

A photograph of a parent carrying a young child on their shoulders. The child, wearing a yellow shirt, has their arms outstretched towards a bright, hazy sky at sunset. The parent is wearing a striped shirt. The scene is backlit by the low sun, creating a warm, golden glow.

**FOR EVERY CHALLENGE,  
there is a solution!**

# ACTION Parents

Volume 45 • Number 1 • June 2021

- Learning differently
- Initiatives for our students
- Support for parents



Fédération  
des comités de parents  
du Québec

# ACTION Parents

Volume 45 • Number 1 • June 2021

*Action Parents* is a magazine for parents active in Quebec schools, and more broadly, all parents and partners in the education sector.

To consult this June issue as well as previous issues, visit our website at: [www.fcpq.qc.ca](http://www.fcpq.qc.ca).

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## Word from the Editor-in-Chief



Dear readers,

As we finish a school year marked by the pandemic, it seems appropriate to highlight the successes and best practices that encourage youth perseverance and achievement, and that helped simplify the lives of parents over recent months.

We wanted to shine the spotlight on some great ideas and large projects that emerged this year, not only to celebrate them but also so that they can be retained or inspire us in the future.

In this edition, you will find projects and ideas that help students continue to learn in a different context, programs for youth and initiatives to support parents.

We also included a poem written by a high school student as a reminder that the success of youth is always at the centre of our commitment.

In addition, we want to put more emphasis on the ideas and initiatives of parents and students. Are you a parent and would like to propose an article for a future edition of our magazine? Do you have a topic to propose? Does your child have a flair for writing?

Write to us at [communications@fcpq.qc.ca](mailto:communications@fcpq.qc.ca) and tell us about it!

Happy reading!

**Stéphanie Rochon**

## President's Message



Dear Parents,

Summer is slowly arriving with promises of nice weather and living with fewer restrictions. I think we are all anxious to enjoy it as a family and most importantly, we deserve it!

Parents had to deal with a lot of new challenges and changes during the school year: supervising remote learning, explaining all the health measures to our children, reconciling working at home and family, and all while having fewer social interactions and activities to enjoy.

Well done!

The last few months have not been easy, in several ways, and we will not miss many of the new habits we had to adopt for everyone's sake. I am the first to want to get back to a "normal" life, but we must admit that some of our old ways merit reflection and improvement, and we should not set aside everything we have learned and created during the pandemic.

Indeed, parents were able to set an example for their children, showing creativity, resourcefulness and respect for others.

School staff mobilized and reinvented themselves to continue to support and guide their students despite the difficult circumstances. Parents are grateful for it.

This prolonged period of frequent changes, online learning and part-time school attendance, has proven how important it is to maintain smooth, two-way communication between school and families. This promotes co-education and helps all adults surrounding the student better support them in their success.

Partner organizations in the education sector or who provide services to families have gone above and beyond to continue to support them and meet their changing needs. The FCPQ has developed many collaborations over the year to support parents in their new challenges, and our complementary missions and desire to help parents have guided us toward common projects.

It is a legacy of the pandemic that we want to continue to nurture!

Parents who are involved in school governance have been resilient, despite the lack of social interaction that usually characterizes and enhances their implication. They discovered solutions to carry out their work and persevered for the well-being and success of all students.

While we are anxious to leave the pandemic behind us, we must recognize the successes and best practices that emerged and strive to retain them.

A big thank you to everyone who rolled up their sleeves and developed and implemented innovative ideas this year... and who will continue in the years to come!

Have a great summer!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Roy'.

**Kévin Roy**



La Fédération  
des centres de services  
scolaires du Québec



**Caroline Dupré**  
*President-director general*

## PROJECTS to get through it!

The pandemic situation that was experienced in Quebec's schools and classrooms demanded many efforts on the part of students and their families in order to persevere, stay motivated and continue learning. We are paying tribute to their remarkable resilience.

All staff in school service centers and educational institutions work very hard each day to provide the best possible environment for the students in their care. In many regions, innovative, original and hopeful projects have emerged. The Fédération des centres de services scolaires du Québec (FCSSQ) presented examples of these projects in its last two editions of *Savoir* magazine and wants to highlight some of these initiatives.

### March 2020: The pandemic strikes

Confronted with health measures, teachers employ their imagination to support students' learning. At École Monseigneur-Labrie on the Côte-Nord, teachers Karine Tremblay and Danielle Dumont chose to showcase their magnificent natural environment. "What do you say about classes in French, English, mathematics, art and even yoga on the beach?" This is what they offered their students. Enjoying the great outdoors and learning is an interesting prospect.

At the Centre de services scolaire De La Jonquière, pre-school teacher Annik Morissette chose to transform her class at École Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption into a pirate world. Everyone had their own boat (desk), and the 'sailors' could respect guidelines, learn and move thanks to the (distancing) lines of maritime charts drawn on the floor. The goal? Make the start of the post-confinement school year fun and interesting for students.



### March 2021: Projects to get better

After a year of living in a pandemic situation, many schools set up projects to explore mental health, to talk about what students and staff may feel about the impacts of the crisis, including Versant secondary school at the Centre de services scolaire des Drapeurs in the Outaouais.

