

# ACTION Parents

Volume 44 • Number 3 • March 2021

- PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:  
ESSENTIAL TO THEIR SUCCESS
- PARENTS WHO INSPIRE
- OUR YOUTH: LEADERS!
- GUIDING OUR YOUTH



**Living democracy**  
**IN OUR COMMUNITIES**

# ACTION Parents

Volume 44 • Number 3 • March 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 March 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,

It is with great pride that we present, for the second time, your *Action Parents* magazine in both French and English. Providing services and resources to English-speaking parents is a priority for the Québec Federation of Parents' Committees, and we are happy to be able to count on our partners and collaborators to work with us to offer these bilingual services.

This new edition focuses on the civic values we hold dear: involvement, commitment and democracy.

Our schools are alive with energy, ideas and collaborative projects. We value parent and youth engagement, and it is important to share their successes as well as expert opinions and advice to inspire all of us. The experience of parents involved in the school environment can motivate other parents to involve themselves, while promoting awareness of the important role of parent volunteers.

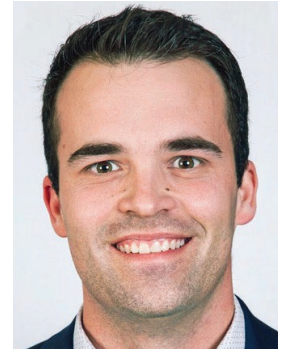
Parental involvement takes on its full meaning in the positive impact it has on young people and their success. Highlighting student initiatives and the projects developed for them reminds us why we get involved. Finally, it is thanks to collaborations with our partners who fully appreciate parent contributions, that we can go this far, together.

We hope that this edition of *Action Parents* will inspire you and help you discover your own projects, actions and passions!

Do you have an inspiring project or experience to share? We want to know! Contact us at [communications@fcpq.qc.ca](mailto:communications@fcpq.qc.ca).

Happy reading!

**Stéphanie Rochon**



Dear Parents,

There are many ways for parents to get involved in our schools and in the school system. In our family, supporting our children in their learning, knowing their interests and watching their development are important steps toward their success.

I am sure no one is surprised by the fact that it is mainly out of curiosity and a desire to help their own children that parents first attend their school's annual parents' meeting at the start of every school year.

But why do parents choose to get involved and volunteer their time in the school environment? It's because we see the positive impact and the difference that we can make together. If a parent has the time and interest, there are abundant opportunities to participate in school life and to work on improving the school system.

The changes to education governance that came into effect more than a year ago have presented challenges, but also great opportunities for parents to take their place and demonstrate the importance of their role and their expertise in the school environment. We are the ones who know our children best and are responsible for their development and education. We have our place!

This is what the Québec Federation of Parents' Committees (FCPQ) has been promoting to our educational partners for nearly 50 years with the help of our collaborators. Not only do we ensure that parents can exercise their essential role in the school environment, we also make sure that they have the tools to do so.

Our Federation is a participatory democracy that creates opportunities for discussion among members, where everyone's voice can be heard, and everyone can exercise their right to vote.

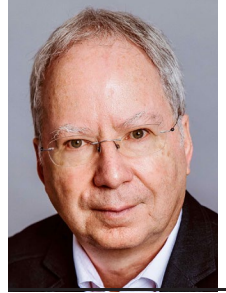
The FCPQ's objective is to inform, equip and support not only engaged parents, but all parents of students in Quebec through various means and resources. It is by equipping parents and sharing good practices and successes that we can best promote parental participation. Through collaborations with our partners, the FCPQ will always encourage open communications between school and families, so that the adults in a child's life can work together for their success.

Being a role model for our young people and talking about our involvement in the school environment or other volunteer activities can be great catalysts to inspire our children to pursue their passions and become spirited and active citizens. We even have examples of parents involved in the school sector who were inspired by their own parents who did so 30 years before them!

All the volunteering we do has positive impacts on our communities, on our youth and on ourselves. Parental engagement is key to the success of our children and our network. Let there be no doubt about it and let's take our place!

  
**Kévin Roy**





## **DEMOCRACY'S CONTRIBUTION to school management**

In September 1998, governing boards were created in 2,600 Quebec elementary and secondary schools. With an equal number of parents and staff members, the introduction of this new decision-making body was an important transformation, as previous parental involvement in school management was only consultative.

But does this place given to parents in the management of their school make a significant contribution to student success? Let's explore this question while considering the scientific research.

From the outset, we can affirm that numerous studies demonstrate the importance of parental involvement in educational success. In fact, it is recognized as one of the characteristics that have the most impact on academic performance, the student's adaptation and the pursuit of studies (Deslandes and Bertrand, 2003; Epstein, 2001).

According to Dr. Joyce L. Epstein's typology (2001, 2004 and 2011), which is regarded as the best-known and most authoritative typology in the field, this commitment by parents can take six different forms: exercising the parental role (1), communication with the school (2), helping at school through volunteering (3), learning at home (4), participating in decision-making (5) and working with the community (6).

For the parent, joining in the decision-making process of their child's school (5) means participating in the development, ongoing evaluation and readjustment of the educational project (Education Act sec. 74); adoption and monitoring of the budget (Education Act sec. 66); adoption of the plan to combat violence and intimidation (Education Act sec. 75.1) and several other functions and responsibilities. It also speaks to a collaborative process - sharing visions, solving problems and taking actions with shared objectives.

Research has, however, identified several challenges with parental engagement.

