



English Parents' Committee Association

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ABOUT EPCA

March 2021 Volume 2



Katherine Korakakis is the President of the English Parents Committee Association (EPCA). In addition to this vital role in the Quebec educational sector, Katherine has spent most of her life working alongside start-ups in various verticals. For 10 years, she was responsible for the development of entrepreneurial initiatives and projects under the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, a Youth Secretariat program of the government of Quebec. Katherine is Head of Entrepreneurship at ProMontreal Entrepreneurs (PME), an early stage VC fund that has been around for 20 yrs, and is currently the vice-president of PME MTL Centre-Ouest and on the investment committees of PME MTL Centre and PME MTL Centre-Ouest. Katherine has also authored and co-authored guidebooks on entrepreneurship education and has served on the Boards of numerous corporations.

President's message

Tools for Parents

As the voice for all parents in the English public school in Quebec, EPCA is constantly working on tools for parents in the province. We are proud to say that we have recently made enormous strides in providing resources to parents. We have partnered with the *Fédération des comités de parents du Québec* (FCPQ) to publish a special edition of the digital magazine *École branchée* focussing on teaching in a digital age... you can find it at <https://ecolebranchee.com/en/family/>. EPCA has also partnered with the FCPQ to launch a website full of amazing resources – parents.quebec – for parents in all areas of our province.

In the future, we will be focusing on providing additional resources for parents and children on various subjects and ensuring that the Quebec government hears the concerns and needs of English school students and their parents.

On Monday, we launched a consultation of parents' committees and special needs advisory committees regarding the organization and funding of services for special needs students. The results will be submitted to the Ministry of Education in the aim of improving processes in the best interest of students.

As parents, we are concerned and want to do everything we can for the well-being and success of our children. EPCA is there to help you achieve those goals. Don't forget that you can always contact us if you need help or have any questions and I invite you to follow us on social media and sign up for our mailing list on the EPCA website if you haven't already done so.



Tina Oppong's eldest daughter started kindergarten this year so she joined parent governance for the first time. She was nominated to be the delegate for Parents Committee and was also voted to represent her school board on EPCA. As a Special Education teacher with her own Grade 2 class, a role as Head Teacher, and being the mother of two daughters aged 2 and 6, life is chaotic but definitely fulfilling and always exciting.

*Tina Oppong
Head Teacher, Sir Mortimer B. Davis School
Jewish General Hospital, Child Psychiatry Department
Director, English Montreal School Board*

EPCA BOD Editorial: The Teacher / Parent Dichotomy

I am very new to the work of parent Governance in Quebec, but definitely not to the education system. I was a teacher first, following in the footsteps of my mother who started a school in Ghana in 2000. Teaching has been a part of my life for so many years, starting with teaching at my mom's school in Ghana continuing to teaching in the special education sector here in Quebec. You can say that teaching has been my calling... and in the end, kids are kids no matter where you teach.

Then I became a parent and realized that the love I have always felt for my school "kids" was magnified with my own children. This pushed me to not only realize the lengths I would go to sacrifice for my own children, but also gave me a completely different perspective on my students as children first. It also meant that I was faced with a new reality – confronting the inherent strain that comes with being a teacher and a mother at the same time and learning how to balance those two realities so that I can continue to be successful in my role in the educational system.

Now, I have also become a Director with EPCA and a whole new world has been opened to me. I wasn't aware of EPCA before my daughter started school this year, but once she did I was very interested in being in a position to have direct access to the government decision-makers on education. EPCA allows me the opportunity to influence systemic changes and advocate for other parents who don't have the opportunity to do so for themselves.

I feel that it is an honour and a privilege to be a part of EPCA and have a seat at the table. I believe that my teaching background – more than being a stressing factor – now allows me to provide insight and advice from both the parent perspective as well as from a perspective of working inside the educational system in Quebec. In that way, I do feel that I can be a part of changing education in Quebec for the better.

Children and Anxiety: How the pandemic has increased concerns

By: Doug Bently, EPCA Director, LBPSB

March 12th, 2020 I was sitting at my son's school, attending what was to be our last in-person Governing Board meeting, with the world changing by the minute around us. I asked our principal what we would do for the kids in the very likely event our schools were going to shut down. He answered, "I don't know, we have never had a pandemic before". In truth, no-one knew what was going to happen.

