



# English Parents' Committee Association

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**ONLY 4 WEEKS LEFT!**



*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

## Supporting all students!

Dear Parents,

We are getting closer to the end of the school year, and we can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel. With curfews being lifted across the province on May 28, along with many of our schools returning to full operation at the high school levels, we can breathe a guarded sigh of relief. Vaccines are also being rolled out for children aged 12 years old and above. Things are getting better.

As we now reflect on more than 14 months under various pandemic restrictions, it's a great time to take stock of how well our children have adapted to virtual learning to make this school year happen. We've all been thrown into a situation that we did not anticipate at hyper speed, with online learning taking a much more important role than ever before. Some students spent all of 2020-2021 in front of the computer, while others, only weeks at a time. What are the impacts? And what can we learn as we head into the next school year?

This edition of our newsletter is tackling some of those questions as we look at the impact of electronic device usage on our kids, the advantages and pitfalls of online learning, and other aspects of good digital citizenship. We hope that it will serve as an informative guide to our local experience navigating the digital world for our schools.

EPCA also heard parents' concerns and has been at the forefront of making sure that electronic resources are available to parents throughout the year. We pushed to ensure that students who did not have access to laptops at home could get them through their schools...

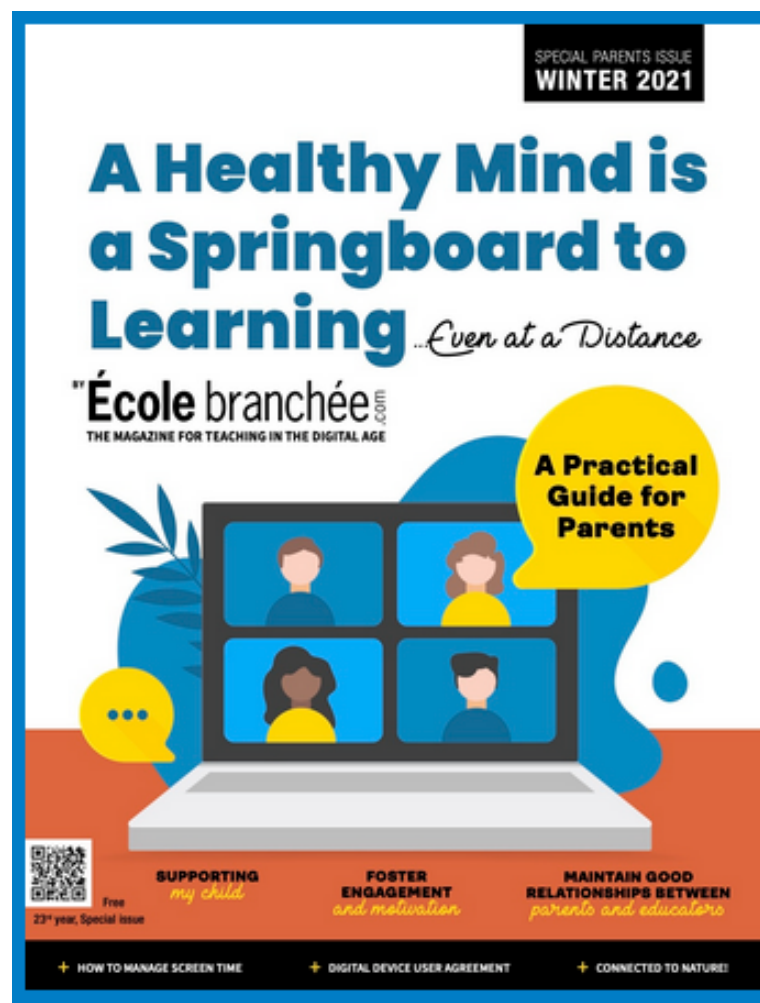
# President's message

cont.

... for virtual learning, if and when they were needed. If you haven't been able to access needed tools for your child, please contact your school principal today.

We also launched our long-term partnership with the FCPQ for Parents.Quebec. This online tool is intended for parents of school-aged children who want to provide support to their children's educational success. We all know that being a parent is not always easy. Finding the right resources to help your child is even less so. With Parents.Quebec, you will be able to find a wide array of resources in just one click.We encourage you to check it out, and if you think we're missing a local resource, please let us know! .

