of adversity? To explain, Dr. Jay used two concepts, “Fight or Flight” and “Tend and Befriend.”

**Fight:** Resilient people struggle in adversity like everyone else. They need to problem solve; they need to put in a lot of work to figure out a way through the challenge. Dr. Jay says that it is a common misperception that they just “bounce back.” What they really do is *recover*.



Photo by Anna Shvets from Pexels

**Flight:** Resilient people know that they can't be in fight mode all the time. They find opportunities to get away from their problems. They understand the value of a healthy escape when needed, whether it is a walk in nature, reading a good book, or watching a movie or favourite T.V. show.

**Tend:** Resilient people have an impulse to care for others and for themselves. They understand that it is “good to be good.” They will think about helping a neighbour or friend in difficulty; they will take some time for self-care when they know they need it.

**Befriend:** Resilient people surround themselves with people who care and turn to these individuals for help when problems arise. Dr. Jay explains: “Resilient people don't go it alone... Having positive relationships has an enormous impact on whether people can adapt well.” The benefits of having healthy connections with others are nothing short of miraculous: they calm us, they sustain us, and they make us stronger.

*Continued on the next page*

# For Parents: News and Information

In her presentation, Dr. Jay shared her adaptation of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale. With it, she describes 10 attitudes of resilient people, as follows:

## I am resilient because...

1. I am able to adapt when changes occur.
2. I can deal with whatever comes my way.
3. I try to see the humorous side of things when I am faced with problems.
4. Having to cope with stress can make me stronger.
5. I tend to recover after illness, injury, or other hardships.
6. I believe I can achieve my goals, even if there are obstacles.
7. I am not easily discouraged by failure.
8. I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life's challenges.
9. I am able to handle unpleasant feelings like sadness, fear, and anger.
10. In times of stress, I know where to find help.

When reading the list, it is really important to remember Dr. Jay's message that **everyone has tough days**. We may not always see ourselves in the description above, but we are a work in progress. If we are striving to grow these attitudes in ourselves, that is enough. It was also useful to hear Dr. Jay describe thinking pitfalls and what we can do to combat them, as shown in the table below.

Common Thinking Error:	How to Reframe It:
<b>Negative bias:</b> I always see what has gone wrong or might go wrong...	I will try to focus on what's gone right or what might go right.
<b>Catastrophic thinking:</b> I am always thinking about the absolute worst-case scenario.	I will focus instead on the knowledge that I am going to recover from this; life will go on...
<b>Black-or-white thinking:</b> Things look all bad or all good to me; there is nothing in between.	I will remember that good and bad go together; there can be upsides and downsides. It is rarely all bad or all good.
<b>Counterfactual thinking:</b> I always think about what might have been, how much better my life would have been if only...	I will try not to compare; I will stay with what is (even if it is imperfect).

Dr. Jay's message was a timely one. While the COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for us all, according to Dr. Jay, it provides "a real opportunity to be an example or template for handling all the other adversities to come."

Here are her suggestions:

- Talk with your children and role model constructive ways of thinking. Instead of focussing on all the pandemic has taken away, discuss what it might have added to life. Maybe your family is enjoying more outdoor time together; maybe your children have rediscovered how to have fun with each other.
- Remind your children of all the ways they have coped through this long year. What "Fight" methods have they used to get through the year and see a way forward? What "Flight" methods have they used to cope, to give themselves a break from the struggle? What did they do to "Tend" to their friends and neighbours? (The pandemic was a real opportunity to understand the challenges others are facing.) What did they do to "Befriend," that is, to keep up those all-important connections with friends so that they did not feel alone in this difficult time?

In her presentation, Dr. Jay referred to these inspirational words from Bessel Van der Kolk, PhD: "Healing is as much about remembering how we survived as it is about what is broken." Without a doubt, a lot of things felt broken this year, but it is very encouraging to remember that there is a way to rise above adversity and become stronger and more prepared to handle the next round of trouble to come our way. Thank you to Dr. Jay and the organizers for this inspirational workshop.

Karen Henchey, *Communications Officer*

## About Dr. Meg Jay

Meg Jay, PhD, is a clinical psychologist and an associate professor of Human Development at the University of Virginia. Her recent book, *Supernormal: The Untold Story of Adversity and Resilience*, explores the supernormal superheroes in our midst—those who overcome adverse experiences/trauma by acquiring resilience.

Dr. Jay is also well known for her work helping young adults navigate their twenties. Her TED Talk, "Why 30 is not the new 20," has been viewed over 11 million times.

