



English Parents' Committee Association



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NEW EPCA EXECUTIVE & BOD

PARENT RESOURCES



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

A Smorgasbord of Information This Month!

Dear Parents,

Happy New Year!

I hope your family enjoyed the break and that your new year has gotten off to a good start. Schools are gearing up again quickly and so much is already happening both in schools and in the educational system in Quebec.

At the high school level, the 2nd semester is coming to an end and mid-terms are upon us. We present in this newsletter some tips to reduce exam-related anxiety. Report cards will soon be out and Parent / Teacher meetings will be available soon. However, there are always opportunities to speak to your teachers and school administration, even if there are not formal meetings being held.

EPCA has recently stood up its new Board of Directors as a result of democratic elections flowing from the local school and school board levels. We are very excited to have many new Directors join us and are equally thrilled with those who have come back for another year to move forward many exciting and important initiatives.

The Quebec government has also installed a new Student Ombudsman whose role is to support students and parents in the complaints process. More information can be found in the newsletter. Finally, we are excited to share the results of our recent survey on special needs students. We hope you find all of this information very useful!

Take good care everyone and have a great month!

6 Exam Anxiety Coping Strategies

High school students encounter a variety of different sorts of exams, ranging from midterms and finals to CEGEP admission exams and ministry exams. They may perceive the stakes to be very large, which might increase their anxiety. These suggestions may assist to alleviate your teen's exam anxiety.

1. Pay attention to your teen's anxieties about testing and the implications of tests on their future

Many high school examinations can have an impact on what your child will do after high school. Marks on these tests and exams can impact admission eligibility into CEGEPs and impact how students continue their educational journey. This puts a lot of stress on highschoolers. These assessments can be even more

difficult for teenagers who have learning and mental disabilities and for those who are concerned about their future.

Discuss your teen's feelings openly and listen to their worries. Try to be soothing while remaining realistic. You can say things such as: "We can assist you in ensuring that you are prepared for this test. And don't be concerned about how you do on it. There are several possibilities available to you after high school, and we will help you to locate the finest ones."

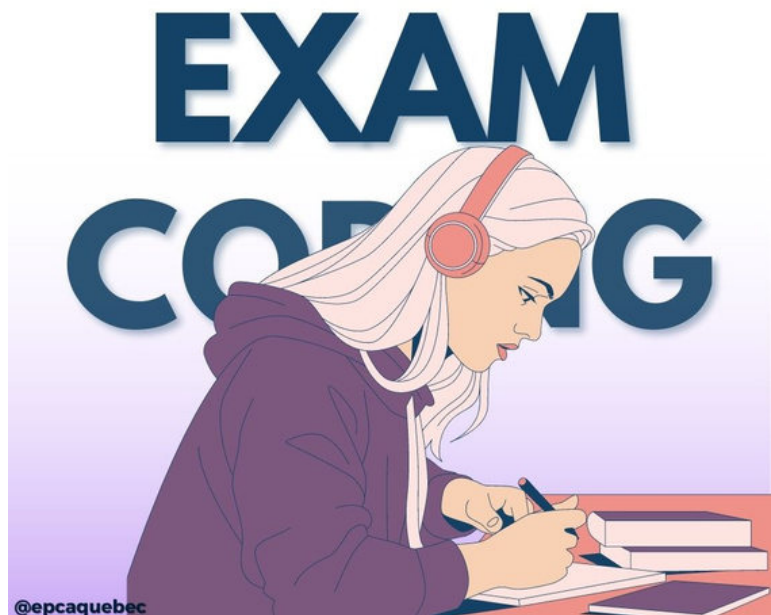
2. Assist in balancing their schedule so that they are not pressed for time

It's one thing to not devote enough time to exam preparation but it's something altogether different to truly not have enough time. Being rushed might exacerbate anxiety which, in turn, may diminish a teen's ability to focus and do well. Allow enough time in your child's schedule for them to comfortably prepare.