We don't know what the next year will bring, but there is no doubt in our minds that technology will play a key role. Let's continue to work together as a community to make sure that we do it in the safest, most effective way that we can.





*Rebecca is originally from Montreal. She is the mother of three young boys (Grades, 3, 2, and pre-K). Rebecca has been on the Governing Board of her school for four years as a parent, prior to which she sat on the Governing Board as the community representative for James Bay. This is her first year on the WQSB Parent Committee and as an EPCA Director.*

*Rebecca Genest  
Director, Auberge Radisson, James Bay  
Director, Western Quebec School Board*

## **EPCA BOD Editorial: Carrying on the School Governance Legacy**

I was inspired to join parent governance by my Ukrainian godmother, Nadia Koshedub Kordiuk, who was the Board spokesperson for the former Protestant School Board in Montreal (now ESMB) for many years. Nadia spoke very passionately about how people should get involved in the process and involved in education; in fact, I remember conversations between my mother and godmother regarding how parent involvement directly impacts the success of a school and its students. This was ingrained in me and it was just natural that I would someday find my way into parent governance as well.

In addition, I strongly believe that you can't complain about what is happening if you aren't contributing to the process. In my opinion, the best way to understand why things are happening is to be involved and see the decision-making process first-hand. With this knowledge and understanding, we as parents are then better equipped to take and encourage positive actions and decisions.

At the start of this school year, half a year into COVID, I assumed that there would be a lot of changes coming to the educational system and I wanted to be a part of it. I also wanted to be able to communicate with other parents at Buckingham Elementary and provide information to my fellow parents about what was happening in my school board and across the English school system in Quebec. That is how I ended up as an EPCA Director.

One of the things that I am most concerned about is the impact that technology is having on students. Because I have young children, my experience this year has been challengin...

# Carrying on the School Governance Legacy

cont.

...in that it is difficult for young students like my kids to use the technology appropriately. While older students (late elementary and up) seem to have been able to adapt better on the whole, and learn more effectively using technology, my children (and other young students) really benefit from being physically in school. The use of technology in schooling is especially challenging for those children who have special needs, including one of my sons. My son has difficulty with understanding social situations, cues, and interactions. Time in class is essential as online classes are limited in supporting this type of learning. However, I want to be sure that it is clear that I don't believe that this is due to a lack of effort on the part of the teachers – they are doing their best to adapt to the changing and challenging situations.

Other worries about the use of technology for me include the amount of screen time and the long-term impact on our childrens' psychological and physical health. I have noticed my boys complaining more about experiencing headaches and missing their friends. On the other hand, however, I do see that technology has also been a blessing for some students who have been able to develop a sense of autonomy and gain time management skills. In fact, my eldest son is thriving and achieving excellent grades.

COVID has been challenging for all. What is easy for some, is not for others – we are in the same storm but not the same boat. But in the end, this has been a perfect time for me to be involved and to try and action change on behalf of all students at her school, in her school board, and across Quebec. I encourage other parents to do the same if they can!



# Digital Citizenship

## DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP GUIDE

PRACTICING SAFE, RESPONSIBLE, AND LEGAL USE OF TECHNOLOGY



### DIGITAL COMMERCE

Be respectful and always have permission before you hit "buy."



### DIGITAL DOWNTIME

Remember to digitally disconnect and spend time with others.



### DIGITAL ETIQUETTE

Apply real world behavioral standards to the digital world.



### DIGITAL HEALTH

Know when to stay connected and when to turn off devices.



### DIGITAL INTEGRITY

Examine the source of online information to determine credibility.



### DIGITAL LITERACY

Avoid suspicious emails, websites, and online advertisements.



### DIGITAL PRIVACY

Review privacy settings. Know what to share and with whom.



### DIGITAL RESPONSIBILITY

Report problems, abusive behavior, and inappropriate images or content.



### DIGITAL SECURITY

Make passwords easy to remember, but hard to guess.