They launched the *Can you help me?* project, a video series highlighting specific concerns of youth and offering various solutions. Psycho-educator Janis Turbide is one of the three persons who initiated the project: "The videos were designed by students in Marie-Claude Guay's drama class but are based on real life. Because of the crisis, young people are much more isolated at home and on their cell phones and are therefore more exposed to cyberbullying and family conflicts. We wanted to create something interactive that meets the needs of those students who do not dare to seek resources," says Ms. Turbide.

At École Val-Mauricie of the Centre de services scolaire de l'Énergie, students participated in several activities "to shed some light on the grayness of the pandemic," according to initiator Denis Bastarache. The activities took place as part of the school's Spiritual Life and Community Engagement Animation Service (SASEC).



During *Friendship Week* in February, students reflected on how the pandemic affects them. They reflected on the positive that could emerge from the ordeal and answered the question "What has the pandemic taught me?"

Some examples of student reflections:

**"Friends, health, and family are more important than screens."** – Justin, Sec. 1

**"I was stronger than I thought."** – anonymous, Sec. 4

**"Everything is fragile, we need to enjoy every moment."** – Lézanne, Sec. 3

**"Family is one of the most important things, as well as health."** – Thomas, Sec. 2

**"We can get out of this faster by working together."** – Jérémy, Sec. 4

**"In life, we have to appreciate what he have."** – Jade, Sec. 1



### A special thanks to parents!

These are but a few examples of what occurred everywhere, across all regions of Quebec. These activities were carried out by students and school staff, but nothing would have been possible without the commitment of millions of Quebec parents. For that we say thank you!

Saviez-vous que près d'un emploi sur deux en demande au Québec requiert un DEP ?

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## LETTING THEM learn in their own way

Finally, the 2020-2021 school year is coming to a close! For some, this pandemic year has been particularly difficult, but for others, like my sons, it was an extraordinary year.

It is with unease, even shame, that I have told people that my children's grades have soared, that their motivation has skyrocketed, and that they jumped for joy with every announcement from the government keeping them home for another week.

My sons are not at the top of their class, and their grades are not usually in the average. They both have learning difficulties: dyspraxia (difficulty with coordination) and ADHD; the Older has dysphasia, the Younger has dyslexia and Tourette syndrome; and both require accommodations, services, even a specialized class in high school.

Despite it all, distance learning saved their year.

The Older, in Secondary 4, loves to work at his own rhythm at home, without pressure from others or from teachers.

Distance learning allowed him to work in a team with his best friend (via videoconference!) to produce the work demanded by the teachers. This also allowed him to study a lot more easily.

Together they can help each other better understand certain notions rather than working individually in class and each trying to understand on their own. Learning has now become fun, and it was possible for them to listen to music, lie in bed, stretch out on the sofa or walk around, rather than sit on an uncomfortable wooden chair without permission to speak so as "not to disturb others."



**Annie Goudreau**  
*Engaged parent, CSS des  
DraveursGatineau*



For the Younger in a special education program, it was the opposite: It was being all alone in his room with the door closed that helped him work and study better. With no one around to make noise or ask him bothersome questions to distract him. With his music in his ears to better concentrate, a privilege when in class, his attention and his motivation soared!

Tantrums have almost completely disappeared, and he no longer needs to spend days or half-days in internal suspension in a time-out space because impulsivity caused him to throw pencils at his friend's head or make noises with his mouth; and no more swearing outbursts during gym class because his auditory hypersensitivity caused him to lose his wits.

Two children with learning difficulties, two different ways of learning, success in both cases, and one thing in common: distance learning. But in the end, it is not actually distance learning that encouraged the success of my children. It was the fact that we allowed them to learn in their own way.

This year we focused on "DID you understand" rather than "HOW did you understand?"

What if we keep this way of learning for the future? (Just that part, we don't need the rest!) What would it bother others that my son learns better with his headphones on? Will the world come to an end if he does his test while sitting on the floor? Will it prevent his success if he works by himself rather than as part of a team?

Have a great summer!







**Teachers  
and parents**

**Together for  
educational  
success!**



FÉDÉRATION  
DES SYNDICATS  
DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT  
CSQ



Centrale des syndicats  
du Québec

## MOTIVATION: driving learning

It's not easy to connect with students and motivate them during a pandemic, when they are far from their friends, must respect health guidelines, and they may be obliged to attend school remotely.

The educational sector experienced enormous changes, positive and negative, over the last year. These changes may have caused some students anxiety, stress, depressive feelings and a loss of motivation. Despite everything, this great disruption allowed the development of new ways of urging students to learn.

### Outdoor Classrooms

The popularity of courses given outdoors has soared since the pandemic began. What's better than learning math in the great outdoors or while playing a sport? Outdoor classes are an excellent way to energize and diversify learning. What's more, this type of learning facilitates social distancing, encourages mental and physical well-being and permits students to enjoy themselves while learning.

The concept can perhaps also be used for meetings with staff or parents. It is even possible to bring the idea home. Why not study and do homework outside, while tossing a ball around? Stretching out while studying: The perfect combination! Learning through games is an excellent source of student motivation.