Examine your child's class and activity schedule, then discuss the amount of time required for studying. You can think about reducing your child's activities if it would allow him or her ample time to study. Explain how maintaining a sense of balance might help to ease stress.

3. Assist them in avoiding stressful cramming

Last-minute exam cramming is likely to cause anxiety. Part of the difficulty might be organizational and time management concerns.



6 Exam Anxiety Coping Strategies

cont.

One method to avoid this is to assist children in creating a monthly schedule of tests. Then, assist them in developing a weekly review program for each test or quiz. Each week, review the exam calendar and make a study plan for the following week. Having a routine and sticking to it might help children feel more in control.

4. Avoid surprises by providing exam information in advance

When they don't know what to anticipate from the test, some high school students may experience heightened anxiety. Not knowing the format (is it a multiple-choice or short/long answer questions?) or the structure (open book, reading comprehension, situational, etc.) can cause uncertainty and stress. What does your teen struggle with?

Suggest that your child ask about the kind of questions that will be on the test or exam and the structure for the assessment. Knowing what to expect might help children prepare and feel more confident. Children who struggle with handwriting, for example, may be concerned that their science examination will require them to name a diagram. They could feel less anxious if they could rehearse ahead of time.

5. Confirm that they understand their test accommodations

Knowing that their unique requirements are being met might help lessen exam anxiety. When children have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) that includes testing accommodations, make sure they understand what the accommodations are and why they will be beneficial. Note that kids can also request accommodations for CEGEP admission examinations.

You should also tell your youngsters that if the instructor or substitute forgets about the accommodations, they should advocate for themselves and remind them.

6. Explain to your teen that setbacks are normal and expected

Even with solid study habits, ample time, and preparation, some students may perform poorly on examinations, especially if they have learning and cognitive disabilities. It is important to discuss with teens that this is normal and an expected part of life – because if they become terrified of failure, they may begin to dread tests and feel concerned about them which will only cause a larger issue into the future.

We want to try to overcome that anxiety by developing an action plan in the aftermath of a poor test grade. Say to your teen: "I know you worked hard for that math test! You now know what worked and what didn't work out so well. Should we gather your IEP team (if applicable)? We can discuss what would work better for you the next time." In the end, it is important to be supportive and positive in order to provide the best possible outcome for your child in their educational journey.

Student Ombudsman

Complaints and the Student Ombudsman

According to the Education Act, every school board must have a procedure in place that allows parents to be heard if they believe their rights are being violated or their child is being treated unfairly at school. Inquire with your school board about its complaint's procedure. The board must make its rules public and easily accessible.

Furthermore, the Education Act states that "a student affected by a decision of the school board's council of commissioners, the governing board, or a holder of an office or employment under the authority of the school board, or the parents of such a student, may apply to the school board's council of commissioners for a review of that decision" (**Education Act, section 9**).

To whom should I address a complaint, and how should I write it?

Read your school board's complaint procedure, which is available on the school board's website. This section contains information on how to file a complaint. If the complaint procedure is not readily available to you, do not hesitate to contact the Secretary General of your school board to obtain it.

It is advised that you submit your complaint in writing rather than verbally. However, your complaint must be carefully worded. The text must be clear, and the language must be carefully chosen to avoid ambiguity. As a result, avoid expressing opinions and write the complaint as factually as possible.

Always keep a copy of all documents related to your complaint.

What should a complaint include?

The following elements should be included in your complaint:

The complaint's subject matter: You must first define the subject matter of your complaint as precisely as possible.

Compelling evidence: You must briefly describe the problem, using specific facts, straightforward evidence, or solid testimony, stating the circumstances under which the events occurred, the date and location, as well as the people involved and their coordinates. You must also explain why you believe your rights, or the rights of your child, have been violated, including a description of the harm you have suffered.

Steps taken: If applicable, describe the steps you have already taken, including the date, people contacted, and outcomes.

Suggested solution: Inform your recipient what you believe is the best way to resolve the dispute.

Student Ombudsman

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What is the role of the Student Ombudsman?