SOURCE: <https://safesitter.org/digital-citizenship/>





# WQSB: Guide to Online Safety

The Western Quebec School Board (WQSB) is committed to helping parents and students learn to stay safe online. The WQSB put on a presentation for parents in April 2021 and have agreed to feature some tips and tricks in the EPCA newsletter. For more information, please reach out to [Trina Hubley](#), or [Rebecca Genest](#), WQSB's EPCA Directors.

We all know that the pandemic has required the significant ramp-up of the use of digital tools. Across the English school boards, students, teachers, staff, and teaching resource personnel are now actively using networks, One Drive, Teams, and other classroom files. Millions of emails have been sent and received and hundreds of thousands of electronic meetings have been held. From a security standpoint, the entire Quebec Educational Sector has 15 Security Measures, including network and data security, business continuity services, and cyber training. WQSB also ensures that WQSB email addresses are protected, so that no external emails may be received nor may any emails be sent outside the WQSB network.

WQSB has developed a Digital Action Plan, that aims to build a foundation for ethical digital citizenship.

## Digital Action Plan (DAP): A foundation for ethical citizenship

- ▶ DAP: what parents need to know
- ▶ DAP is part of our "master plan" which includes ethical citizenship
- ▶ Schools develop DAPs for their community
- ▶ Training for staff: awareness of information security

## What can parents do?

Three primary areas that families can manage to create a safer digital environment for their children are:

1. Monitor and control screen time and app access.
2. Manage devices.
3. Manage the home network.

# STAY SAFE ONLINE

## Tips from WQSB

- Have good communication
- Set clear guidelines
- Use technological tools yourself to remotely monitor and set screen time limits for devices and limitations on app usage
- Create filters to prevent access to certain content on the internet
- Do your homework
- Know what's out there
- Allow for balance with screen time
- Understand that the 21st Century learner uses technology in learning
- There are manufacturer-specific resources:
  - [Apple](#)
  - [Google](#)
  - [Microsoft](#)
- There are also often resources from the specific internet service provider that you use
- Finally, you may contact these additional resources:
  - [Parents.Quebec](#)
  - [Ecole Branchée](#)
  - [NeedHelpNow.ca](#) for teenagers
  - [Media Smarts](#) for managing screen time and excessive use supports
  - [Protect Kids Online](#)
  - [Internet Safety](#) - tips for youth
  - Common Sense Media's [Parents' Ultimate Guide to Parental Controls](#).





# EPCA Technology Surveys: THEN and NOW

## THEN: March 2020

This year has been an exceptional year and Quebec families are facing many challenges on a daily basis they have never faced before nor ever expected. Where school used to be a physical place, now a regular school day can either be in-class learning or remote learning. It is a different approach to learning which has presented a whole new set of challenges for parents and students and it has raised many concerns and challenges for parents. EPCA and the Fédération des comités de parents du Québec (FCPQ) put out a survey in March 2020 to gauge parent's reaction to moving to online learning and associated questions regarding the use of technology. Below is the feedback that we received.

### Do your children currently have access to a computer or other technological tools? *The need to manage sharing of tools*

Access to technological tools	Anglophones	Francophones
Yes, my children have their own computer	56%	24%
Yes, but they must share it with other family members	42%	73%
No, they do not have access	2%	3%

### For which aspect of parenting would you like more information?

#### *The challenge: keeping youth motivated while reconciling work with family organization*

Theme	Anglophones	Francophones
Motivation	35%	40%
Work-family balance	41%	33%
Stress-Anxiety management	25%	24%

Specific concerns that were raised by parents at the time included:

- Has there been adequate communication from teachers regarding their child's progress?
- How can parents make sure their children are keeping up with the curriculum?
- Have students who are more vulnerable received all the support they need from teachers and resource staff?
- Has each child's special needs been addressed and has communication with parents been open and often?
- How have families been coping with all of the changes?
- How have families dealt with multiple constraints of working at home with performance pressures coming from different sources, as much for parents as for children, who must also adapt to a new way of life?

Since the publication of this survey, we have learned a lot and made great strides with technology and online learning. However, there remains challenges.

