




Fédération
des comités de parents
du Québec

ACTION Parents

Volume 45 • Number 2 • October 2021



We must take care of our mental health

- Well-being at school and at home
 - Parents' testimonials
 - Resources to support your child
 - The experts' point of view
- 

ACTION Parents

Volume 45 • Number 2 • October 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 October issue as well as previous issues, visit our website at: www.fcpq.qc.ca.

Editor-in-chief: Stéphanie Rochon

Editorial assistant: Catherine Galerneau

Graphics: Julie Payeur

Translation: Joel Ceausu

Contributors:

- Steven Bilodeau, high school student
- The FQDE team
- Gaële Côté, Conseil supérieur de l'éducation
- Stéphanie Dionne, École branchée sur la famille
- Frédérique Gervais, PhD candidate in neuropsychology
- Stéphanie Powers, Member, Parent Committee, CSS des Draveurs
- Corinne Payne, director general, Quebec's Federation of Parents' Committees
- The Institut Pacifique team
- Mireille Moisan, Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec
- The Alloprof team
- Katherine Korakakis, English Parents' Committee Association
- Ariane Coddens-Bergeron, Théâtre Parminou
- Sylvie Barma, Ph.D, CRIRES
- Rollande Deslandes, Ph.D, CRIRES
- Nathalie Ste-Marie, MSc., CRIRES
- Chantal Camden, Sherbrooke University and Centre de recherche du CHUS
- Élodie Hérault, Centre de recherche du CHUS
- Mégan Casoli, master's degree student in health sciences research
- Christine Gervais, inf., Ph. D., Université du Québec en Outaouais
- Isabel Côté, Ph.D., Université du Québec en Outaouais
- Milica Miljus, student in Educational Sciences

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Quebec Federation of Parents' Committees (FCPQ)
2263, boul. Louis-XIV, Quebec (Quebec) G1C 1A4
Telephone: 418-667-2432 or 1-800-463-7268
Email: courrier@fcpq.qc.ca

Find the Federation on

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WORD FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



The theme of our Fall magazine was obvious from the editorial team's first discussions on the subject. The mental health and well-being of youth is always a concern for parents, but the needs have greatly increased since the beginning of the pandemic and the latest research is not reassuring.

That's why we've asked experts and partners in the education community to offer clarification and advice to parents in this issue.

Once again, we are pleased and privileged to publish an original text from a student, Steven Bilodeau, who expresses his views on the ideal school.

Would your child like to speak to parents, share his or her point of view or talk about a project? Please contact us! Parents are also welcome in the pages of our magazine; it is a pleasure to reserve pages for you in each edition.

Our entire team hopes that the information, resources, tools and advice presented in the magazine will help you to better support your child's well-being, and to better understand and manage your own mental health!

Stéphanie Rochon

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear friends,

During the last few months, more and more voices have been raised expressing concern about the mental health of our youth and demanding more resources for them.

According to results of a survey conducted by the FCPQ and EPCA, parents were already preoccupied with the consequences of the pandemic on mental health since Spring of 2020.

The pandemic has created or exacerbated a number of nuisances or issues: uncertainty about the future, concern about our health and that of our loved ones, the lack of social interaction, instability in our jobs and our incomes, not to mention balancing work and family and the significant increase in videoconferencing! Let's remember also that these problems don't affect all families in the same manner: according to their socio-economic situation, some families are more vulnerable than others.

In March 2021, 43% of parents estimated that the pandemic will have had significant or lasting impact on the mental health of their children. What's more, only 20% of parents believe that they were properly equipped to support them.

During the *Rendez-vous pour la réussite* in Spring 2021, the FCPQ demanded the optimization of specialized human resources for intervention with students. We also promoted the importance of real collaboration between the health community and education sectors, all while implicating parents and students in the solution. We spoke about good practices and school initiatives to support students, such as classroom visits by psychologists, awareness-raising activities, discussion groups and

conferences for students and parents. Relying on extra-curricular activities and youth interests to encourage motivation is a strategy that was mentioned repeatedly.

The FCPQ also reiterated its demand for a transparent, accessible and independent Student Ombudsman.