Here are a few:

- Including parent leaders of all races, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds and other groups present in the school.
- Offering training that allows parent leaders to develop skills that can be useful to them in their role of representing other families.
- Including student representatives with parents in decision-making committees.  
(Epstein, 2004)





It should also be noted that the scientific research recognizes several benefits of including parents in decision-making:

- There is a sense of ownership of the school and of contributing to decisions that influence their children.
  - There is a perception of increased support from school and other parents.
  - More interactions with other families in school and in community activities.
  - More effective responses to student problems.
  - Increased awareness of student progress and how to help students do better.
  - Greater respect for the strengths and efforts of families.
  - A more developed sense of belonging.
  - A larger readiness to involve all families in different ways.
  - Greater satisfaction associated with the support and involvement of families.
- (Epstein, 2004, 2011)

Moreover, parents are more involved if they believe that this is their role and if they are invited to do so.  
(Larivée, 2011).



In conclusion, as to whether the place given to parents in the management of their school really promotes student success and makes a significant contribution to it, the answer is clearly in the affirmative.

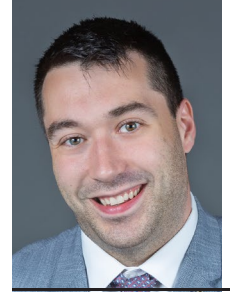
We could not do without this collaboration and the science confirms it.

Reversal is not an option.

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**Me Jean-François Rioux**  
Secretary-general of the Quebec Federation  
of Parents' Committees (FCPQ)

## **PARENTS TAKE THEIR PLACE in school governance**

*(Ed. note: This article refers to the adoption of Bill 40, which has transformed school governance in Quebec. Ongoing litigation has suspended application of the law for the English sector, which maintains the school board system pending resolution.)*

The date of February 8, 2021, marked the first anniversary of the adoption of Bill 40: *An Act to amend mainly the Education Act with respect to school organization and governance*. While the COVID-19 pandemic has occupied a large space in our lives, the new school governance model has been an integral part of the daily life of our partners, stakeholders and parents involved in the school network, and not without multiple disruptions!

At first, the launch of the first school service centre boards, initially scheduled for June 2020, was postponed until October. Parent committees had to be creative and adaptable to virtually nominate parents to boards of directors since gatherings were prohibited by pandemic restrictions.

There was also the creation of transitional advisory committees, which required at least one sitting parent member. These were responsible for temporarily supporting the directors-general of school service centres until the first meetings of the boards of directors.

No matter what upheavals occurred, parents answered the call! Indeed, with few exceptions, parent positions on the boards were filled immediately.

The fall of 2020 was also devoted to implementing the new rules of school governance, the objective of which was to de-politicize school governance and bring decision-making closer to the people who work with students daily. To do this, lawmakers wanted in particular to consolidate the role of parents in the educational success of students. Parents thus enjoy several levers of control in their involvement, starting with the five (5) seats reserved for parent committee members on the board of directors.

The law also modifies certain powers of the parent committees, which must now promote public education among parents, and offer the school service centre the means to support parent engagement with their child, with a view to school success.

Governing boards also enjoy new prerogatives, including the power to adopt anti-bullying and anti-violence plans. It also has the power of initiative, that is, to transmit opinions and recommendations to the school administration on subjects likely to ensure proper functioning of the school.

Following the entry into force of these new rules, the Federation launched a consultation with parent committees on the lessons to be drawn following the formation of the first boards of directors. The results show that the nomination process, both for parents and community representatives, was quite satisfactory.

The committees that responded also had the opportunity to comment on elements that could be improved. Specifically, they proposed adaptations for committees that are remote or have few representatives, as well as to ensure greater representation of parents of students with special needs on boards of directors.

In 2021, true to form, the FCPQ will make a point of bringing the comments and positions of parents to partners and decision-makers in the education sector, all in a proactive manner, and with an approach that promotes the collaboration of all stakeholders.







Teachers  
and parents

**Together for  
educational  
success!**



FÉDÉRATION  
DES SYNDICATS  
DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT  
CSQ







Katherine Korakakis  
President

English Parents' Committee Association

## PARENTS' EMPOWERMENT: The Way to Effective Governance

Being a responsible citizen and taking an active part in the democratic life of your school community means more than simply raising your hands to participate. It is the basis of it all, but it's also just the start.

Once you have taken a seat at the table and an agenda is placed in your hands, do you know what to expect? Do you know what those terms mean? Budget-building process? Business arising? Redacting the minutes? A commitment-to-success plan? Do you know where the line is between your organization and say, a school administration? Do you know the 'chain of command'?

Finally, when you raise your hand for a *yea* or *nay*, do you know the impact of that vote? Do you feel confident in your deliberations?

The questions may seem trite, but the answers are an important measure of your sense of your own effectiveness. Many members of parent governance find that they face a steep learning curve. This, often coupled with a reticence to ask questions about their role, can be a daunting task.

That is why Parent Committees will often query their membership and the parent community at large, about their understanding of governance. If they do not, they probably should. A parent population equipped with knowledge about what decisions must be made and how to act upon their responsibilities, is an informed community exercising responsible citizenship.

When you query parents, involved or not, about whether they feel informed enough to confidently tackle those challenges, often, the dominant answer is No. But you don't need to wait for someone to ask you, there are things you can do to get started on your own.

Parents need to learn to be their own advocates and ask the questions and empower themselves; to seek the information they need to make those decisions, and not just act on or accept what they do not know. Too many parents feel that they are alone, but they are not.



All knowledge is new until it is your own. That is where *empowerment* comes from.

If you just joined a Governing Board, chances are you will attend a training session to help you understand what your role is and how things function. Every school board has a Governing Board manual - read it. These are important because the amount of information about the various aspects of GB, which is a legal entity, can be overwhelming. But in it you will find what you need to know.