# Literacy Corner

## COVID COULDN'T STOP US: *Born to Read Arrives at Souvenir Elementary*

THE SOUVENIR ELEMENTARY HOME AND SCHOOL Association in Laval decided to go ahead in implementing a new program at our school this year, despite the COVID restrictions. We had to cancel many of our traditional activities such as our Welcome Back Corn Roast, Movie Night, and our Fun Fest in June. Despite these cancellations, we still managed to add a few new activities and Born to Read is one of our favourites. The QFHSA promotes reading by supplying schools with a bag of board books for new readers. We decided this year, more than ever, our future Souvenir students needed these books, and they loved them.

Home and School sent out a letter to all parents with young toddlers at home to see if they wanted to



participate. The emails came in! We received emails from 20 families with 24 young future readers. Toddlers, twins, newborns, and even a few expectant mothers contacted us. The QFHSA hand delivered 24 bags to the school and Home and School volunteers added homemade bookmarks and a label for each family. Due to COVID restrictions, volunteers couldn't welcome families to hand out the books, but where there is a will there is a way. Our principal, Ms. Kalipolidis, kindly

went to each homeroom of the older sibling and distributed the bags on January 27th (National Literacy Day). That day, the students brought the books home to their eagerly awaiting younger brothers and sisters.

In the future, we hope to plan a book swap and distribute the Born to Read bag of books or perhaps even offer it at our annual book fair. The future is still unknown; however, we are happy to say 24 new readers are enjoying their board books at home. We are looking forward to our new generation of bookworms!



### *About Born to Read...*



Photo by nappy from Pexels

The "Born to Read" program began in 1990. It was the brainchild of the New Carlisle Literacy Exchange in the Gaspé, and the project has been adapted many different ways since then.

To encourage early literacy, the Born to Read book bags are filled with concept board books for babies and toddlers. A "good night" book is also included.

Roslyn Elementary and Edgewater Elementary Home and Schools have run the Born to Read program at their schools for years. As you can see from the article above, we are proud to announce that Souvenir Elementary has recently joined the program as well. The QFHSA supports new programs by donating 10 book-filled bags.

Would your Home and School like to start a "Born to Read" program? If so, please contact Carol at [carolmeindl@qfhsa.org](mailto:carolmeindl@qfhsa.org).

# Membership Services — *The Latest News*

## News from Membership Services

### Reminders for Executives

- All Home and Schools have received emails about outstanding documents for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. Please send any outstanding items to the QFHSA Office.
- Constitution and By-Laws (C&B) revisions: These documents are normally reviewed every few years. Given that many Home and Schools have needed to use online services like Zoom during the pandemic, it is time to ensure your C&B allow for online meetings. There are pros and cons to using online platforms, but your Home and School should look at incorporating this option into the by-laws.
- Deadlines: Look at the deadlines for changes to the C&B and respect the notice deadlines.

### Other News

- **Presidents' meetings:** In January 2021, the QFHSA organized a series of Presidents' meetings. Executive members from 19 local associations

attended. Topics covered included quorum at monthly meetings, access to the school premises, fundraising, December holiday events, plans for TSAW, and plans for other activities.

- **Special meeting to discuss online services:** On February 25th, six Home and Schools met to discuss the inroads they are making and the challenges they are facing moving their associations online. The pandemic has "forced" some Home and Schools to look for alternatives, but some associations have been using online platforms for quite a while. The QFHSA will put together a summary that Home and Schools can use as a resource guide.

### QFHSA AGM—Save the Date

The QFHSA Annual General Meeting will be held online on June 3rd, 2021, in the evening. Please select a delegate to represent your local association. Please check the QFHSA website for the voting delegate forms.

Marlyn Brownrigg, *Membership Services*



The joys of learning in the great outdoors at Pierre Elliot Trudeau Elementary in Gatineau

## Focus on the Locals

In the *Focus on the Locals* section, we share news and information from our associations. We would love to hear from your Home and School too! Before sending photos, please make sure you have the permission of those appearing in the photos. We invite H&S members to send in your news to [news@qfhsa.org](mailto:news@qfhsa.org).

### Winter Artistry at Onslow

For four days in late January, the students at Onslow Elementary became snow sculptors with the help of artist Marc Walter. The school is located in Quyon, and is part of the Western Quebec School Board. Grade 5 teacher Kayla Savard said the activity was part of an effort to bring the school together—an important thing to do in these times of COVID-19 restrictions. The 4-day sculpting activity began with two days of collecting the snow in the school yard and placing it in molds. Then the fun really began as students worked in small groups to figure out what they wanted to sculpture and then execute their plans. The results were fantastic! The art projects included a hand with a thumbs up, the Lorax, Homer Simpson and, of course, many dogs.