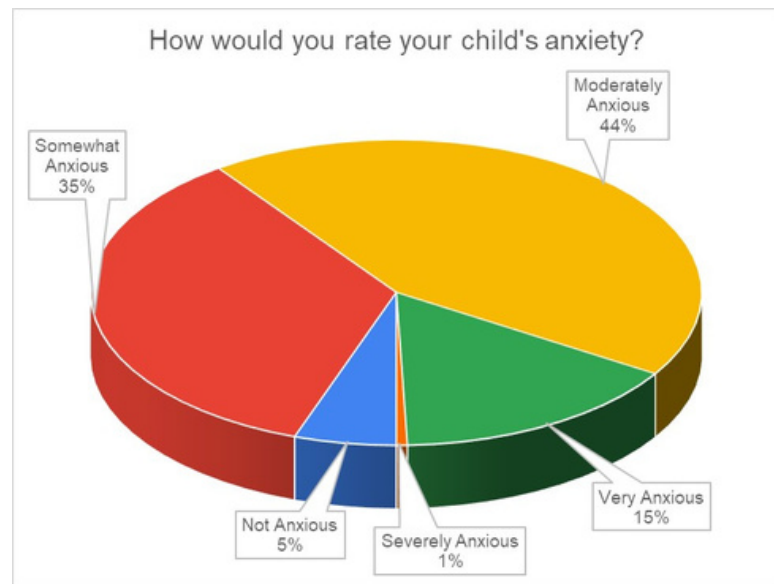
A year later we have a much better understanding of how to navigate a

pandemic. Québec Public health has given us guidelines to follow. Our school boards and our schools have adapted on the fly to changing requirements based on evolving social and health considerations. All with the important goal of keeping us – and our children – physically healthy.

While there is nobody unaffected by this new reality, it's the kids who have the least amount of control over their situation, and anxiety can be directly related to not having control. A child's anxiousness is high when their confidence is low and there is a high amount of uncertainty. In a recent EPCA survey, we found that 95% parents surveyed said that their children were somewhat to extremely anxious. This is an alarming statistic.

Parents have a very important job to do in positively framing all the challenges that their children have overcome and are continuing to overcome in this difficult time. Reframing these challenges as opportunities can help increase motivation while mitigating anxiousness and despair. Don't forget, children reflect the attitude of their parents. Helping your child through this is the most important thing you can do for your child's future. Every small thing you can do to help your children through this will mean a lot to their growth. Making them feel strong for their sheer perseverance throughout this pandemic will help them persevere.

There are kids who, even before the pandemic, needed professional help with anxiety and even more now who need assistance. Please contact your school (or visit parents.quebec) if your child is in need. There are resources available to your family.





EPCA, in partnership with *Ometz*, the *Betty and Bernard S. Shapiro Family Endowment*, and *Federation CJA*, was delighted to host Dr. Meg Jay earlier this month for an amazing lecture for parents. The topic was how children use their most challenging experiences to become more resilient, an extremely relevant subject given that the COVID pandemic has provided a significantly challenging experience for our children.

Dr. Jay began by discussing the fact that 75% of children have been affected by one or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which can include abuse/violence, neglect, mental illness, and now COVID. She also explained how increased stress, especially for a prolonged period of time, can negatively impact both our brains and our bodies – BUT that doesn't have to be the end of the story.

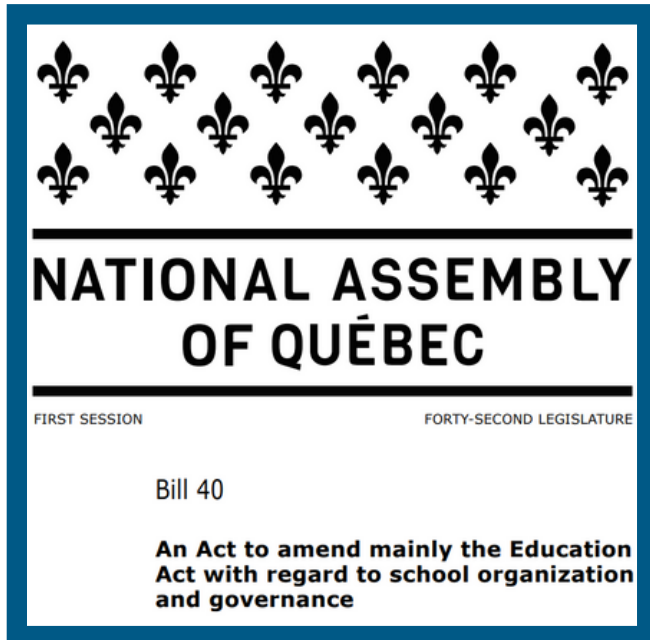
Resiliency, Dr. Jay states, can shift the story... from abnormal to supernormal; from being a victim of circumstance to being a protagonist in one's life. In other words, it is not just about what has happened to us (or our children), but what we do to get through it.

In an empowering message, Dr. Jay informed parents that we can learn to be resilient, although that doesn't mean that we won't struggle. It just means that we "change the conversation" to ensure that we believe we can push through rather than dwell and remain stagnant in a bad situation. Also, Dr. Jay explained that the most effective treatment to help children overcome the ACEs was to improve the number and quality of relationships in the child's life; these relationships help lower stress hormones and calm children – a benefit which builds up over time and also contributes to resiliency.