Consider a place or implication with representative associations like EPCA and FCPQ, read our updates and subscribe to our newsletters, take part in surveys and ask questions of your directors.

You can also peruse the Quebec Education Act online: it is mostly presented in simple language. However, there are some heavily esoteric sections to it, and some of it may not be relevant if there is no context or you lack understanding of certain terminology, but it is a useful resource, and every governance stakeholder should at least be familiar with it. A simple search using the term 'parent' or 'governing board' can yield a treasure of information.

Furthermore, an online training is now mandatory for all Governing Board members in francophone service centers, but we are still waiting for the same material to be available in English. This is a tool that can be added to the resources that can empower parents in leadership roles.

One need not be a member of a Governing Board or Parent Committee to be informed. Anybody can ask their PC leadership for clarification about a process, rule, or event. If you are on a board and get that information that you need, you will make more responsible decisions and you will feel more confident in those deliberations.

Too often I see parents scared to reach out to people that are supposed to represent them. You should *never* be afraid of asking. As we often tell our own kids, if you don't know what something is, ask: That is one of the most basic steps to effective governance and responsible citizenship.

As parents we tend to think about our own children in their school, but this is also about us as advocates, because when you really get involved and discover how you can effect change, your thinking can evolve beyond your own school to a broader governance perspective.



For many, long-term planning or a budget-building process can be very daunting, but these processes are learned. Regardless of your skill set or how much time and energy you have to give, what is most important is your commitment to student success and the betterment of the school community.

Too often when parents exercise their democratic roles, they are thrown in without a 'life jacket' and it takes time to learn and be effective. But at the same time, many parents don't have enough time, or are 'burnt out' and leave. The result is a serious and continuous deficit of knowledge around the table, which is not the way to effective governance, and certainly not a good recipe for democracy and responsible citizenship.

Governing Boards, Parent Committees and associations like EPCA and FCPQ working together will strengthen parent governance, rather than working in silos. Your first task is to know yourself, and reach out when you are uncertain. That is how you attain a friendly, collaborative environment of people working together.

One person should not hold all the information in any institution. That is not the way to democracy.

## ALL ROADS LEAD TO parental involvement in education!

Like many families who chose to move to, and settle in Canada, my choice was guided towards the French-speaking province of Quebec.

I found myself in the beautiful east-end Montreal sector of Saint-Léonard, where I learned from my Italian neighbors (who own most of the housing properties) that they arrived after the Second World War and built this neighborhood. In fact, speaking with native-born (*de souche*) Quebec families, I discovered that this area was once populated by farms and livestock, and the arrival of the Italian community contributed largely to the development of homes, businesses, roads and much more.

As a new arrival, I benefited from the achievements of those who came before me in this part of Montreal. I immediately asked myself: What can I contribute?

My first point of contact with a forum where I felt that I could be of value, was at school. When my older daughter began kindergarten is when I began my initiation to the Quebec school system, by attending my first general assembly in September 2001. Without hesitation I presented myself as a candidate and was elected to governing board!

I later understood that I was participating in an important school democracy process, citizen participation and intercultural dialogue. I never imagined that my first involvement in governing board would permit me to discover my abilities to work as a team, search for compromise, commit to volunteering and participating in decision-making at the heart of the school!

Not only did I feel useful, but I developed a passion for these types of activities.

A few years later I was a candidate for school board elections, also in my neighborhood, and sat for two years as a co-opted commissioner for the Commission Scolaire de la Pointe-de-l'Île and as vice-chair of their pedagogical committee. My master in French literature and my doctorate in comparative literature (a thesis

### Najat Boughaba

Member, Parent Committee, Board of Directors  
Centre de services scolaire de la Pointe-de-l'Île



on *Otherness, Identity and Difference*), permitted me to propose solutions relating to the learning of French by allophones, and to better understand intercultural relations in multi-ethnic schools.

I have served on governing boards, including as president, and have tried to motivate families around me, particularly immigrants, to participate in their children's school parent assemblies throughout all the school years of my four children - the last one finishes high school this year.

Following the abolition of school boards, I awaited the opportunity to implicate myself in the new governance structure and was acclaimed as District 3 (Saint-Léonard) representative to the board of directors of the Centre de services scolaire de la Pointe-de-l'Île.

So now I proudly represent, since October 2020, a district for which I have a great attachment and where I began my citizen involvement in 2001!

My message for parents is: Be available and motivated to support your children and advance school democracy!





**Jean Cormier**  
President, Parent Committee,  
Board of Directors  
Centre de services scolaire des Îles

## ENGAGED PARENTS IN A SMALL COMMUNITY: Finding balance

Whether we live in a large or small community, as parents we have a role to play in the education of our child, regardless of their age. Parental involvement often begins with our first child's entry into school, with homework and lessons.

We can see however, that few parents actually attend the school's annual parent general assembly, which can compel some parents to get involved in the school's governing board.

As a small community with few schools, the number of parents available to get involved or occupy positions on school service centre bodies is limited. As a result, those who are appointed to the parent committee will most likely find themselves involved in *other* committees, such as the centre's board of directors, governance committee and more.

Besides being a very engaged parent, we must also find time for student activities. If that is not enough, we also need to promote parental participation and organize activities for parents. The participation of all parent committee members is central to the success of all these endeavours.

How do we do all of this?

To begin with, we need to have an understanding partner, believe that we can make a difference, and prioritize our children's school success over more superficial considerations.

Next, you have to find the right equilibrium between work, family and leisure time. The combination of two, or all three, promotes mental health and the balance we seek.