In addition to being a whole lot of fun, the snow sculpture project allowed the students to think about how to create a 3-D shape. The project was made possible thanks to a grant from the Artists Inspire Program, which Ms. Savard had applied for. Ms. Savard has received several other grants as well. As a result, the lucky students at Onslow will enjoy more activities with artists and authors almost every week for the rest of the school year. The creative activities planned include virtual author visits and in-person visits from more artists. What a wonderful way to create positive memories in this pandemic school year.

Onslow's Home & School team also made sure to bring some joy to the teachers this year as well. The staff was treated to individually-packed lunches and desserts from a local café.



## News from St. Charles Home and School

*“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much!” Helen Keller*

We feel very, very lucky to have the support of staff members at St. Charles. It is because of them that Home and School has been able to offer the students the traditional activities that they look forward to, especially in this unprecedented year.

Not being in the school did not stop us from holding one of the community’s favourite fundraising activities (usually held in conjunction with the Welcome Back BBQ): The Big Bang. This year it was held virtually, and it was a huge success!



We have been working hard with the grad committee and the teachers to make sure our Grade 6 students have as much of a normal grad year as possible. In October, because Home and School volunteers were not allowed in the building due to COVID-19, the Grade 6 students were treated to their traditional Halloween Dance by the staff. Although it looked a little different this year with the classes maintaining their bubbles, the teachers were still able to provide them with a dance, a costume contest, and a pizza lunch with treats. The pizza and treats were funded by Home and School.

In December, we were able to continue our tradition of the Grade 6 elves. They recorded a story for the younger grades, and they delivered the activity packages for our Breakfast with Santa. We were also able to give the students their grad T-shirts, which were provided by Home and School.

We continued our regular fall fundraising events with the help of the staff. We sold St. Charles clothing to our families to promote school spirit. Without the staff there to distribute the clothing, this would not have been possible. We look forward to offering this again in the spring.

As our main fundraiser, we sold Recipes in a Jar. It was such a positive campaign that we continued the campaign into March.

The holidays are a much-anticipated time of year at St. Charles, especially Breakfast with Santa. This year Home and School, with the help of the staff, was able to share a virtual message from Santa, give the students individual snack bags, provide a pre-recorded story from the Grade 6 “elves,” and offer other enjoyable activities without being present in the building.



# Focus on the Locals

## At Children’s World Academy: *Appreciating Staff, Raising Funds, and Going Green!*

We have already passed the halfway mark of this school year. Our school staff at Children’s World Academy (CWA) has been working so hard educating and keeping our children safe. Thanks to the efforts of the **CWA Home and School Staff Appreciation Committee**, staff members were treated throughout the week of February 22 to 26. Staff coffee time was made special with the addition of doughnuts, cookies, and tiramisu. This year’s traditional luncheon was catered by our local Casa Grecque restaurant. In addition, we were able to offer a “Self-Care Kit” to our staff—something to help their days at school!



Image by Prawny from Pixabay

This year, due to the pandemic, CWA Home & School decided to make staff appreciation a year-long celebration. We plan to offer the staff treats every month until the end of the school year! In January, we offered coffee and canolis; in February, we celebrated our teachers “being the bomb” with hot chocolate bombs for all! Due to COVID restrictions, we have been planning treats according to health guidelines. Items are individually wrapped for minimal handling. We would like to thank our parents for their generosity in donating to our Staff Appreciation Fund, which has made it possible for H&S to find safe ways to THANK our staff for all they are doing.

### The CWA Home and School Fundraising

**Committee** has been busy planning new and creative ways to fundraise in this pandemic year. One of our new initiatives is to partner up with local restaurants in Lasalle. When parents order from a participating restaurant on a specific day, 20% to 25% of the sales are donated to our school. This

fundraiser is a win-win because it helps our community support local restaurants, it raises funds for CWA, and it gives families a break from the cooking.

