



# English Parents' Committee Association



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*Katherine Korakakis is the President of the English Parents Committee Association (EPCA). In addition to this vital role in the Quebec educational sector, Katherine has spent most of her life working alongside start-ups in various verticals. For 10 years, she was responsible for the development of entrepreneurial initiatives and projects under the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, a Youth Secretariat program of the government of Quebec. Katherine is Head of Entrepreneurship at ProMontreal Entrepreneurs (PME), an early stage VC fund that has been around for 22 yrs, and is currently the vice-president of PME MTL Centre-Ouest and on the investment committees of PME MTL Centre and PME MTL Centre-Ouest. Katherine has also authored and co-authored guidebooks on entrepreneurship education and has served on the Boards of numerous corporations.*

# President's message

## Have a safe and engaging summer with your kids

Dear parents,

This year, we encountered significant challenges within the school system. In the fall, students experienced disruptions ranging from a few days to several weeks due to staff strikes. All educational partners collaborated to implement a remedial plan to ensure student achievement. However, this was yet another impact on students who were still recovering from school impacts due to the pandemic.



In the 2023–2024 school year, EPCA's primary focus has been on the well-being of young people. We have addressed various issues such as school violence, screen time, safe routes to school, access to English-language resources, family quality of life, and accessibility of services. We have represented parents in the media and participated in meetings and events with the Minister of Education, the Ministry, and our educational network partners. All of these consultations and discussions have been focused on how to advance education in the province and how to support students and their families.

A core principle guiding our efforts is that children's well-being and success should always be prioritized.

This edition of our newsletter looks at how to continue to engage students throughout the final weeks of school and into the summer. We have also secured content from partners regarding digital literacy, support for parents, and educational contests. And as usual, we hope that our articles help parents by providing tips and tricks on building confidence, enhancing learning, and supporting neurotypical and special needs children.

As we look ahead, let's continue working together to ensure a positive and safe educational environment for our children. Your support, engagement, and collaboration are essential to making this happen. Together, we can build a strong community where every child can thrive and succeed.

Thank you for your continued support this year and have a wonderful summer holiday.

Katherine Korakakis  
President, English Parents' Committee Association

# Routines for the Summer

During the summer, school-year routines are frequently abandoned. In some ways, this is good. Children (and parents) require a break from the demands of the school year. However, for children with ADHD, abandoning routines completely can present difficulties – making it more difficult to return to school in the fall.

Children with ADHD perform better with structure and routine in their daily lives. Routines help individuals stay on track and improve key executive function skills such as organization and planning. It's critical to maintain this even while your youngster is on vacation from school.

Here are five essential summer routines.

## 1. Practice proper hygiene.

Some children with ADHD find it difficult to maintain good hygiene. And the lazy days of summer (sleeping in and not having to get dressed for school) can make it difficult for children to keep up. Kids may forget to brush their teeth, shower, and apply deodorant.

Establishing consistent routines will help your child remember to practice proper personal hygiene. You might have a regimen in which you clean your teeth first thing in the morning, no matter what. If your youngster has trouble remembering, consider putting a reminder on your iPad or phone. Alternatively, write it down on a sticky note and place it where your youngster can see it.

## 2. Establish a bedtime routine.

Healthy sleep habits are essential year-round. Your summer schedule may vary, with later bedtimes and wake-up times. But there should still be a routine, including a predictable bedtime. You'll also need a rule about when screen time should cease, as well as a bedtime routine — washing up, brushing teeth, and so on. Working with your child to develop a summer version of this practice may help to increase buy-in.



# Routines for the Summer

cont.



### 3. Plan time for exercising.

Many kids with ADHD struggle with hyperactivity. Staying active throughout the day can help children expend energy. Include physical activities in your child's summer regimen. Perhaps you can do something together on a regular basis, such as going for a walk after dinner. Active play, such as tag or sports, can help your youngster sleep better.

### 4. Establish (some) screen time limits.

More idle during summer break can easily lead to more screen usage. Avoid this by setting clear limitations on how much time your youngster can spend on technology. It's fine if it's more than you allowed during the school year. Just make sure the restrictions are sensible and that your youngster understands them.

Also, bear in mind that staring at screens might impair sleep, especially in the evening. Even if your child has a later bedtime during the summer, make sure there is a break between screen time and sleep.