Finally, prioritizing our values, which lends purpose to our actions, strengthens our personal satisfaction and self-esteem while maintaining a sense of control over events, which bolsters that balance.

Implicating oneself in a small school environment, however, isn't only about the obstacles. Undeniably, the proximity of a small community is an advantage to encourage face-to-face parent meetings.

Indeed, the fact that there are few parents around the table actually *promotes* dialogue and allows all parents to express their opinions. We also have more time to address different subjects, and the meetings are shorter, reducing the risk of participants becoming demoralized.

Senior management attends almost all our meetings, so we have a privileged relationship. They keep us informed on the progress of various service centre projects, and provide the information we need as we discuss situations that deserve special attention.

In conclusion, parents clearly have a key role to play in their child's academic development and demonstrate the importance they place on education by valuing the role of school, taking an interest in school life and in their child's achievements.



### STUDENT LIFE in High School

My name is Julia Setlakwe, and I am a member of the student council at Jean-Rimbault high school.

I am very involved in my school environment. My school has a student council which participates in the choice of student activities, and many decisions concerning student life and projects for the year are made during these meetings.

When we are in student council and an activity must be chosen, everyone is asked to share their ideas. Subsequently, a vote determines which project will be selected. This is how democracy works in my community.

Democracy is also exercised in the election of the school president.

An election campaign is carried out, during which the candidates are called upon to express their ideas. Several modes of communication are encouraged to ensure that messaging reaches all students. Among other initiatives, there is a debate where all candidates gather in the cafeteria to make their case. My school had to adapt in the Covid-19 pandemic era, so the debate still took place, but virtually.

Each student aged 12 to 17 is invited to vote by secret ballot for the president of his or her choice. Each voter has the opportunity to elect a president who will represent their values.

It is particularly important to teach this democratic exercise to young people before they reach the age of majority: This will help them as adults understand the importance of taking an interest in politics. It is our politicians who run our democracy, and we have the power to decide who will represent us through our vote.

As a student council member, I participate in the discussions, propose and listen to others' ideas, vote and accept the majority's will. The council then has the mandate to carry out the chosen activity. I am involved in the planning, organization, communication with students and implementation of activities. My involvement has given me experience in governance management and event organization, a sense of belonging to my school and enhanced self-esteem.

The student council allows me to have decision-making power and be the first to know the information. I also love being able to meet new people who share the same interests as me. All of this has given me the confidence to host *Secondaire en spectacle* for four consecutive years and to participate in the fashion show.

I made the decision to get involved and take action. As a result, I live in an interesting school environment that resembles me and corresponds to my values.

I can say that my high school has been fun. That's because *I built it*.





**Jean-François Gagné**  
Principal - École LaRocque  
Centre de services scolaire  
de la Région-de-Sherbrooke

## SCHOOL DEMOCRACY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL is possible!



I am pleased and proud to present to you the electoral process for École LaRocque. Our elementary school is a multi-ethnic environment that welcomes students from our city's most disadvantaged backgrounds and is part of the Centre de services scolaire de la Région-de-Sherbrooke.

I had the chance to teach high school social sciences for 11 years and was involved with Student Council elections on several occasions. During my transition to leadership in an elementary school, I wanted to recreate the practice with our young students. Although school elections are usually more common in high school, I felt that it would work and that the students would participate in large numbers.

Indeed, the response was positive and exceeded my expectations! In fact, for this year's school elections, 34 candidates vied for the six positions: specifically, a Cycle 1 minister, a Cycle 2

minister, three ministers from Cycle 3 (including one Grade 6 student who will be the Prime Minister) and a minister from our *Rainbow* (moderate intellectual disabilities) class.

The election process is rigorous and similar to official elections: nomination, election posters, ballots, official ballot box, Prime Ministerial candidates' messages on the intercom, etc. Once elected, the Council meets once a month and is headed by a teacher, and they work on different projects, organizing holiday and charitable activities. I believe that for the participants, this will remain one of their most important elementary school memories.

Being a high school social sciences teacher at heart, I am genuinely concerned about the participation rate in various recent elections (66% in the 2018 provincial elections). Thus, in addition to introducing students to this important democratic process, it allows me as an administrator to hear their concerns directly. This is an enriching experience for me and helps to develop a sense of belonging among our students to their educational environment.

Elections and Student Council involves them in decision-making and allows our students to positively assert their leadership. The Council changed the name of the moderate intellectual disabilities classes to *Rainbow* classes, and this, even before the *Rainbow* trend spread during the pandemic! More importantly, it is now embedded in the way we communicate, and it originated with the *students*.

School democracy in a primary school? It is more than possible!



## DEMOCRACY through entrepreneurship

Learning about democracy within society is essential: Stakeholders in the education community are aware of their role with youth in terms of education and democracy.

So how can democracy in schools be reflected within a framework of countering social inequalities and involving students through practical learning?

### Vision and role of administration in teaching about democracy

Located in a disadvantaged sector of Sherbrooke, Marie-Reine elementary school welcomes 230 students, more than half coming from an immigrant background. In addition to running the school, principal Linda Pagé is also affiliated with the Idée éducation entrepreneuriale network of Entrepreneurial Community Schools, which aims to teach youth to become innovators who are aware of the impact of their entrepreneurship on themselves, others and their living environment.

For Ms. Pagé, teaching is not just about theory and subject matter: students must be encouraged to work together to carry out practical assignments. At its most basic, it's a vision of engaging students to develop their critical thinking and sense of judgment by carrying out entrepreneurial projects.