### Art for Learning

Some students prefer arts over sports. For them, designing their understanding of a notion or learning a concept with the aid of a song can be a great motivator. It is also possible to visit museums virtually, with some exhibitions connected to geography or history subjects. It is even possible to discover the Canadian Parliament virtually from the comfort of your living room. At home, to review, it's possible to dance, do puzzles or even arts and crafts. Small activities like these can help a child stay motivated all through the school year.

### Ask Questions

For many students, the future is quite clear: They already have certain occupations and careers that they aspire to. For others, it's often more complicated, so why not just ask them what motivates them at school? What are they passionate about? What is their favorite subject? Communication is key with youth, and because some do not automatically express their feelings or their thoughts, we must ask the question to get the answer. A discussion like this between child and parent can be greatly beneficial and allows us to better know what's going on in our child's mind.

At school it's important to vary the methods of motivating students so that every one of them can benefit. Each student has at least one source of motivation that allows them to advance and remain focused throughout their school career. As a parent at home, it's about finding this source of motivation that stimulates your child, to support them in their personal and educational growth.





**FQDE**

Fédération québécoise  
des directions d'établissement  
d'enseignement

## THE SUCCESS OF CLASSE EN LIGNE with Marie-Ève Lévesque!



When schools closed last March because of the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher Marie-Ève Lévesque partnered with *School Success* to launch **Classe en ligne**, an initiative that allowed her to support her elementary students with a series of daily educational videos.

*Classe en ligne de Madame Marie-Ève* responded to the new reality in terms of educational support, part of a daily teaching routine while helping students maintain their acquired knowledge. From Monday to Friday, March 31 to June 18, Lévesque animated free review workshops for all elementary students in Quebec. More than 35,000 families made it a daily appointment when all they were accustomed to had disappeared.

Today the teacher is here to answer our questions. Let's meet her!

### *Marie-Ève, what did you take away from the Classe en ligne adventure?*

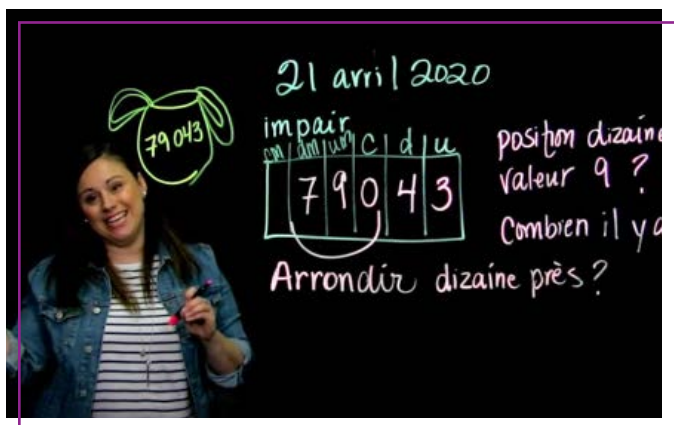
It was a difficult period to manage, as it was for everyone, but I was thrilled to offer help to parents during this time. It was very gratifying!

### *What are the 3 most positive essential elements of Classe en ligne that come to mind?*

First, I would say being able to allow so many students to continue to be interested in what they can learn at school and have the chance to continue supporting them at home. Then for myself as a parent, I felt truly fortunate to give a little support to parents who were at home full-time by launching this project. It was an incredible experience to help so many people, so many families, all while continuing to do what I love, which is teaching!

### *You are a teacher, but also a parent... What advice or strategies can you give to parents who are looking to develop a love of reading in their child?*

First, set an example: You should also be reading books! Then, I would say let them choose books with subjects that interest them. For that, you should visit the library which has extraordinary choices! The ideal is to create favourable conditions for reading, in a quiet space and at an opportune moment, and to do it together. Reading opportunities are everywhere, so don't hesitate to have them read commercial signs, cereal boxes, restaurant menus, recipes, etc.

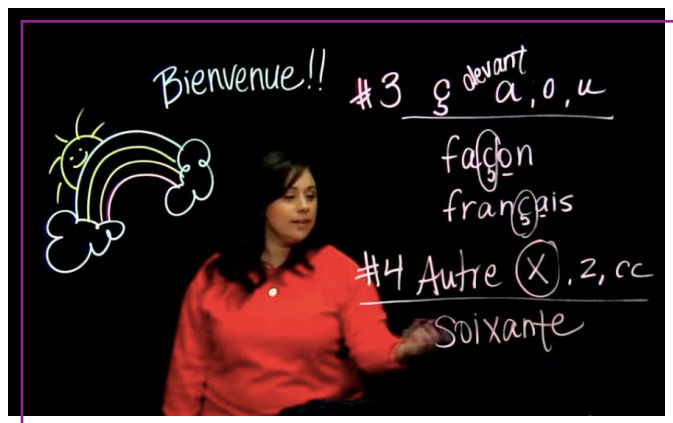


**Speaking of reading, summer is approaching...  
Any good reads to recommend for students?**

This is a big question! There are so many novels, beautiful young adult literature titles, particularly in Quebec! I really liked *Nos Héroïnes* by Anaïs Barbeau-Lavalette and Mathilde Cinq-Mars. There are also books by Élise Gravel that I like a lot. She also creates beautiful posters on differences and even injustice. Her work allows young people to explore different subjects in a remarkably simple manner. This invites them to reflect and discuss.