## THEN to NOW

Each school year transitions into a new level of learning for students and making sure the students are ready to take that step is based on communications between the teacher and the parent(s). This is particularly sensitive in the current context, especially for families who are progressing to new educational levels next year (either into high school or into CEGEP). Some parents have been told that, "unless you hear from the teacher, there is no problem with the student's academics." This, coupled with some report cards being left without comments, has dramatically affected how parents can gauge where their child's level of understanding is on all the material being covered. If parents can't ascertain exactly where their children are academically, they cannot support them or help them to achieve what they need to for their academic career.

The concern is that the gap between special needs students and less vulnerable students would widen during this challenging year. Many parents have expressed a great deal of concern regarding their children's access to supports and even less vulnerable students have been negatively affected by lack of direct access to teachers and school staff.



While remote learning, students have used Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and/or Google Classroom depending on the School Board. Having children at home and learning important class material in an unfamiliar way has presented many challenges (for students, parents and teachers alike). While most families have access to electronic devices, training in their proper use has been an issue. Some students received in-class training on the software, but for the most part, parents were overlooked for training. Specifically in the elementary schools, parents were needed to set up, assist, and manage the technology for their kids – technology that they didn't necessarily understand themselves. And with this lack of training offered to parents came additional frustrations during an already challenging time.

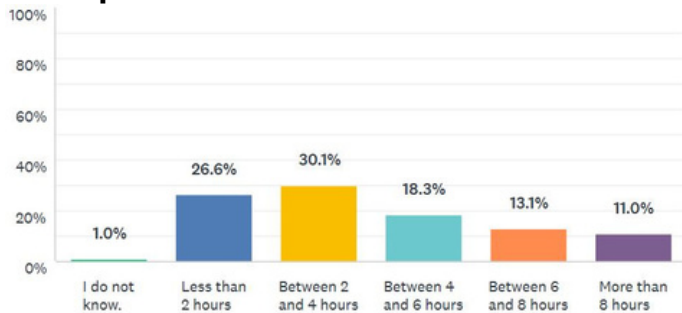
There is no doubt that this year has proved most challenging. One easy way to help is through effective communication between school and family. Teachers and parents have been put in a position where they need to work together and communicate effectively to ensure that the student benefits as much as possible. While this challenge has been taken on by all, it is important to note more can be done for the children and their future by utilizing the best outcomes from this year – including advancement in technology – as well as returning to the roots of personal interaction amongst students, parents, teachers, and school staff.

# EPCA Technology Surveys: THEN and NOW cont.

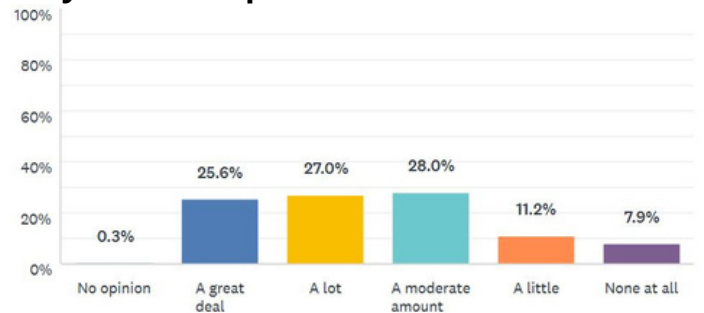
## NOW: May 2021

In May 2021, EPCA put out a new survey in regards to technology usage to determine if views on the use of technology have changed and if new concerns have arising. Below are the results of this survey.

### How many hours a day does your child spend on an electronic device?



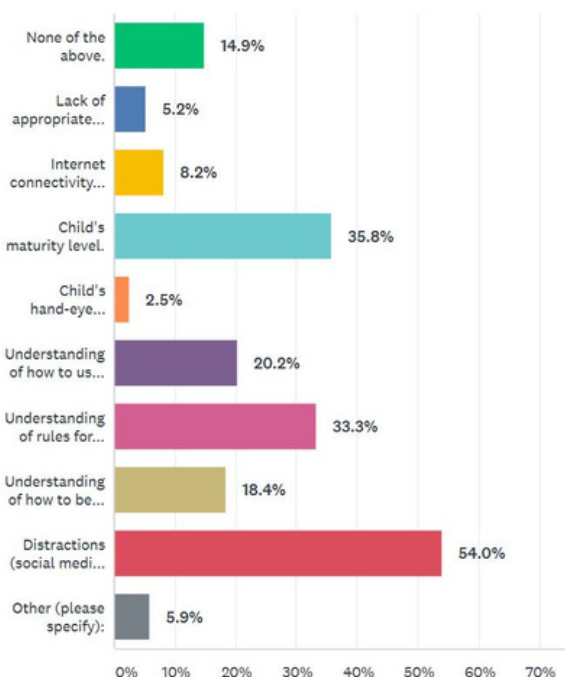
### How concerned are you about the amount of time your child spends on an electronic device?