According to this model, the role of the administration is to support students through projects that they conceive on their own, and from which they can draw lessons to apply in their daily lives. As such, they are encouraged to solve problems and ask questions, which is essential to student development.

It is also necessary to encourage their commitment, be attentive to their needs, empower them, advise them of their rights and freedoms, and teach them to be autonomous and to care for both their body and spirit.

### Concrete initiatives in schools

At Marie-Reine, the school team prioritizes students and listens to their needs, with students involved in the organization of a student council, and consulted on numerous issues, including schoolyard activities, school rules, bullying, violence, etc.

### The school's vision also includes citizens of the community-at-large

In January 2020, the school organized a citizen consultation to better understand the reality of the community. Neighbourhood demographic data was studied and made public to establish an action plan in line with the needs expressed by citizens. For example, one of the expressed needs was a lack of adequate food supply. The school therefore decided to remedy the shortage and meet the need by becoming a collection point for baskets of vegetables, and those who wish can place an order and pick up their produce directly on-site.

The students also established another project, the *Fabricollation*, which is a weekly food-related activity. Students, working with teachers and the school team, plan a menu, find recipes, make a grocery list and prepare snacks. The effort teaches them both subject and social skills, such as French, teamwork, mathematics (in budgeting, measuring) and so much more.

Finally, using entrepreneurship to learn about democracy offers many advantages: Students share their ideas and all stakeholders in the school are involved in carrying out the projects, which creates exchanges between students with an immigrant background and those born in Canada. They can better understand each other by developing their own sense of judgment and openness to new ideas and experiences.



**FQDE**  
Fédération québécoise  
des directions d'établissement  
d'enseignement

# Influente pour son milieu

POLITIQUE

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COMMUNICATION

RÉUSSITE DES ÉLÈVES

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**Emilie Robitaille**  
Coordinator, Sors de ta bulle  
Fondation Monique-Fitz-Back

## GET OUT OF YOUR BUBBLE

### The campaign to mobilize Quebec youth on climate change

We often meet young people who want to take action *now* on climate change, but they don't know where to begin!

It's true that the first step may seem like the most difficult to take, especially when one feels that they are acting alone. Thanks to the *Sors de ta bulle* (Get Out of Your Bubble) campaign, we hope to combat this sense of powerlessness in youth in the face of the climate issue and support their feelings of hope for the future.

*Sors de ta bulle* offers different engagement opportunities for youth aged 12 to 17.

#### Get involved in a group: become a young environment minister or environmental journalist

It's easier to have, and maintain, motivation to act when we join others who share our convictions. This first step, identifying friends in the same school or neighborhood, is a favorable factor in youth engagement. Once well supported by a group of peers, young people will feel more confident when facing issues that arise and finding solutions to put in place.

Motivated youth can also get involved in regional or provincial groups!

Each year within the framework of the campaign, groups of young ministers of the environment and environmental journalists are formed. These two bodies aim to support and accompany youth in developing their leadership and training them according to their individual and group interests.

#### Mobilizing your entourage: organizing a concrete action at school

Small gestures, such as choosing to walk, bike or eat local, have great significance for youth engagement. They allow young people to feel empowered on global issues, and to feel that they can make a difference, one step - or one bite - at a time! Moreover, by adopting eco-friendly habits, these youth can influence their friends and families.

For young people who wish to sensitize their entourage more directly, organizing an action at school can take diverse forms, such as a kiosk to raise awareness on buying local, school gardens, elimination of plastic water bottles, etc.

To organize such an initiative, students should speak with a trusted staff member who can support them in the process. Sites such as [Sorsdetabulle.com](http://Sorsdetabulle.com) (in French) offer interesting resources to get informed or even to find financing. What remains essential is that young people involve themselves in a project that they care about.

Several examples of school projects to combat climate change that have received financing can be found at: [fondationmf.ca/nos-actions/projets-soutenus](http://fondationmf.ca/nos-actions/projets-soutenus) (in French)

*Sors de ta bulle* also offers short webinars by and for young people, dealing with actions that can be taken in high schools.





## Getting together: participating in youth summits on climate change (SJCC).

The SJCCs are an additional opportunity for youth to meet with others their age who are also sensitive to the climate issue. Meeting a large number of people from all over Quebec reinforces the feeling that one can take action and plant the seeds of hope.

This year, SJCC21 will take place April 17 in virtual format. Registration begins soon for the free event that will bring together youth from across the province.

[Facebook.com/sorsdetabulleSJCC](https://facebook.com/sorsdetabulleSJCC)  
[Instagram.com/sorsdetabulle/](https://instagram.com/sorsdetabulle/)  
[Sorsdetabulle.com/](https://Sorsdetabulle.com/)

According to a 2019<sup>1</sup> poll, 10% of youth aged 12 to 18 doubted their ability to act, because of, among other reasons, their age, disinterest of adults, or a feeling that they are acting alone.

As adults, let's give them the means to fulfill their ambitions!

<sup>1</sup> Fondation Monique-Fitz-Back (2019). Sondage sur les perceptions des jeunes de 12 à 18 ans, face aux changements climatiques. Disponible à <https://sorsdetabulle.com/sondage2018-2019>



*The Fondation Monique-Fitz-Back works to develop the environmental and social conscience of Quebec youth. Since its creation in 2006, more than 100,000 young people from all administrative regions of Quebec have been sensitized to sustainable development through Foundation projects, making it one of the largest organizations in its domain.*



- **En tant que nouvelle PDG**, il me fait plaisir de saluer l'engagement des parents du Québec envers leurs enfants et leur implication indéfectible à la réussite de ceux-ci.
- **Vous trouverez en moi** une interlocutrice ouverte et engagée vers l'atteinte de nos objectifs communs.
- **Ensemble**, nous pourrions relever les défis de cette année toute particulière !