### 5. Practice school skills.

Children should continue to learn over the summer holiday. Without practice, children may encounter setbacks in reading, writing, math, and even organizational skills.

However, practicing skills does not have to feel like homework. Keep it entertaining and engaging. For example, you could ask your child to read a book and come up with an entertaining way to summarize each chapter. It might be a song, a written account, a performance, a poem, or a drawing.

# Helping your Child Learn a New Skill this Summer

Helping your child learn a new skill during the summer can be a fulfilling and educational experience for both neurotypical and neurodivergent children. While the general principles of learning and skill development apply to all children, neurodivergent children may require additional considerations and tailored approaches. Here's how to effectively support both neurotypical and neurodivergent children in learning a new skill over the summer:

## 1. Identify Interests and Goals

- **Explore Interests:** Talk with your child about their interests. For neurodivergent children, pay attention to specific areas of focus or special interests they might have.
- **Set Achievable Goals:** Set clear, realistic goals based on your child's abilities and interests. For example, if your child is interested in drawing, you can set a goal to complete a specific number of drawings by the end of the summer.

## 2. Create a Customized Plan

- **Research Resources:** Find resources matching your child's interests and needs. For neurodivergent children, look for resources that offer inclusive and more structured environments ask them to provide visual aids if that helps your child.
- **Flexible Schedule:** Develop a schedule that accommodates your child's routine and energy levels. If you are registering your child into a program talk with the organisers in advance about importance of flexibility to accommodate any unexpected changes or needs specially for your special needs child.

## 3. Provide the Necessary Tools and Environment

- **Materials and Equipment:** Ensure your child has access to all necessary materials. For neurodivergent children, consider sensory-friendly tools and environments.
- **Learning Space:** Create a consistent and distraction-free learning space. For neurodivergent children, a sensory-friendly space can be particularly beneficial.

## 4. Encouragement and Support

- **Positive Reinforcement:** Celebrate even small achievements to build confidence and motivation. This is important for all children, but especially for neurodivergent children who may face additional challenges.
- **Patience and Understanding:** Be patient and supportive. Remember progress can look different for each child.

## 5. Hands-On Learning and Practice

- **Practical Experience:** Encourage hands-on activities. For example, if your child is learning to bake, involve them in the entire process from measuring ingredients to decorating.
- **Consistent Practice:** Establish a routine that includes regular practice. For neurodivergent children, a visual schedule and prompting can be helpful.



# Helping your Child Learn a New Skill

cont.

## 6. Incorporate Fun and Creativity

- **Engage and Motivate:** Use fun and engaging methods to teach the skill. Neurodivergent children might benefit from combining their special interests into the learning process.
- **Encourage Experimentation:** Allow children to experiment and explore different aspects of the skill, fostering creativity and a deeper understanding.

## 7. Utilize Community Resources

- **Local Classes and Workshops:** Look for inclusive classes and workshops that cater to both neurotypical and neurodivergent children. You can also request for extra support for your child with special needs. Be clear about their specific needs and challenges.
- **Peer Learning:** Find group activities or clubs where children can learn and practice together. Ensure these groups are inclusive and supportive.

## 8. Monitor Progress and Adjust

- **Track Progress:** Keep a record of your child's progress through journals, portfolios, or check-ins.
- **Adapt as Needed:** Be flexible and ready to adapt the plan based on your child's needs and progress. For neurodivergent children, this might mean adjusting the approach to suit their learning style.

## 9. Celebrate Achievements

- **Acknowledge Milestones:** Celebrate when your child reaches a milestone. This can boost their confidence and encourage further learning.
- **Reflect on Growth:** Encourage your child to reflect on their learning journey and recognize their achievements.

## Examples of Skills to Learn

- Creative Arts: Painting, drawing, photography, or crafting.
- Musical Instruments: Learning to play the guitar, piano, violin, etc.
- Sports and Physical Activities: Swimming, soccer, tennis, or martial arts.
- Academic Skills: Coding, language learning, or science experiments.
- Life Skills: Cooking, gardening, or sewing.



For neurodivergent children, look for inclusive programs that accommodate different level of abilities, use interactive and multisensory learning tools, and provide clear, structured instructions and demonstrate each step. Use step-by-step instructions and visual guides and break down lessons into small, manageable steps.