And she also came with pointers to finish off the talk:

- Notice what has gone well or might go right → see the good
- Tolerate uncertainty → we can recover
- Recognize that most situations have upsides and downsides → things are never all bad
- Learn not to always compare → it's good to stay on the same path sometimes, even if things aren't perfect

Holding our breath: Bill 40 and the English-language public school system



The debate surrounding Bill 40 continues in the aftermath of its fast-tracked adoption on February 8, 2020.

While this Bill has become law, it is not currently in effect for English-language school boards and continues to hang over our system, just waiting to roll over our existing structures. To stop its implementation, English school boards evoked Article 23 of the Canadian Constitution, the provision that guarantees minority official language communities the right to control and manage their

educational institutions. A request for a stay on Bill 40 was granted by the courts last Fall on those grounds... and that's where we stand today. While our French-language peers have seen their elected school boards councils wiped away, ours remain in place in a sort of suspended animation.

EPCA's position on Bill 40 has been nuanced, as we reflect on the various potential impacts. What we have seen with our counterparts in the French-language system has been worrying. Many parents feel that their voices are no longer being heard since this reform came in, and there is a strong sense that control is being centralized in Quebec City. This would be absolutely unacceptable to us in the English-speaking community. That is why EPCA has chosen to continue to support the fight to strike down Bill 40, working with organizations like APPELLE-Quebec and encouraging people across our community to donate towards the legal fight through an ongoing GoFundMe campaign. That fight continues.

At our core, we believe that schools must be stronger. There are so many needs that remain unfilled, and government must stop the rhetoric and start prioritizing our schools.

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Holding our breath: Bill 40 and the English-language public school system (cont.)

The investment needed is tremendous... and governance reform is just a side-show compared to the crumbling state of many of our schools. The English-language community needs to continue the fight to champion our schools, and push for more local control of our institutions.

How would this Bill impact parent governance across the English-language system? Well, the answer is complex. Among many other aspects, Parent Committees would lose the right to nominate commissioners to the new Board of Directors, being replaced by parent representatives elected at large from among parents of school Governing Boards. The election process would become heavy and overly complicated, likely resulting in more acclamations and fewer true votes. Parent democracy would be whittled away. PPOs and Home and School Associations may remain unaffected for now, but who knows what the future may bring.

With the merits of the legal challenge to Law 40 scheduled to be heard in April, we are likely still just in the middle of this saga... one likely to end at the Supreme Court of Canada. Until then, we wait.

If you'd like to learn more about Bill 40, please check out on our website at www.epcaquebec.org/for-parents/bill-40-explained/

To support the Bill 40 legal fight, visit the GoFundMe campaign here: <https://ca.gofundme.com/f/quebec-bill-40-court-challenge>

Summer is Coming!

Reminders for Parents

Camp Registration – Good News! Camps are a go in many places. Take a look in your neighborhood recreation centres. Also, many camps offer bursaries or payment plans!

Look ahead to summer

What else can you do for the summer other than a camp?

- Hire a trusted high school student to watch your children... they can go to the pool, the park, etc.
- Make little bubbles with other parents – take turns sharing play dates at each house.
- Find time to not be on a schedule... have family time where you just hang out! This can be just five minutes a day of **child-led** play!



EPCA MISSION STATEMENT

The English Parents' Committee Association (EPCA) is a coalition of parents' committees of Quebec's English-language public school boards, representing more than 100,00 students in the youth sector.

EPCA advocates for a strong and sustainable English-language public education system to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for our children, while respecting the culture and language of anglophone Quebecers.

To do so, EPCA seeks to engage and motivate parents across Quebec to contribute to strong, representative and effective parent governance, to foster positive relationships with stakeholders across the educational spectrum, and to provide guidance and support to all member organizations.

What would you like to see in
our upcoming editions?

[TELL US HERE](#)

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EPCA STRATEGIC PILLARS

INFORM

Using all communications tools at our disposal, offer up-to-date information on public education initiatives, parent governance interests, best practices and issues management to ensure a healthy, well-engaged anglophone parent community.

CONSULT

Ensure strong, high-quality and consistent feedback mechanisms with members and partners across the English-language public school network through both electronic and in-person methods.

SUPPORT

Provide training and professional development at all levels of parent governance, optimize the sharing of best practices and provide multiple support services for parent committees, governing boards and parent delegates in need.

ADVOCATE

Push for appropriate policy change and improvement through enhanced partnerships with like-minded organizations, Government working groups/tasks forces, and related organizations, through well-considered political positions on behalf of English- Language parents committees across Quebec, taking into account regional difference and the urban/rural divide.



Katherine Korakakis, President
Tina Oppong-Lefebvre



Darren Pountney
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Pierre Masson



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WHO ARE WE?

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