*Claudette Turcotte*



**La Fédération**  
des centres de services  
scolaires du Québec



**Marius Bourgeois**  
Leader and coach at escouadeÉDU

## OUR CHILDREN are Watching Us

"Do what I say. Not what I do."

I'm not proud of it, but I have already spoken these words to my children. Maybe you have too?

It is an awkward, but loving sentiment, but for me these words really mean to say: "*Be better than me. Do better than me.*"

After all, we want what is best for our children, it's normal. But these words also speak to a larger truth: Our children learn through imitation. They learn from their role models, from us, their parents. Specifically, we know that they learn more from our *actions* than from our words.

### Our children do what they see

Being a role model is a recognized leadership principle because people will emulate what they observe. It is the same thing with our kids.

The pandemic has shaken family life and begs the question: What kind of modeling have we done for our children thus far? In a constructive way, the question is important because our children are watching us and have spent the last year learning how to live within the context of a pandemic.

To be a role model does not mean trying to be someone else. It is clearly being oneself as a parent, but in a purposeful way. In this era, what do we want to model for children in terms of responsible citizenship?

### Perfection does not exist

I don't think our children expect perfection. When we give ourselves the right not to be perfect as a parent, we also give our children the right not to be perfect. That is important. What makes Superman so approachable is that he has a weakness: kryptonite. As parents, our imperfect side, *that* is our kryptonite. But it is also important to believe in ourselves as parents. Isn't that what we want for our children: To believe in themselves?

Drawing upon my experience in schools and as a parent of three children, I can tell you that our self-talk affect us, adults *and* children.



Here are 10 key affirmations that have been personally helpful to me. I believe that these can have a positive impact on us as parents, but also on our children who are currently living a school experience unlike anything we have ever known.

### Take care of ourselves

After a year of living through a pandemic, the early temporary strategies must give way to more reflective approaches, as much at school as at home. After all, isn't taking care of ourselves the first responsibility of citizens since the beginning of the pandemic? Washing our hands, staying home, and keeping a two-metre distance from others?

So where do we start? One of the things that is most difficult for children is to learn how to manage their responsibilities when their time is not structured, which is everything that happens between classes. So maybe our children need to figure out how to structure time and take care of themselves at home, such as:

- Taking time out from pandemic routines and going outside to be active.
- Talking about their feelings.
- Taking a break from their device at mealtime.
- Limiting Netflix consumption to spend more time taking care of themselves or with family.
- Going to sleep at a reasonable hour.

In short, our children simply need role models to show them the small daily actions that we can take to care for ourselves. It takes every one of us, because the pandemic is demanding for everyone. It begins with us at home, and our children are watching.

## INTRODUCING DEMOCRACY to your child

Democracy is not just the business of adults. It is also part of the daily life of children, whether at school, at home or in their community. The earlier they become aware of it, the faster they will be able to make active use of it. As a parent, how can you support your child in learning about democracy? Here are some ways to get started!

### Explore the city

Observing the tangible presence of government in your community is a good way to spark your child's interest in democracy. Go on an exploration session in your city: at the library, post office, park or museum, try to determine together which level of government (municipal, provincial or federal) is responsible for the service.

Continue the exercise on the Democracy Education Zone of the Élections Québec website by playing *The Levels Game* or *Who does what?* These activities will help you to refine your knowledge as a family!



### Experiment with democracy at school

In school, the student council enables youth to experience democracy in action. By electing their representatives, they learn about the electoral process and participate in carrying out projects that will impact their community. Talk about the student



council with your child: is this democratic body present in their school? What is its role? What are the current initiatives?

Offered jointly by the Quebec National Assembly, the Fondation Jean-Charles-Bonenfant and Élections Québec, the Vox populi program (in French only) supports primary and secondary schools in the activities of their student councils. Schools receive a free support kit including a guide for the person in charge of the student council, teaching aids for council members and election materials (ballot boxes, voting booths, election posters). Registered schools also have access to personalized educational support.

### Open dialogue at home

In a democracy, different ideas and opinions are expressed with openness, tolerance and respect. Moreover, it is the role of an elected individual to listen to the citizens that they represent. Talk to your child about issues that affect society (health, education, the environment, poverty, etc.) and invite them to express their thoughts and develop their critical thinking.

The exercise of democracy also requires involvement in one's community. Are you part of a parents' committee? Are you a volunteer in an organization or in your community? Share your experiences with your child. It will be a great way to inspire him and make him want to get involved in a project or cause!



### Learn how to vote in the next election

Next fall will be marked by municipal general elections in Quebec. This is an excellent opportunity to introduce young people to the exercise of the right to vote.

Be on the lookout! When the next school year begins, your child's school could participate in the Élections Québec Voters in training program. If this is the case, your future voter will be able to experience an electoral simulation: they will practice voting for one of the candidates for mayor of their municipality. This will allow them to develop their civic skills and their knowledge of how our democratic institutions function.

### Tell us your ideas!

We are always on the lookout for good ideas to introduce children to democracy. Fill out our questionnaire: Understanding and experience democracy with my child and help us design educational and engaging learning tools for young and old!



For more information visit <https://www.electionsquebec.qc.ca/english/index.php>

Tomorrow we're voting to elect our class representative.

Mom, I'm running for election to my student council.

What's the point of a by-election?

Dad, who makes the decisions in our city?