By adapting your approach to your child's individual needs and interests, you can make the summer a productive and enjoyable time for learning new skills. Whether your child is neurotypical or neurodivergent, providing support, resources, and encouragement will help them succeed and grow.

# Building Confidence and Staying Sharp Through Summer Learning

We have arrived at the end of another school year! Congratulations to all parents and their families. Surely there were many successes as well as many challenges this year. While the summer may signal the end of classes, it should not bring about the end of learning. While COVID may seem like a distant memory now, it is important to remember that our kids missed out on so much core learning during that challenging time. Perhaps during exam preparation or in the report card you may notice certain weaknesses in your child's understanding. The summer is a great time to address these concerns in a relaxed and informal way.

ALLOPROF is a wonderful resource where students can review any grade specific subjects that they may need help with. This can be done at a relaxed pace throughout the summer to prepare kids for the next grade level. It is important to frame this subject reinforcement as something that will make your child's studies easier in the next grade. And ALLOPROF offers games and other resources to make the experience fun.

<https://www.alloprof.qc.ca/en/students>

Here are some other summer learning resources we have come across to help our kids:

<https://ca.ixl.com/>

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/teaching-tools/articles/resources/3-ways-keep-kids-connected-learning-over-summer.html>

<https://www.oxfordlearning.com/summer-learning-activities-for-kids/>

If your teen has a particular skill or passion about a particular academic area, you could encourage them to offer tutoring services to other children over the summer!

**And don't forget to have your kids read every day!**



# Seeking Digital Literacy for All

Phones, social media, and the internet are a big part of the lives of our children. Eighty-six percent of Canadian children aged 9-11 have a social media account restricted to 13+ (2022 Media Smarts, Phase IV 2022 survey of Young Canadians in a Wireless World). The vast majority of kids have phones or access to phones. It's how they interact, plan, learn, and it's a big part of their futures.

It's also full of challenges. As a father of four daughters, I've seen the negative impacts on self image and mental health firsthand. But research also suggests that access to technology is correlated with improved development of digital literacy. Kids who have strong digital literacy are more resilient when faced with uncomfortable content. So, how do we help educate our children so they all can be resilient in a digital world?

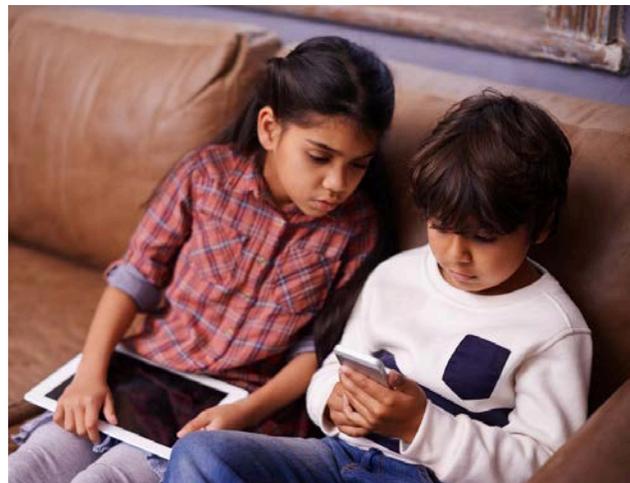
My name is Michael Stewart and I'd like to share with you a free digital literacy resource developed with Dr. Michelle Schira Hagerman, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa, designed to facilitate these conversations. The resource can be found at [www.seekingdraven.com](http://www.seekingdraven.com). It can also be paired with the novel Seeking Draven, written for children aged 8-12, a Canadian Children's Book Centre 'Recommended Book' published by Red Deer Press.

When my ten-year-old first begged me for a phone with a visceral emotion I might otherwise have associated with life or death, I sensed I was coming to a very important decision in my role as a parent. I wrote Seeking Draven as a way of developing a language with which to have important conversations with my children. In the story, fungi-fanatic Teagan, age 10, loves her big brother Draven. When he disappears after a fight with their father, she's stunned and lost without him. She can't believe her father's accusations that Draven's a thief. But the truth might be scarier. The story follows Teagan as she struggles to piece her family back together again with the help of her father's cracked old phone.