We should not forget how important it is to ask young people what they need. Children, even at the elementary level, are for the most part able to say what they like and what they need to overcome difficulties, whether it's to pass the time relaxing without pressure to perform or to speak about their emotions with a trusted adult.

We all worry about our children, but what about parents? Our mental health has also been affected on different levels, which could have an effect on the entire family. There are resources to help, such as [LigneParents](#) and [Tel-Jeunes](#). Don't hesitate to call on these trusted organizations.

In addition to demanding extra resources, the FCPQ also created tools to support parents during this difficult period, notably the [parents.quebec](#) portal and [new webinars](#). Two informative series of video capsules are also presented in this magazine.

We will continue our efforts to represent you and to support you this year and for a long time to come.


Kévin Roy

MENTAL HEALTH: AS IMPORTANT AS PHYSICAL HEALTH!

As a society, we must constantly reconsider how we welcome differences and how we can find a way to help everyone.

Mental health is a subject that affects me personally, as I live with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), which also affect many young people like me.

School is the place that welcomes us every week, one of the places that allows us to develop our potential and help us grow into the adult we wish to become. I believe that the school must support young people and while it does for the most part, there is always something more to do and room for improvement, such as increasing resources and personnel!

I have seen great resilience and adaptability on the part of my school, and it is important for youth not to feel that we are a “burden” to our school. In my opinion, the most important thing requiring improvement is the fact that we accommodate youth with dyslexia or learning disabilities, for example, more than those who have mental health problems like me. I think this is a shame: just because the problem doesn't appear to be there doesn't mean it isn't there. Young people are the future, so it is essential that we take concrete actions so that we have a promising future and an environment that makes us comfortable.

Personally, I would have needed the school administration to take my difficulties a little more seriously. It's not that they didn't, but I really think they do a lot more for physical health issues, and in my opinion, that's not normal. However, I have been fortunate to have teachers since the pandemic who have been extremely supportive and have taken the time to talk to me about my needs and concerns. This has helped me considerably. Also, my classmates have been a great help by their understanding, their non-judgement and even some-

Steven Bilodeau
High school student



times by making efforts like putting on their masks when they approach me. This also helps a lot.

We need to have more student services: people who specialize in mental health and mental health training for all teachers and principals. I have a lot of respect for the leaders and officials who are in an office and not in the field, but the vast majority cannot understand the mental health situations experienced by youth.

When I filmed my series “La lumière derrière l'ombre” (The Light Behind the Shadows), I met with people who work in the school system: parents, youth, experts and politicians. What is missing is the humanity and taking the time, but also not underestimating the mental health challenges of young people.

The person who helped me the most was my mother. So as a young person – and parents as well – let's not underestimate the importance of parent stakeholders in helping their child, and schools should work even more collaboratively with them.

Thank you for reading. I am confident that together we can do more and better in mental health.

MENTAL HEALTH AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES



Children blossom through the discovery of new hobbies from an early age. In school, most of the time these hobbies follow them in the form of sports, art, intellectual, musical, computer or scientific activities. As they get older, it is very important for them to continue to grow these passions that can help motivate them throughout their school career.

This year, the ministerial measure dedicated to extracurricular activities in high schools – a measure that has been in place for three years – has reached 100 percent of the budget allocated. The allocation of this measure can be used to hire coaches, organize free activities, etc. At Soulanges High School, Principal Jean-François Drouin and his team have developed a diversified program: investment club, cheerleading, student radio, photo club, video game club and much more. They even offer transportation to and from school after activities so that as many students as possible can participate.

Participation in extracurricular activities allows students to develop new interests and a sense of belonging to their team or school. These activities have also proven to be beneficial to the mental health of our youth. For example, sports allow children with behavioural difficulties to expend their excess energy, while artistic activities can help soothe a child suffering from anxiety.

Extracurricular activities also allow young people to break out of their isolation and meet other students with similar interests, with whom they otherwise might never interact. It can be reassuring and even empowering for them to understand that others share their experience. In addition to being able to connect with peers with similar passions, they can also meet an inspiring adult who often becomes a mentor or role model, and can be a positive resource for a young person's mental health if only by giving them someone to talk to that they can trust. Teachers are often viewed by students as authority figures, whereas a coach or other after-school leader can also be a friend!