**What is your best memory of the Classe en ligne?**

The enormous wave of love that I received! Whether it was the many messages that I received or even children's drawings, I was really touched.



*Madame Marie-Ève's workshops are still available online in the form of video clips via the [School Success](#) website. With the end of the year approaching, it is an interesting review tool for you to consider.*



# Mon slam

## L'INCERTITUDE

Alex Diotte, Student - Secondary 5

Je ne suis pas sûr.

C'est comme frapper un mur.

Le manque d'idées.

Crée une certaine anxiété.

Un certain vide.

Dans lequel je me sens terrible.

C'est horrible, les idées sont inaccessibles.

Le fait de ne pas savoir quoi faire

Est une situation très précaire

Je me sens enfermé, piégé

Pratiquement en captivité

Dans mes propres idées.

Décider c'est compliqué.

L'incertitude, il ne faut pas s'y habituer.

Sinon, tu ne seras plus déterminé.

Embêter, plus capable de développer tes idées.

Ce qui résulte à ce que tu sois démotivé.

Tu dois montrer ton vrai côté

T'exprimer

Ne pas hésiter

Développer tes pensées

Afin de révéler ta vraie moralité.

Être incertain

C'est comme un certain déclin moral

Qui peut se révéler banal.

Comme si tu cales.

Dans un océan qui t'avale.

L'incertitude

Troublante comme elle est.

Est une sensation qui me déplaît

J'essaie d'être discret

Mais tout le monde le sait

Qu'être incertain me fait effet.

C'est certain que la confiance en soi.

Ce n'est pas aussi simple que ça.

Toujours plein d'options

Essayer d'exécuter la bonne décision.

Afin d'atteindre une certaine satisfaction.

Et sentir comme si tu as accompli ta mission

This slam was written in December 2020 as part of a French course. If your child has artistic, literary or argumentative talents and would like their work to be published in Action Parents magazine, contact us at [communications@fcpq.qc.ca](mailto:communications@fcpq.qc.ca)!



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## THE SUMMER SLIDE

### Prevent the summer learning loss for at-risk students to increase their chances of success

Every summer, all students forget some of what they learned during the school year. This loss of knowledge, commonly known as the *summer slide*, is not the same for all students: those with little access to books and fun and stimulating activities during the summer holiday return to school with a more significant deficit than their peers. The phenomenon is even more pronounced for vulnerable students, including allophones, children from disadvantaged backgrounds or even students with learning difficulties<sup>1</sup>.

### A decline exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic

The pandemic that marked the last year created serious upheaval in the education system. While the impact on learning varies significantly from one student to another and one milieu to another, one can see how the cumulative effects of interrupted schooling because of the pandemic and distance learning, paired with the phenomenon of summer slide, will have a significant impact on the following school year and the long-term educational journey of young Quebecers.



### What makes the difference: access to resources and stimulating activities

A child's family and community environment will determine major differences regarding:

- Access to resources that encourage learning (books, computers, Internet connection, etc.)
- Access to enrichment activities (visiting libraries, museums, participation at camp, etc.)
- Supervision and availability of parents

### Activities to slow the summer slide

While it's normal to drop some school habits during the summer and embrace more free play, some students might require more formal educational support during the prolonged break. As parents, integrating fun literacy and numeracy activities daily during the summer can help slow the slide. For example:

- Playing board games
- Following a recipe and having children measure quantities
- Animate a book / Establish a weekly reading activity based on different themes
- Produce a play based on a story
- Build a birdhouse
- Conduct science experiments
- Read commercial signs and billboards
- Write an email, card or letter to a friend and describe your vacation

The *Réseau québécois pour la réussite éducative* and its 17 regional partners are putting in place numerous projects and actions to allow Quebec students to maintain their educational gains, notably their reading, during the summer.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Olson, L. S. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American sociological review*, 72(2), 167-180.



## THE PASSE-PARTOUT PROGRAM: adapting to facilitate the first school transition

**Marie-Eve Quirion**

*Professional practice consultant  
 Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels  
 de l'éducation du Québec (FPPE-CSQ)*

When our children are about to go to school for the first time, countless questions arise: Will they be okay in their new environment? Will they bond quickly with other children and the adults around them? Will they learn and flourish? The first school transition is a decisive step in every child's school career. For parents, it is just as important a turning point. Being supported in the process makes all the difference.

The Passe-Partout program accompanies four-year-old children and their parents on this great adventure. Offered in 43 of Quebec's 72 school service centres and school boards, this educational program offers about a dozen meetings in the year leading up to the start of the school year. For children, it allows them to learn – in a gentle way – about school life, by experiencing fun and stimulating workshops. Passe-Partout appointments offer them a unique opportunity to go to school with Mom and Dad!

Participation equips parents to support their child and promotes discussions, allowing them to meet stakeholders in the school network and establish a bond of trust, which promotes long-term parent-school collaboration. The effectiveness of Passe-Partout in facilitating the first school transition and promoting the child's overall development is recognized: A major government survey shows that children who participate have fewer vulnerabilities in kindergarten<sup>1</sup>.