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you can now contact the Student Ombudsman. The Student Ombudsman will deal with complaints in a neutral manner. In certain circumstances, where there is a potential for harm to the student, the Student Ombudsman may intervene before the complaint process is complete.

According to the law, "the ombudsman must, within 30 days of receiving the request from the complainant, give the council of commissioners his or her opinion on the merits of the complaint and, if applicable, propose the corrective measures he or she deems appropriate" (**Education Act, s. 220.2**).

Regulation respecting the complaint examination procedure established by a school service centre

Contact Information for the Student Ombudsman

Each school board has its own Ombudsman – for more information and to find out who to contact, click [here](#).



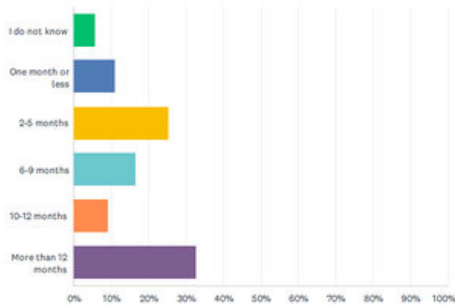
Special Needs Survey Results

- Key Data Points

In response to the Quebec government's Project 294, regarding getting the perspectives of parents on the overhaul of funding and the organization of services for students with disabilities and those with learning or adaptation difficulties, EPCA launched a survey to directly solicit information from parents. The survey had 634 respondents from across the province of Quebec, each of whom has a special needs child. The following graphs represent a selection of responses from the survey, a full analysis of which will be presented to the government by EPCA as part of the consultation process. As well, the next section of the newsletter presents a more personal perspective of survey results from a parent's viewpoint.

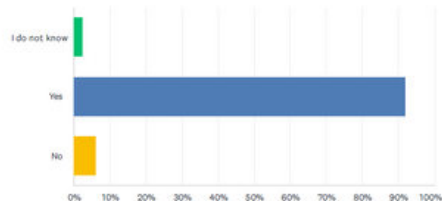
Q5 How many months did you wait for your child to be diagnosed?

Answered: 220 Skipped: 414



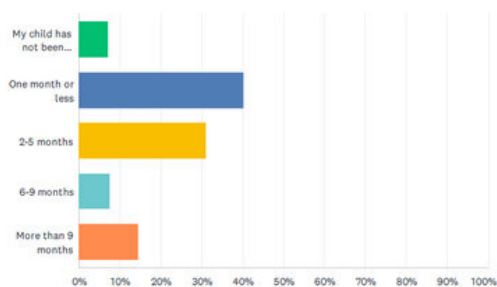
Q9 Does your child have an individualized education plan/intervention plan?

Answered: 220 Skipped: 414



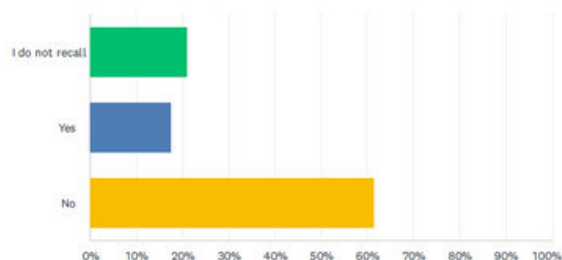
Q11 If your child has been identified as a student with a disability, how many months did it take from the beginning of the school year until the child's disability was accommodated?

Answered: 201 Skipped: 433



Q17 At the time of your child's assessment, did you discuss the possibility of your child receiving a recognized MEES code for the purpose of funding the services your child needs?