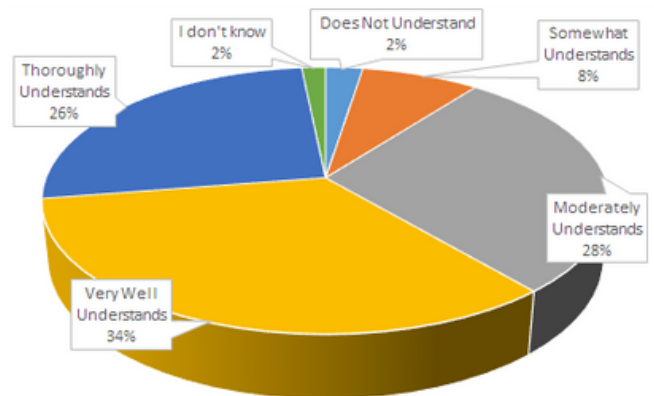
The survey asked specific questions in regards to changes in health and behaviour that a parent would attribute to the use of electronic devices. Answers are provided:

Question	Yes	No	I don't know
Changes in general health?	41.4%	52.8%	5.7%
Changes in eye health?	28.0%	58.8%	13.2%
Changes in mental health?	46.5%	47.0%	6.5%
Changes in attitude or behaviour?	58.2%	37.0%	4.8%
Has there been disciplinary problems?	31.0%	66.3%	2.7%

### What are the biggest missing elements to your child being able to use electronic devices more effectively?



### How well does your child understand how to use electronic devices appropriately?



The survey results indicate that, now, most children have a certain level of comfort with the use of electronic devices and are able to use them appropriately. However, there remains much concern about the amount of time students spend on devices as well as concern regarding impacts to the health and wellbeing of the children.

# Online Classroom Netiquette

- Choose a comfortable and designated space for working
- Be on time and ready to participate
- Dress appropriately
- Maintain proper posture and move around on breaks
- Limit external distractions
- Only eat during your breaks and lunch
- Keep the mute function on until you are asked to remove it by your teacher
- Keep the video/camera function on during class
- Use the chat function for schoolwork purposes only
- Wait for your turn and do not interrupt the teacher or other students
- Be respectful of everyone and their opinions
- Do not share or post inappropriate material
- Pay attention, participate, and be engaged during class time
- Online classes deserves the same attention, respect, and hard work as in-school classes





# Only 4 Weeks Left!

## TUTORING

Parents, there are only 4 more weeks of school. If your child needs help, **NOW** is the time to be hiring a tutor if you think one would be helpful for your children. Children **still have time to learn** any essential skills that they might not have mastered in class. Remember, receiving one-on-one support from professionally trained educators is the best way to ensure that your children understand important concepts. Learn Quebec offers free online tutoring and homework support, as well as excellent tips for parents. For more information, visit: <https://www.learnquebec.ca/what-is-online-tutoring-!>



## CONTACT TEACHERS

If you have any concerns about your children's academic progress, email their teachers and ask for an appointment to discuss concrete ways that you can help support your child at home. Remember, working collaboratively with your child's teacher is one of the best ways to promote academic success.

## REGISTER FOR SUMMER ACTIVITIES

This summer, many summer camps will be open. Check out local spots and make sure to register soon! And remember, a real vacation, is important - focus on family time and outdoor activities like picnics, bike rides, hikes, and playing sports.





# 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  
David Fournier



Pierre Masson



Bart Jeuris  
Dana Hoshowatiuk

# WHO ARE WE?

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