With the pandemic, preschool education consultants had to completely re-invent themselves. Since parents generally do not have access to schools in this context, parent-child activities have been limited. Of course, nothing replaces in-person activities and the possibility for children to become more accustomed to their future school under the protective and caring gaze of a parent. Nevertheless, the virtual meetings, use of diverse digital platforms, creation of information capsules and individualized telephone follow-ups all



help to maintain contact and support parents. To facilitate communication and reconciliation of schedules, the many tools developed will surely remain useful post-pandemic!

Passe-Partout has been around for more than 40 years and has weathered all storms. Despite different trends and eras, what is notable about this transitional program remains the warm and supportive welcoming of child and parent, so that entry into the school world goes smoothly.

In addition to the pandemic, a lack of funding is threatening the program's survival. Some school organizations mistakenly position Passe-Partout in competition with the four-year-old kindergarten program. To protect this proven educational service and to allow all parents who so wish to have access to it, the *Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation* and the *Quebec Federation of Parents' Committees* are speaking with one voice: We hope that the Passe-Partout program will not only be maintained but enhanced and updated to meet the needs of today's parents.

To make school a caring environment, there is nothing better than welcoming children together with their parents.

<sup>1</sup> Institut de la statistique du Québec, *Enquête québécoise sur le parcours préscolaire des enfants de maternelle*, Tome1, February 2019, p. 143.

## VIRTUAL LEARNING: Alloprof innovates to help your child

alloprof parents

For more than 25 years, Alloprof has been launching initiatives to support Quebec students in their learning. With the pandemic, the organization doubled its efforts to boost this assistance, motivate youth, facilitate homework time and support parents.

Parents and students can now benefit from a motivating homework timer, games such as Potager en péril and Réaction solitaire, a mutual help zone open seven days a week, a chat service with real profs and mini-tutorials (MiniRécups).



### Timer for elementary students

Conceived to meet the needs of families who call Alloprof, the minuterie motivante aims to transform homework and study time into an exciting countdown. The customizable timer is available on the Alloprof website and in the various application stores. It allows the child to monitor the passing time, estimate a task's duration, organize, regain composure and feel a sense of accomplishment. The fun aspect of the tool allows them to choose the theme of their study session and receive rewards linked to the accomplishment of each task.

### Potager en Péril: play to review word classes

One of the most popular games ever launched by Alloprof, Potager en péril allows students in Grades 4 to 6 to review word classes, also called *word categories* in traditional grammar. In short, the player takes on the role of a little carrot who sets out on a fun quest to save the vegetable patch by getting their hands on nouns, determinants, verbs, etc. (in French)

### Réaction solitaire: an essential boost in Secondary 4

To help teens review the balancing of chemical equations – a key concept in Secondary 4 Science and Technology – Alloprof has launched the survival game Réaction solitaire: A prisoner on a dangerous desert island, the player must solve puzzles to collect the items that will allow him to escape... *and* pass his exams! (in French)

### Mutual aid zone

To support students seven days a week, the Zone d'entraide collaborative space allows students to submit academic questions or offer explanations to their peers. The presence of Alloprof moderators guarantees that they will quickly receive complete and validated explanations.

### Live chat with real teachers

The favorite tool of nearly 85% of students since its launch, the new chat feature is unique in education. It allows you to establish an immediate link with teachers and ask questions live on the site. The service is available Monday to Thursday from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

### MiniRécaps: immersive tutorials

To facilitate preparation for final secondary exams, some 50 MiniRécap tutorials have been put online. These 30-minute sessions review basics and provide an immersive, fun and visually engaging learning experience. Each includes a prerequisite review, interactive video, at least one comprehension validation exercise and links to additional resources if needed. Alloprof expects to have 150 videos online by June 2022.



### ABOUT ALLOPROF

*Alloprof engages Quebec students and their parents in educational success by offering them free professional and stimulating school support services.*



**Essayez Potager en péril :  
le meilleur jeu pour réviser  
les classes**

[aprof.ca/potager-peril](https://aprof.ca/potager-peril)

alloprof



## HELPING OUR YOUNG ADULTS guide themselves, even during a pandemic



Ordre des conseillers  
et conseillères d'orientation  
du Québec

*Mireille Moisan, g.c.*  
OCCOQ



The current health crisis left indelible traces in its path and definitely disrupted the numerous journeys of young people already in the midst of an identity crisis. However, like all major events that happen in the life of an individual, it's possible to use this turbulent period wisely to help young adults make enlightened choices.

### Tips for parents

In everyday life, it is quite rare that young people take the time to identify the elements that characterize their personality, and at school it is generally the academic notions that are put forward... especially since the launch of the exhausting back-and-forth between online school and in-person classes that does not really encourage self-reflection! But it is possible, and even favorable, to help our children take the time to discover themselves through diverse experiences, even uncommon ones like the pandemic.

- **Stop and listen!** Youth, just like adults, are taking less time for breaks, and it's even more true in times of crisis! So why not take a small nature walk or a ride in the car, have a coffee or hot chocolate, or an exchange with a sincere "How's it going?" and let the young person express themselves, without judgement, about their frustrations and concerns.