Answered: 239 Skipped: 395



	EXTREMELY UNSATISFIED	SOMEWHAT UNSATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	EXTREMELY SATISFIED	NO OPINION
Length of time between the assignment of a recognized MEES code and access to services for my child	18.41% 37	13.93% 28	17.41% 35	22.89% 46	17.41% 35	9.95% 20
Nature of the services offered to my child to meet their specific needs	18.91% 38	24.88% 50	9.95% 20	32.34% 65	11.94% 24	1.99% 4
Frequency of interventions with my child to meet their specific needs	20.40% 41	27.86% 56	12.44% 25	23.88% 48	11.94% 24	3.48% 7
Overall effectiveness of the measures implemented to meet my child's specific needs	18.91% 38	26.87% 54	12.44% 25	27.36% 55	11.94% 24	2.49% 5
Communication between me and the school	20.40% 41	16.92% 34	13.43% 27	19.40% 39	27.86% 56	1.99% 4
The overall assessment/diagnostic process	14.43% 29	15.42% 31	18.41% 37	25.87% 52	19.40% 39	6.47% 13

Special Needs Survey Results

- A Parent's Perspective

Getting a diagnosis

If we have to wait for an official diagnosis using the standard waiting list, it will probably take two or more years! This is in line with the results of the survey where more than 32% of respondent have been waiting more than a year for a diagnosis for their child. However, with the help of a proactive social worker in the CLSC and/or a previous diagnosis from elsewhere, some are able to bypass the extreme waiting list that is currently in place. Survey results seem to be indicating that not only are teachers and school staff now recognizing external diagnoses more, they are now also recommending to parents to get diagnoses for their child as the survey has indicated that the impetus for the diagnosis of the child was the assessment done at the request of the school in 20% of all cases.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

My son did not have an IEP in Pre-K and he was not familiar with calming techniques for when he was overstimulated, resulting in him being restrained and dragged through the hallway to a calm room (which was actually a storage unit) to make him compliant! When my daughter, who attended the same school, accidentally witnessed the situation, she had to intervene brokenheartedly. When the IEP process was introduced at the school, it was a welcome change. Unfortunately, it initially did not meet my child's needs and we had to intervene again with an external therapist and social worker to enhance the quality of the IEP, a process that we have repeated almost twice a year since then. The survey has indicated that only 60% of parents are involved in the development of their child's IEP; given my experience, this rate is alarmingly low.

Communication

My son's issues in school were not communicated to us in a timely manner and we had to be incredibly proactive in order to be able to get information on incidents that he was involved in. According to survey results, the communication between parents and schools remains an issue as more than 30% of respondents have indicated that they are unsatisfied or extremely unsatisfied with communication between them and the school. I can say that this is an accurate representation of my feelings throughout my son's educational journey as well. The really unfortunately part about this is that communication is so fundamental to ensuring my son receives the support that he needs to progress, as every incident, not about his behaviour, and strategies to overcome his challenges must be communicated amongst his private therapist, other members of the school community, and his social worker in CLSC in order to be successful. This gives us a united front to address his issues and overcome them as they present. Nothing is more important than timely communication between the school and parents.

Special Needs Survey Results

- A Parent's Perspective

cont.

Services

We have been on waiting lists to get services for my son since 2014, so I was really struck by the section of the survey dealing with waiting for services.

The only time my son got one-on-one intervention it resulted on him having a permanent scar on his face due to self-harm since methods of intervention are extremely outdated and incompatible with my child's needs.



Invisible Disability

The impact of having an invisible disability often exacerbates the situation. For children such as my son, when the disability is not clearly visible, behavioural issues can be miscategorized as being disrespectful and rude. This can make getting help harder.

French Language

My son has always had issues with learning languages due to his autism and now that he has started high school, his issues with French classes persist. My son was non-verbal until the age of three when he finally started speaking after intensive speech therapy and at that time could only pick up English, never learning French which was in fact his mother tongue. We felt that we couldn't insist on his learning to speak French because we were so worried that he would lose the one language that he actually did have. Considering that 40% of autistic children are non-verbal or have very limited vocabulary, our priority for him was to have at least one language, regardless of if it was English or French. With Quebec's language requirements tightening onto the French language, we are now in a very disadvantageous situation. As an autistic child of immigrant parents for whom French is a third language, we feel that his future options are becoming more and more limited and restricted due to his inability to learn French - and this is truly heartbreaking! The unfortunate reality of the new laws that have been put in place is that the only way that he can get an exemption from French in CEGEP is if he consistently fails his French classes throughout high school, a fact that we continuously have to remind ourselves and school staff. Bill 96 simply does not take into consideration the requirements of children with disabilities and special needs.