**Not only is democracy**  
a part of your every-day life...  
it's a part of your children's lives as well!

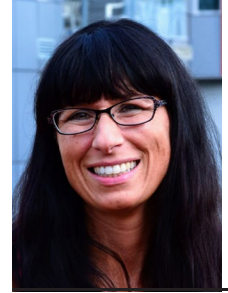
*Help them as they learn about democracy and its key concepts.*

VISIT

[www.electionsquebec.qc.ca/DEZ](https://www.electionsquebec.qc.ca/DEZ)

[Programs](#)
[Educational activities](#)
[Video clips](#)

**DEMOCRACY-  
EDUCATION ZONE**



**Martine Rioux**  
Deputy Editor-in-Chief, École branchée

## BETTER INFORMATION for more informed citizens

One of the pillars of democracy is access to quality information, which permits one to exercise their role as a citizen in a proper and enlightened manner. With the development of online media and social networks, being a citizen in 2021 means exercising this role taking digital technology into account, whether you are a user or not.

Already, in 2017, 90% of people aged 18 to 34 were getting their information almost exclusively online. Now imagine your children and adolescents! For them, traditional media hardly exists. Knowing this, we should be concerned about the information they are looking for online.

Why? Because the dissemination of fake news has grown steadily in recent years, which “shakes the trust that we place in political institutions, the media and scientists, and destabilizes our democracies.” Also, we are all just one click away from sharing false information.

The CIVIX initiative provides citizenship education across Canada and is unequivocal: “The spread of fake news is arguably one of the most pressing issues in democracies today. The ability to distinguish between true and false has become an essential skill for all citizens in this digital age.”



As parents, what can you do to help your child better inform themselves?

The three key skills to develop are: verify the source, verify the claim, and trace the information to its origins. This is inspired by the approach developed by the Citnum.ca website team.

### 1- Verify the source

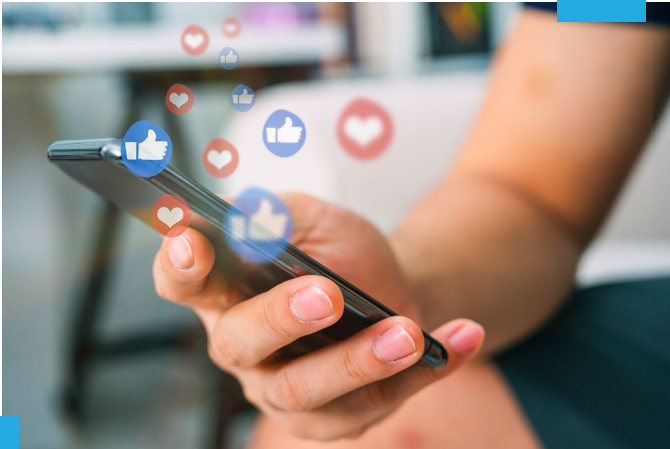
- Ask yourself about the author (Who is he/she? Is this a recognized media organization? etc.).
- When there is an image, do a reverse image search (Google, TinEye).

### 2-Verify the claim

- Compare the information with other reports on the same subject: story angle, choice of interview subjects, how the information is presented.
- Beware of *cognitive biases* (your brain selects or transforms information to affirm your opinion).
  - Confirmation bias: “This photo validates what I already believed... it must be true.”
  - Illusion of truth: “I’ve seen this post so often (even shared by ‘serious’ media), that it must clearly be true!”

### 3-Trace the information to the source

- Often, the information we read has been shared by someone we know. Try to go beyond that source and trace the story to its origins. You will find that the information may have been transformed, more than once, over the course of the many shares.



### Share or not?

The urge to share/react/comment/retort/confront/ridicule can sometimes make your fingers itch. Try instead to first take a few seconds to think about the potential impact of your click. This is also something we need to learn!

In a context of information overload, it is essential to support your child so that they learn to decode the news that they read or see online. Talk to them about current affairs. Challenge them to validate their sources as well as their perception of a fact or a reality. While helping them become aware of the importance of being better informed, you will also be spending quality time together. This could spark great family discussions and you will help make them knowledgeable citizens!



### RESOURCES

- [BreakTheFake.ca](https://www.breakthefake.ca)
- Associated Press Fact check
- FullFact
- Doubt it? Check it. Challenge it.
- NewsWise.ca
- 30secondes.org
- Check then share. Media Smarts
- COVID-10: Track the facts, Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (FPJQ) in partnership with Agence Science-Press (ASP)

### References

*Media education, newsliteracy.ca*

*Citizenship in the digital age, citnum.ca*

*Why is journalism important? CIVIX, View video*

*Democracy Education Zone, Élections Québec*

*Petit, B. Construire sa citoyenneté à l'ère numérique, Le réseau Edcan (in French)*



## HOW TO MOTIVATE YOUR CHILD to do homework?

When there is motivation, homework time can become an enjoyable parent-child experience. Here are some tips from the Alloprof Parents team to help you get there.

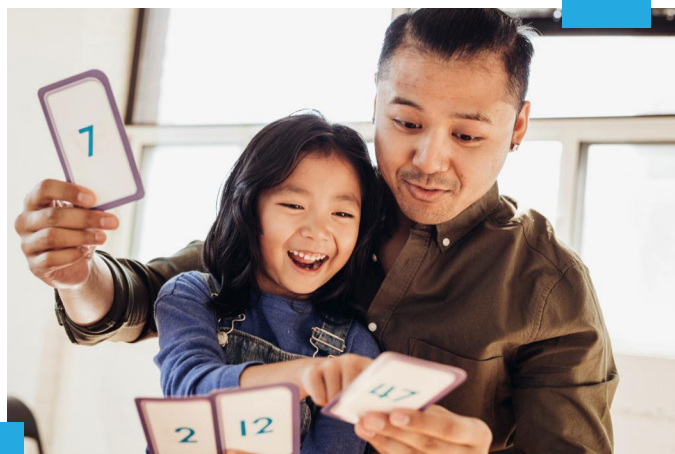
### Show interest

When it comes to doing their homework, a child's motivation largely depends on that of the parent. By demonstrating *your* enthusiasm, you are helping your child develop their own taste for learning as well as their self-confidence.