- **Help young people see themselves.** Observing themselves and reflecting what we as parents see from the exterior is a laudable exercise that can lead to identifying or validating some of their qualities, strengths and personality traits. These positive and constructive comments are highly significant and can bring a little bit of light into these rather dreary times!
- **Help them rethink their priorities!** The pandemic may have influenced what a young person wishes for their future and the way they foresee their future studies, even their place in the workforce. Uncertainties and difficulties may be numerous and it's important to have space to talk about it. No need to be an expert, it simply suffices to be present and to listen, to help them identify what is important and refer them to the proper resources as they need them.
- **Encourage them to explore and engage!** While traditional exploratory activities have not been taking place in person, it is still possible to view videos or presentations of programs on websites of most post-secondary establishments which have reinvented themselves for the occasion. At the same time, many work-placements remain possible while respecting health guidelines. Encouraging them to act will help them validate their ambitions!
- **Demonstrate patience and make room for experience!** Some young people have no idea about what they want to do later in life and that is completely normal! It is, among other reasons, why exploration is so important and makes so much sense. It is HEALTHY for a young person to explore, to change their minds, to question themselves, even more so during a crisis. This questioning helps them deepen their understanding of who they are.
- **Talk about projects rather than choice!** Since the perfect choice does not exist, swap the notion of "choice" with "projects" - in the plural! It's less constraining and threatening for young people and leaves them a lot of freedom and space to imagine their future.

## The school guidance counsellor

The "g.c." supports students throughout their journey and helps them discover their abilities, personality traits, values and interests, to enable them to persevere and make substantial choices. The crisis generated a lot of concerns and worries but it's never too late to consult, clarify and readjust their educational path.

The means to reach youth have multiplied everywhere in Quebec. Whether it's through the creation of digital tools, video-conferencing or online consultations, the guidance counsellors are there to support youth and their parents. During the crisis, this support was as important for aiding them in defining future projects as in defining their own image.

## A site for Quebec parents

The Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec (OCCOQ) has created the site [Espaceparents.org](https://espaceparents.org) to equip parents who are supporting their children throughout their educational journey. The website is now available in English. An online guidance counsellor can even respond to their questions and concerns.



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# NAVIGATING PARENT GOVERNANCE in the Pandemic and Beyond

## Making the most of parent engagement when Governing Boards and Parents Committees can't meet in person, and what we can learn for the future.

With a challenging school year coming to an end, we can now look back and consider what we have learned as engaged parents. For parent governance in particular, the pandemic has brought to light elements that could help parents become even more engaged in our public school system, if we are willing to keep pushing forward. That means opening the doors to our schools even wider, and reinforcing that parents have an important role to play.

### How things have evolved in 2020-2021

COVID-19 has caused us to rethink how parent governance works. No longer could we hold in-person parent assemblies, Governing Board sessions and Parent Committee meetings. Instead, we have all had to make the switch to virtual gatherings. It has not necessarily been a smooth transition, however, and there have been instances where meetings have been cancelled, or the public was not included. While good intentioned in most cases, those decisions unfortunately slam the door on wider parental input.

Public Governing Board and Parent Committee meetings are NOT optional. Meeting publicly is the law, and the wider community must have the right to be present, and ideally, contribute to your discussions. That is true for both in-person and virtual meetings.

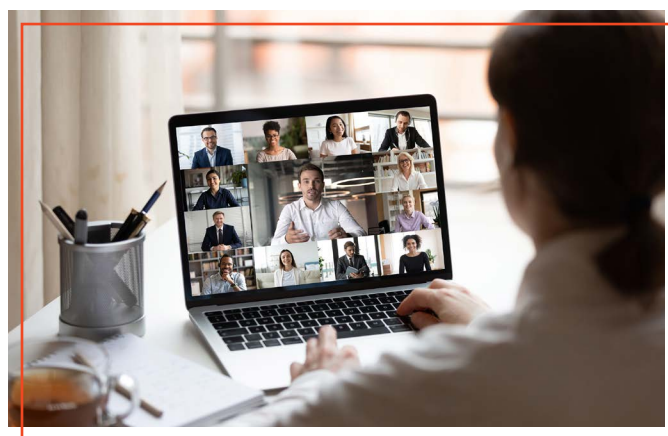
**Katherine Korakakis**  
*President, English Parents' Committee Association*



Virtual public meetings come with a huge advantage, making them even more accessible to the wider community. This is especially true in school boards/service centres that cover large territories, where travel time can be a very significant obstacle. By holding virtual meetings, geography is no longer a factor, and attendance will increase. The crucial piece of the puzzle is to promote the meeting date at least one week in so that attendees can plan accordingly. Two weeks in advance is even better. Make sure that the meeting link is easy to find and that there are no obstacles in place in order to access it.

### The importance of keeping up the routine of meetings

Keeping parent governance engaged means also maintaining a routine. That is why regular meetings are so important, if for no other reason than to reinforce the links between members. A meeting schedule for the entire year should be adopted in the Fall, and the committee should stick to it. It makes it easier to plan and promote meetings with a reliable schedule to fall back on. An established meeting agenda, with reports from key stakeholders, also gives all groups an active role in each meeting. And don't forget to build in social opportunities for your Governing Board members throughout the school year. Even a virtual 5-à-7 can do wonders for your collaboration and morale.