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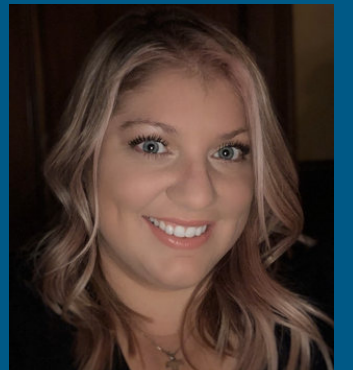
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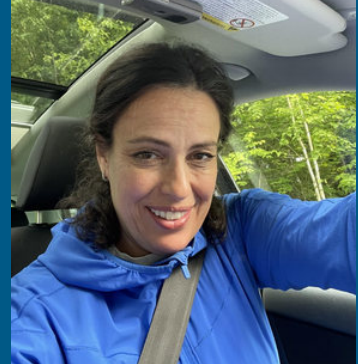
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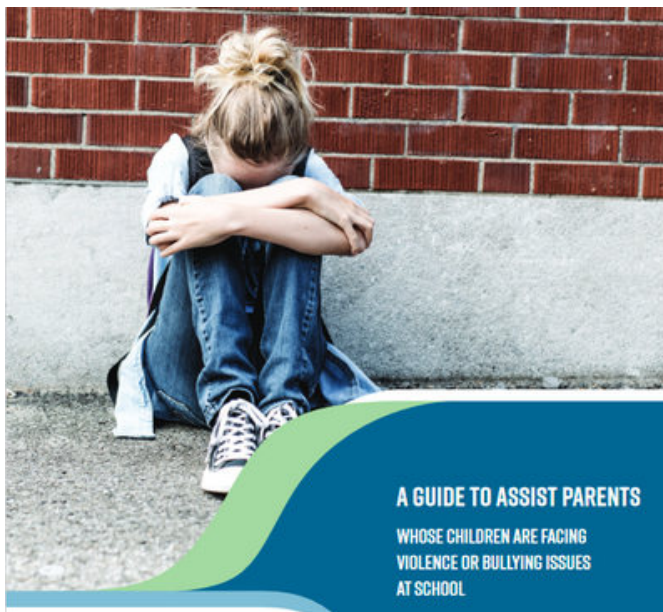


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Parent Resources

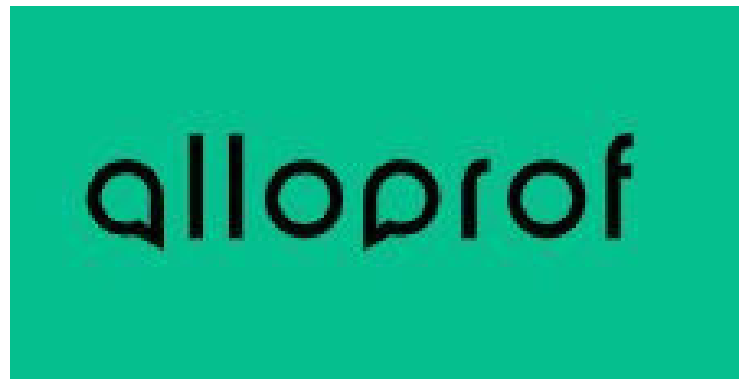


The Quebec Federation of Parents' Committees, with support from various partners - including EPCA's President Katherine Korakakis, has put together a guide to assist parents whose children are facing violence or bullying issues at school - click [here](#).

Tutoring



Homework Help



Supporting the journey to bilingualism, the Canadian Parents for French has many resources on their [website](#) to foster French second language learning. As well, EPCA will be partnering with Canadian Parents for French to host a movie night in French on 19 April - to register, click [here](#).



CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH (CPF)

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.