### Offer choices

You can discuss options with your child to determine which homework routine is right for them. By offering them certain choices, they will feel a sense of freedom and control that will quickly boost their motivation. Here are some questions to help guide the conversation:

- Would you prefer to relax and have a snack before starting your homework?
- Do you want to start as soon as you get home from school so that you have free time after dinner?
- Would you prefer one long study period or several short ones?



To help you determine the ideal time for your child to do homework, you should consider their schedule – and yours. It's also important to think about what their energy level is like when they get home from school and what it is like after dinner.

### Determine the best place to work

The physical work environment influences how the homework period unfolds. It has been proven that a space that corresponds to a child's particular needs and characteristics will have a positive effect on their motivation, and therefore on their learning. The best place to work should be:

- calm
- away from sources of distraction
- without a telephone
- free of ambient noise
- tidy
- equipped with soft music (optional)
- near a window
- close to a parent
- etc.

### Split up the work time

Dividing up tasks and taking a few breaks are two proven strategies that promote concentration and help maintain motivation. Instead of working for 60 minutes non-stop, your child can opt to do three periods of 20 minutes each.

### Be creative

Sometimes all it takes is a little imagination to banish the boredom and make lessons enjoyable. Here are some tips to liven up the process for younger children:

- turn the lessons into a game
- study vocabulary words using letter-shaped noodles
- use the « Dictée de mots de vocabulaire application (in French only)
- review mathematics tables while walking or playing in the park
- play *Fin Lapin* (in French only)
- etc.



### Avoid conflict

Despite all your planning, ideas and efforts, fatigue and small frustrations may increase tensions. To avoid conflicts and keep homework time a pleasant one, you can call for reinforcements. Whether it is the other parent or a sibling, quite often simply the intervention of a third person will help calm the situation and restore everyone's good mood.

### ABOUT ALLOPROF PARENTS

The Alloprof Parents service was created to make life easier for parents throughout their children's school career. To meet their diverse needs, the Alloprof web platform offers articles, columns, videos and printable resources. From homework help and school difficulties to healthy lifestyles and exam preparation, the variety of subjects is broad, and the resources are numerous.

Alloprof Parents also offers a telephone service for students to speak with remedial teachers, Monday to Thursday from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., and on Sundays from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. These professionals also respond to questions posed by email or in the private Messenger service on the Alloprof Facebook page during these same hours.

Finally, a practical newsletter delivers real-time news and the best strategies to parents to help their child according to their grade level.

For information visit: <https://www.alloprof.qc.ca/en/parents>



## DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING IN OUR CHILDREN.

### Why and How?

The last year was marked by confinement measures and entailed its share of challenges.

If what these demanded from us was to change many habits, these measures also obliged us to take actions for the good of society more than for our own personal interests. In short, this was the occasion to teach our children about the importance of collective conscience.

Furthermore, certain events that we've witnessed in the last few months have also reminded us of how fragile democracy is. These situations proved to be excellent prompts to exchange with them on different subjects touching our society, and to help them develop as citizens who can grasp the complexities of democratic life.

But concretely, how do we instill critical thinking in them along with the qualities of a good citizen?

What's important is to create moments that allow discussion, whether it's reading a book, watching a film or talking about the news and related issues. As parents, we want to think about posing open questions (Why? How? Explain to me what you think about it...) and let our children speak.

To begin, listen without judgment, concentrate, and try to understand their point of view. Afterwards, encourage their introspection with questions that allow them to consider that other ways of thinking can exist, that there are two sides to every coin. The objective is not about attaining consensus, but rather to learn to dialogue, to validate their ideas, to debate in a respectful manner and be able to listen and acknowledge different opinions.

Developing this capacity to question oneself on different issues can begin at a very young age.



For example, we can discuss with them the notion of equity versus equality. The question: "Is it more important to give the same thing to everybody or to give each person what they need?" can generate thought-provoking discussions. You can invite your children to reflect on this notion by offering concrete examples related to their lives: "Should we share our blocks in equal parts amongst each member of the family, including the baby, who can't use them? Why?"

During these exchanges, keep in mind to not impose preconceived notions or try to get them to adopt your point of view. Your role as educator consists not necessarily of giving them a path to follow, but more to encourage them to think autonomously and develop a critical spirit and ethical mindset. Even if they arrive at conclusions that are different from yours, your primary objective must be to allow them to become independent citizens, free to make choices beyond social pressures and dictates.

Isn't that essential to maintaining democracy?

#### PREMIÈRE RESSOURCE, HELPING PARENTS

Free and confidential consultations  
For any questions about education and the parent-child relationship

**514 525 2573 • 1 866 329-4223**  
[consultation@premiereressource.com](mailto:consultation@premiereressource.com)  
<https://premiereressource.com/en>



## 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>.



Fédération  
des comités de parents  
du Québec

**We are here for you!**

For your training needs, and your questions about  
your role and your rights in the public school system,  
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[services-conseils@fcpq.qc.ca](mailto:services-conseils@fcpq.qc.ca)!

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