We hope the [www.seekingdraven.com](http://www.seekingdraven.com) teacher resource will provide a guide that can support both parents/guardians and teachers in teaching digital literacy. It includes up to date research and information to help parents/guardians and teachers ensure they too have a thorough understanding of how the internet and social media work in order to best support their charges.

Michael F. Stewart is the author of two dozen books for children and holds an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from the Vermont College of Fine Arts.

Dr. Michelle Schira Hagerman, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa, is an expert in Digital Literacies and the founding Director of edstudiO.



# Vent Over Tea

## Vent Over Tea Wants Parents to Know They Are Not Alone

Parenthood is a journey filled with moments of joy, love, and fulfillment. However, it also comes with its own set of challenges, including feelings of isolation and stress. It's important for parents to know that these feelings are normal and that they are not alone. Vent Over Tea is here to provide a supportive and non-judgmental space for parents to share their experiences and connect with others who understand what they are going through.

### Coping With Loneliness in Parenthood

Parenting is a full-time job, and it can sometimes feel overwhelming. Preparing school bags, packing lunches, and attending countless activities can leave little time for self-care or socializing. If you feel overwhelmed or alone in this journey, know that you are not alone. Vent Over Tea offers a space where you can share your feelings and find support.

Loneliness is an all-too-familiar feeling to many parents and at times seems unavoidable. You may have a supportive network who share these experiences with you, but sometimes it can be hard to vent without feeling judged. If this resonates with you, you are not alone. It is important to know there are people who empathize with your experience and will listen.

Vent Over Tea gives every parent in Quebec access to trained listeners in a one-on-one setting. Our purpose is to provide you with a space to express whatever thoughts, fears or loneliness that can arise in your journey as a parent. This is your time to vent about whatever is on your mind free of judgment. Our services are available in English and French.

### Supporting English Parents in Quebec

Vent Over Tea is a non-profit organization originally based in Montreal, that has expanded to support all regions in Quebec. Our support takes many forms, allowing individuals to pick what feels right for them.

Whether you're looking to combat loneliness or find community with our social events, or have a safe space to vent in our listening sessions, both services are available at no cost online and in-person.

Establishing community and active listening are proven to be exceptionally effective strategies in reducing feelings of isolation. It is our goal that every individual leaves an event and session feeling heard and valued.



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## Loneliness and Active Listening: Let's Talk About It

We recognize that counselling and therapy are not always feasible options for busy parents. With everything else going on in life trying to find the time, money and energy to attend therapy appointments can seem daunting. Seeing no realistic options, parents may choose to struggle alone, exacerbating feelings of isolation.

Our service is designed to fill the gap between professional support and no support. We provide a free, non-judgmental space for those who might be between therapy sessions, can't access such services, or feel like therapy isn't for them. Our listening sessions are unlimited, confidential, and easily accessible. With just a few clicks on our website, you can book a free session online or in person. Virtual sessions allow you to talk to a trained listener wherever is most convenient, whether that's during your morning coffee run, in between drop-offs, or at home folding laundry. Your voice will be heard and uninterrupted as the listener is engaged regardless of the circumstance. What is shared in a session stays between you and the listener. No matter the topic, you will be met with empathy and understanding.

While supporting your child's life, it can be easy to lose sight of your own needs and well-being. It's important to take time for yourself, and Vent Over Tea is here to help you do just that.

**Book a listening session with us at [ventovertea.com](http://ventovertea.com)**

**See what we're up to on Instagram and Facebook @ventovertea**

## Common Questions From Parents

*What if my child starts crying or needs to be fed during a session?*

How you choose to spend the 1-hour session is up to you, we understand things come up and will be there to listen regardless. This confidential, free, unlimited and flexible approach means you can have our undivided attention without leaving the house.

*What if I want to cancel at the last minute?*

You can cancel your session at any time before the session is scheduled to begin. You do not have to stay for the entire session and can leave at any point. Simply email your listener and let them know or click the Change/Cancel Appointment button in your session confirmation email.

*How can I ensure my privacy during a session?*

All sessions are confidential. What you share with your listener stays between you and them. We prioritize your privacy and provide a safe space for you to express your feelings. Our listeners hold virtual sessions in private areas so what you say won't be heard by others.

*Who are the listeners?*

Our listeners are volunteers that are carefully selected and given extensive training in active listening and mental health first aid. Most of them are pursuing careers in psychology, social work, medicine or community service. Some are parents just like yourself.