In addition, the fundraising committee is always looking to partner with businesses that offer online shopping fundraisers where parents can order online and have the goods delivered directly to their homes. This eliminates the step of picking up the items at school (as was the case with most fundraisers in the past). This year, we are partnering with Tru Earth, Mabel’s Labels, and Bad Monkey Popcorn.



mabel's labels®

### The CWA Home and School Green Committee

has begun 2021 with their “Small Changes, Big Impact” campaign. The committee noted that if Chartwells were to stop providing plastic cutlery with their lunches, this would prevent 5,600 cutlery sets from going into landfill (this is just CWA’s impact)! Imagine the overall impact if Chartwells were to **stop providing disposable cutlery** for all the lunches they provide to schools in the Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB). With that in mind, the CWA Green Committee has drafted a resolution to present to the LBPSB Parent Committee, and with this committee’s support, we hope to present our green resolution on disposable cutlery to the LBPSB Council.

Observation	ACTION	Impact
<p>Small changes can have a BIG impact...</p> <p>It was noticed that Chartwells still included cutlery in their school lunches.</p> 	<p>The CWA Green Committee contacted Chartwells and told them to stop providing cutlery in their lunches in order to align with CWA’s green policy</p>  <p>Sometimes, all it takes is an email, or phone call.</p> 	<p>160 Chartwell lunches in a day 35 Chartwell lunch days remaining in school year. (from Feb 10 - June 18)</p> <p>=</p> <p><b>5,600</b> plastic cutlery sets not in landfill</p> <p>Get your school onboard, and share your impact!</p> 

Stay tuned for more exciting news from CWA! On behalf of Home and School and all

the parents, we would like to extend a big thank you to our staff for their continuous efforts in keeping our school safe.

Wishing you all a safe and happy second half of the school year!

### Figuring Out a Pandemic School Year at Forest Hill Senior

In the 21 years since the Forest Hill Senior Home and School Association was established, there was never a start to the school year like September 2020. The committee, led by returning president Colleen Sardinha, was faced with limited options to help the school with the COVID-19 restrictions in place. With no physical access to the school, the team couldn't count on traditional fundraising activities, yet school staff members were counting on H&S to support their requests for additional classroom supplies.

Like a lot of other organizations around the world in 2020, Home & School had to pivot at the beginning of the school year to operate only online. The focus had to be on initiatives that would work remotely, which required creativity and new ideas.

A series of successful theme days kicked off the fundraising efforts, and ongoing partnerships with Editions Vaudreuil for school supplies and Mabel's Labels continued to do well. In late fall, a new partnership with Tru Earth laundry strips created a new revenue stream. Just before the holidays, a successful fundraiser for school-branded face masks was launched, and the annual giving campaign wrapped in early 2021. With the mantra "every penny counts," the committee raised over \$6000 in 6 months, and was able to assist in the purchase of SEL (Social Emotional Learning) cushions to help reduce student anxiety and several new Chrome Books for the Grade 6 classrooms.

An innovative virtual book fair with Babar Books in Pointe-Claire raised close to \$200 for the school library, and parents and guardians generously contributed to Staff Appreciation Week, where gifts were dropped off daily by H&S volunteers.

The above initiatives were successful thanks to the committee adapting and overcoming the difficult conditions of the past year. Because of these innovative ideas, the FHSR Home & School Association has already met the goals it set out for the 2020-21 year, thanks to the support and generosity of the school community.



## Focus on the Locals

### Beyond the Classroom at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary

The March 13th anniversary of the unprecedented closure of Quebec schools provides an important opportunity to reflect on how our educational thinking has adapted and evolved during these extraordinary times.

Given the uncertain landscape during the summer, 2020/2021 was seemingly destined to be the most demanding of school years for students, staff, and parents. With court challenges, restrictions to online learning, strict protocols, 2-metre distancing, masks, class bubbles, the elimination of extra-curricular activities and field trips, and red zones, it hardly seemed like the appropriate time to seize the moment and re-think traditional school organization—or was it?

At Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School (PETES) in Gatineau, we were becoming increasingly worried that the potential of a diminishing educational experience for students could have a dramatic impact on our students' emotional well-being and their motivation for learning. As such, we felt compelled to set forth on a course of action to change the prevailing narrative and inject a sense of wonder and adventure into school life. At the beginning of the school year, we worked closely with our Home and School Association to reimagine the entire educational landscape with the hope of enhancing student engagement through unique and fun outdoor activities.

We collaborated with many partners and wrote grants to find funding to purchase new equipment. Incredibly, we received grants from Connexions, our CLC network, Canadian Tire, and local businesses. As a result, we were

able to purchase sets of snowshoes, ice skates, tuques, and splash pants. However, our H&S did not stop there; H&S volunteers were determined to provide the school with more equipment. They fundraised tirelessly to help purchase a class set of bicycles, scooters, and sleds for every homeroom—simply incredible!