## Making sure the wider parent community remains informed and engaged

Meetings are only one way to engage the wider parent community and ensure that they are active players in schools, as well as at the school board or school service centre. Regular communications with parents are vital. While announcements and newsletters are great starts, two-way communications tools are ideal, especially when you are asking real questions. Use surveys and calls-to-action on social media to engage your fellow parents and learn from their feedback to help guide local decision-making. More frequent communications between your Governing Board and the wider community will help build a stronger and more active parent community.

## Looking ahead to 2021-2022

There is still so much more to learn to make parent governance even more accessible and engaging. We all look forward to a return to in-person meetings but consider a hybrid model which combines virtual meetings and in-person gatherings to boost engagement. Enhanced monthly communications across a variety of virtual platforms can also be very valuable. Everything is a learning opportunity, and much like our kids in the classroom, we can learn too to do things even better.

School year **2021-2022**

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EDUCATION ZONE



**Martine Rioux**  
Deputy editor-in-chief  
École branchée

## LOOKING BEYOND the pandemic and restrictions

Beyond all the nuisances stemming from the pandemic, it is important to stop for a moment and look back at the road we've travelled since March 2020 to imagine what follows with optimism. There are gains we've made that are well worth keeping once the health measures have been lifted.

### 1- Perfection is out!

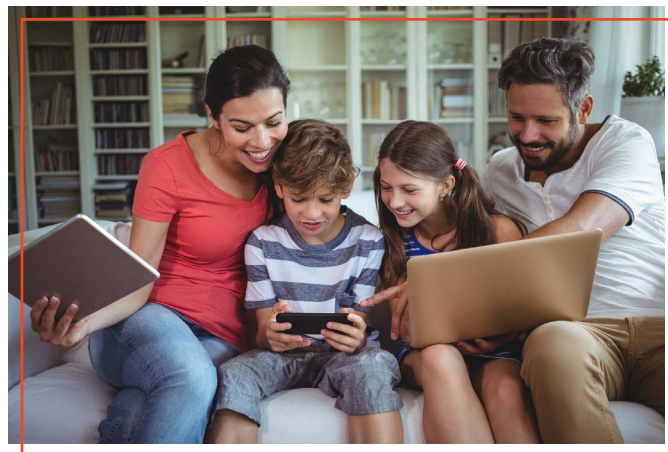
Juggling work (at home or not), household chores, distance learning and the ambiguous context we found ourselves in placed an undeniable pressure on many parents. This was also an occasion to remind ourselves that we need to be flexible to successfully reconcile our different roles, and that it is not necessary to strive for perfection at all costs. *Perspective* and *'let it go'* were the words of the day. At the same time, we had to (re-) learn to live and accept the emotions we experienced, be they positive or negative.

### 2- Quality family time

Freed from numerous outings and activities, many parents seized the opportunity to spend more time with family. Cooking, playing and moving, the possibilities were many despite it all, as these moments became a new way to rediscover ourselves and exchange with each other. They demonstrated the importance of sharing these moments together and stepping away from our screens to enable uninterrupted conversations.

### 3- Co-education valued

Teachers and parents have roles to play to encourage the well-being and success of youth, and the recent months highlighted the complementarity of these roles and the advantage of maintaining bidirectional communication between home and school. Parents should never hesitate to reach out to teachers to sensitize them about situations at home. Even when young people return to school full-time, this co-education must remain in place since it will continue to help students.



### 4- Digital family dialogue

Many parents were more permissive with their children's device usage since the start of the pandemic, and the numbers confirm it: The number of parents supervising their children's screen time or the sites they visit decreased by 5% from 2019 to 2020 (from 88% to 83%)<sup>1</sup>.

An idea: Instead of simply supervising the duration of their activity, how about supervising their usage (time spent learning versus time spent playing or socializing)? Moreover, it could be useful to define the rules in a parent-child contract, the preparation of which is a tangible measure that encourages communication and allows each to express their views about device usage.

You can find a contract model to personalize at <http://bit.ly/DRLAgreement>.

<sup>1</sup> NETendances, (2021, février). La famille numérique, Académie de la transformation numérique, <https://transformation-numerique.ulaval.ca/enquetes-et-mesures/netendances/netendances-2020-la-famille-numerique>

## 5- Developing digital skills

The pandemic emphasized the importance of digital. It is possible to develop new skills to understand all the digital tools and use them wisely, such as technical abilities, but also other aptitudes such as finding information online, critical thinking skills, collaboration, producing digital content, etc. We can also maximize our digital knowledge while supporting each other, parents and children. The [compe-tencenumerique.ca](https://compe-tencenumerique.ca) site offers tools to help understand the digital universe.

*A practical guide for parents, A Healthy Mind is a Springboard to Learning... even at a distance is free and available to download at <https://ecolebranchee.com/en/produit/healthy-mind>.*

- *[Distance learning: 8 tips for parents](#)*
- *[Distance learning: More screen time? Do not panic](#)*
- *[Distance learning: Co-educating is when school and family communicate two-way](#)*



### OLOfusion proposes tools to learn how to tell the time!

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**Corinne Payne**  
Director general, Quebec's Federation  
of Parents' Committees

When the pandemic closed all Quebec schools in March 2020, the FCPQ team was also plunged into a new reality... 100% work from home! We were in the last couple of months of our plan of action for 2019-2020, upcoming General council, training schedule, launch of our new guide on intimidation, planned tour of our Parents' committees, the implantation of the new governance model and the list goes on. We were in the final stretch of planning our bi-annual congress, our 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Saguenay, for May 2020. As the Director General, I keep the train on the tracks, but I must give major kudos to my amazing dedicated team that work day in and day out to support the parents of Quebec. We turned down the heat and closed the blinds in our building, ensured everyone was equipped with a comfy place to work at home and got down to business!