# alloprof



## School Year Superstars Contest

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



As we near the conclusion of the 2023–2024 school year, there is much to celebrate. Students and teachers across Quebec have shown remarkable dedication and progress throughout the year. Now, you have the opportunity to recognize and honour one of them as this year's superstar!

Do you know a child who exceeded expectations or worked hard to progress? Was there an extraordinary teacher who consistently supported your child and their classmates in their educational journey? Then, nominate them today!

One teacher and one student from Quebec will win a \$250 gift card to the store of their choice to celebrate the end of the school year!

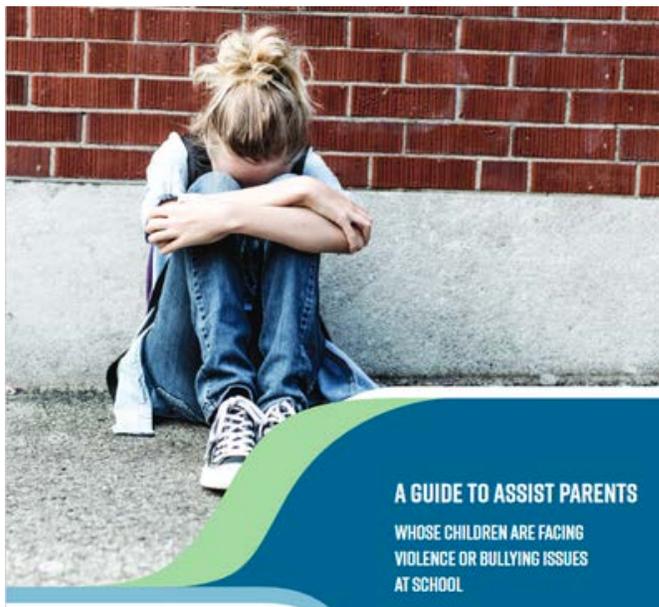
**Hurry!** The contest closes on **June 19, 2024, at 11:59 p.m.**

### Summer School?

It's hard to imagine that your child might still have to go to school during the summer. Yet, for many students, attending summer school is another chance to transform their challenges into successes. And fortunately, Alloprof is also here to help! Our Ask a Teacher service will be open from July 10 to July 31. Students can phone, text, or live chat with one of our teachers to get help with school-related questions. Or, your child can ask questions anytime in our Help Zone, open 24/7. Psst! There's a contest for this too starting on July 4th!



# Parent Resources



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

## Tutoring



## Homework Help



## ENGLISH ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATES

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



UNITED FOR SCHOOL:  
**MY VOICE,  
 OUR IMPACT!**

If you are a teacher, a school non-teaching or administrative staff member, a parent, or a member of community-based organizations, **WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

The challenges that schools face are well known. However, no public consultation has ever brought together all the stakeholders in education and explored all of the facets of these challenges. Until now! Here's a unique opportunity for you to share your views and ideas on the subject. Your input will contribute to support the academic success of students and the well-being of the entire school community!

The more people participate, the more the issues deemed a priority and the more the strategies proposed to address these issues will reflect the realities across all the regions of Quebec and the many stakeholders.



## Your Role

### ON A SECURE ONLINE PLATFORM:

**Identify** the most pressing challenges faced by education stakeholders and propose solutions to address these issues. (15 min.)

### AND/OR

**Classify** the most popular strategies into groups and identify those with the highest potential for impact (15 min.)



## Expected outcomes

1. An exhaustive list of pressing issues and desired solutions across the province.
2. An inventory of initiatives already being applied to address these challenges.
3. An overview of the leading issues in each region and across stakeholders.



## How to participate to this research project

Go directly to the online consultation platform.



Visit our website for more information and to download material to promote the project at your school, institution, or association.

This project, led by Isabelle Ouellet-Morin and Sylvana Côté, has been approved by the Comité d'éthique de la recherche - Société et culture (CERSC) of the Université de Montréal (no. 2023-4945).



Observatoire pour l'éducation et la santé des enfants

# 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](#)

5253, Blvd. Decarie, Suite 309, Montreal, Quebec, H3W 3C3  
(514) 778-3722 - [epcaquebec.org](http://epcaquebec.org) - [president@epcaquebec.org](mailto:president@epcaquebec.org)

# 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.