Thanks to the generous measures (grants for additional staffing) from the government, we were able to dedicate a staff member to oversee our healthy lifestyles program. This motivated teachers to sign up for daily or weekly outdoor activities. By providing students and staff with new opportunities to participate in healthy and fun outdoor activities, we strategically and skilfully reframed a more positive outlook for the 2020/2021 school year.

To capitalize on the gathering momentum, the staff and H&S organized a “Winterpalooza Extravaganza” to embrace the great Canadian outdoors. Staff and parent volunteers organized a rotation of stations that included snow carving, broomball, an obstacle course, sledding on Mt. PETES, snow volcanoes, maple taffy, Timbits, and hot chocolate. Each cycle had a dedicated Winterpalooza Day, and this

celebration of outdoor fun will undoubtedly be a highlight of this remarkable school year.

Our focus on outdoor activities initially brought an element of fun and adventure to the school day. Not only were students happy, engaged and excited to be at school, but it deeply solidified their attachment to their teacher and their sense of belonging at school. However, the greatest benefit we have noticed is an increase in student focus and attentiveness to their studies after participating in physical outdoor activities.

Our philosophy of school organization has changed dramatically over the past 12 months. At first glance, one would assume that the future of education was inevitably going to feature a greater reliance on the integration of technology in a digital world. However, when we take a second glance at PETES, we will realize that this will not necessarily be the case.

As we continue to observe an increase in children's screen time and reduced time in nature, it may become an imperative for education systems to adapt and reimagine school organization. Perhaps what will be required for the future of education, in a mid and post-pandemic world, is a more back-to-basics approach to focus on learning outdoors through play and nature.

Staying healthy, safe, and moving beyond the classroom has been a collective effort between the staff, community and Home and School—so congratulations to the entire PETES family!

*David McFall, Principal*



## Genesis Celebrates!

### Teacher and Staff Appreciation Week and Valentine's Day

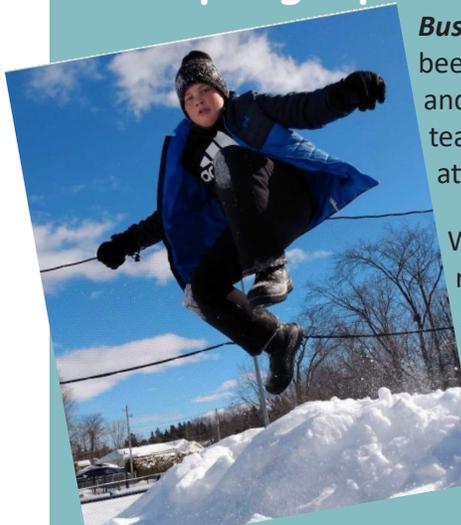


The Genesis Home and School Association highlighted Teacher and Staff Appreciation Week (TSAW) with wonderful gifts for the teachers and staff, a delectable breakfast, and a hearty Greek luncheon. The walkway leading to the school and the fences of the schoolyard were decorated with posters with messages of love and gratitude! Every teacher and staff member also received

a beautiful cactus to remind them of how much all of their efforts have been appreciated throughout this very prickly year!

To celebrate Valentine's Day, each child was given a goody bag of heartfelt treats. Although social distancing has kept us apart, the students will always hold a special place in our hearts!

## A Spring Update from Grenville Elementary Home & School



**Busy, busy, busy** is what our Home and School has been lately! With the Winter Carnival behind us and spring just around the corner, parents and teachers alike are excited to put away our winter attire and break out the spring jackets.



We held our very first online fundraiser, a raffle, via our new Facebook Group. Four gift certificates were up for grabs from local restaurants in our area: Carole's Restaurant, Stephanie's Bar & Grill, and Petit Pain in Hawkesbury as well as Fromage & Cie in Grenville. What a great success it was! So much so, we are ready to launch our next fundraiser soon. We have partnered up with a local business in our area. Who wants MAPLE SYRUP?

Teacher & Staff Appreciation Week was held on March 15. We provided all the teachers and staff with boxed lunches from Petit Pain in Hawkesbury. It's the Number One choice for us.



Happy Spring,  
Michelle Deslauriers

## SHARE YOUR NEWS!



Photo by Anissa Thompson from FreeImages

What is happening in your Home and School community? Fun fundraisers? Special events? Please let us know and we will be happy to share your news in our *Focus on the Locals* section in an upcoming issue of the *QFHSA News*. Send your submissions to [news@qfhsa.org](mailto:news@qfhsa.org)

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