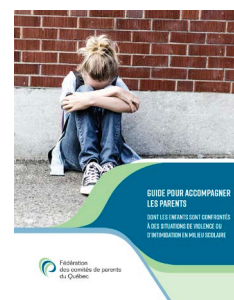
With great regrets we postponed our 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Congress... we will get to Saguenay another year and our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary is now not so far off. But we did not stop there, we planned and held our first virtual National Gathering in September and, when you read this, we will have delivered our first ever 100% virtual Congress, which was held from May 25 to 29, with over 50 workshops, an exhibitor's fair and an amazing festive evening with digital experts!

Spring 2020, with weekly, and often daily, updates and changes of schools being open, closed, every other day, along with never-ending changes in sanitary measures, there was no shortage of information to be diffused to parents. Within a matter of days, a new page was added on our website, we held weekly update by video conference and started to monitor, via online surveys, what parents needed to best support their children. Our advisory service went into overdrive, with a 30% increase, in answering emails, phone calls and messages. Once the talk moved to a back-to-school plan for 2020, we launched an online survey to all Quebec

parents... over 40,000 parents participated over a five-day period. We were well equipped to provide the Minister, Ministry and our educational partners with parents' point of view. And, our interventions in the media, to ensure the parents voice was heard, exploded, with a 150% increase.

As we moved into planning our activities for 2020-2021, we doubled-down on our mission. We were hopeful to return to work at our office, but even that was short-lived and limited. We knew the new year would not be like any other and parents would need help to support their children. Here are our highlights or "bons coups" of this past year:

- An offer of online training via webinars, with our amazing partners and trainers, that far exceeded our expectations
- A series of online coaching sessions and capsules, with EscouadeÉdu, free for all parents, to help them with their children's motivation and perseverance
- The production of a bilingual guide, with École Branchée, focused on digital learning
- Virtual visits to 40 parents' committees, in every corner of Quebec
- Tools, accompaniment and training to support the implementation of the new governance model
- Launch of our guide on intimidation and completion of a series of accompanying video capsules
- A series of online surveys, throughout the year, to monitor parents' points of view and needs in light of the pandemic
- The development of the online platform www.parents.quebec



Yes, PARENTS.QUEBEC, an idea that was germinating for years, but that was pushed to the forefront by the pandemic. A collaboration with the English Parents' Committee Association and the Ministry. An online platform that, with the answers to a couple of simple questions, provides parents with a list of resources tailored to their needs. This tool is already in its stage two of development and will undoubtedly be a legacy of the pandemic.

**The parents of Quebec and the employees of the FCPQ will forever have 2020-2021 etched in their memories. As the saying goes "where there is a will, there is a way!" Our team, as with every parent in Quebec, found the ways to make IT happen to ensure we continue to move forward in our common goal... success for every child!**



An advertisement for "SECONDAIRE EN SPECTACLE". It features a person in a black outfit performing a dance move in front of a colorful bus. The bus has "LE MIXBUS STUDIO SUR LES ROUTES DU QUÉBEC POUR FAIRE BRILLER LE TALENT DES JEUNES" written on it. The background is a bright yellow and orange gradient. Text on the left says "ADMISSIBLE À LA MESURE 15028". The main text in the center reads: "« MÊME EN VERSION VIRTUELLE, SECONDAIRE EN SPECTACLE M'A DONNÉ DE L'ESPOIR DURANT LA PANDÉMIE. TOUT ÇA M'A AIDÉ À TRAVERSER CETTE PÉRIODE DIFFICILE. »". At the bottom right, it says "MERCI D'AVOIR FAIT TOUTE UNE SCÈNE AVEC NOUS POUR LES JEUNES PASSIONNÉS CETTE ANNÉE." and "SECONDAIRE EN SPECTACLE".

## TRAINING

The FCPQ offers general training in webinars via our virtual conference room. You can participate alone or as a group. With a maximum duration of two hours, general training courses offer essential content on various subjects relating to parent participation in school governance. Consult our programming (in French) and register at [www.fcpq.qc.ca/fr/formations](http://www.fcpq.qc.ca/fr/formations).

## ADVISORY SERVICES

Do you have questions about governing boards, parents' committees, special needs advisory committees, or even the Quebec Education Act? Our team of advisors offers a support and information service concerning the school sector, its structures and its functioning. The service is free and provided for parents in the public school network.

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The FCPQ offers its assistance in the event of a crisis to help you find constructive solutions to complex situations, or even conflicts at the heart of your committees.

## VIDEO CAPSULES

The FCPQ has created video capsules that offer, in just a few minutes, essential information on subjects of interest for engaged parents, such as governing boards, annual general assemblies, the complaint-handling process, special needs advisory committees, etc. These videos are available (in French) on our website:

<http://www.fcpq.qc.ca/fr/capsules-video>.



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