In short, it is very important for students to flourish through a hobby or even a passion, with proven benefits to their mental health, socialization and sense of belonging. High school can be the experience of a lifetime! So don't hesitate to sign your children up for an extracurricular activity, or even encourage them to try several if they are unsure of their choice.



SECONDAIRE EN SPECTACLE

*EN 2019-2020, ON A FAIT #SESQUANDMÊME.
L'AN DERNIER, LE PROGRAMME A EU LIEU CONTRE VENTS ET MARÉES.*

**ON REMET ÇA CETTE ANNÉE AVEC
UNE AUTRE ÉDITION SÉCURITAIRE,
FLEXIBLE ET SURTOUT QUI AURA LIEU.**

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THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN IN SCHOOL: LET'S DO OUR HOMEWORK

Conseil supérieur de l'éducation



Québec

Gaële Côté
Researcher

Conseil supérieur de l'éducation

In its position paper *Le bien-être de l'enfant à l'école : faisons nos devoirs* (The Well-Being of Children in School: Let's do our Homework), the *Conseil supérieur de l'éducation* examines factors that influence the well-being and mental health of pre-school and elementary school children. It describes the needs and circumstances of children, and then focuses on the levers that school environments possess to help them grow, learn and thrive in a caring, life-long school environment.

Because each child is unique, the Conseil believes that the well-being and mental health of all children in Quebec's elementary schools must be addressed in a comprehensive and universal way.

Child well-being: a shared responsibility

Child well-being is a shared responsibility among all school personnel, families, communities and decision-making bodies.

The importance of social and emotional skills

Social and emotional skills are central to a child's well-being: They provide tools to protect and assert oneself, to manage emotions, to become a responsible citizen and to succeed at school. They are developed in early childhood and throughout life. For adults working in schools and for parents, these skills are the basis of a caring intervention and constitute a protective factor.

Co-education: an essential tool

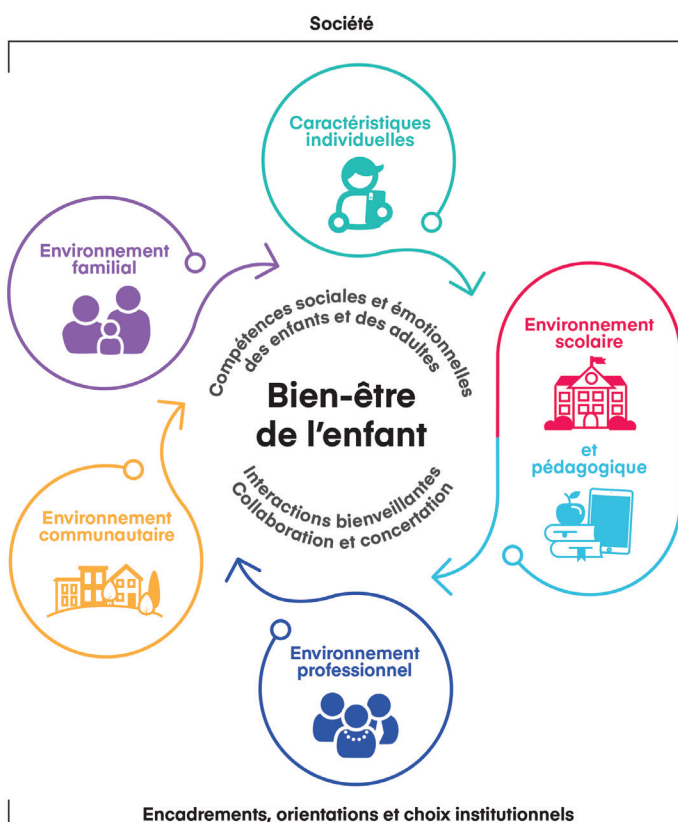
Family and school are the two main environments influencing a child's development. Each child has his or her own family experience that has shaped them as an individual. In order to understand the child, their potential and their needs, one must consider the uniqueness of each family, its background, history, socio-economic conditions and everything that comprises its identity.

Based on the principle of co-education, the Conseil recognizes from the outset that the school and family influence each other, and that parents are primarily responsible for their child's development. Their knowledge of their child and their needs makes them priority partners for the school community.

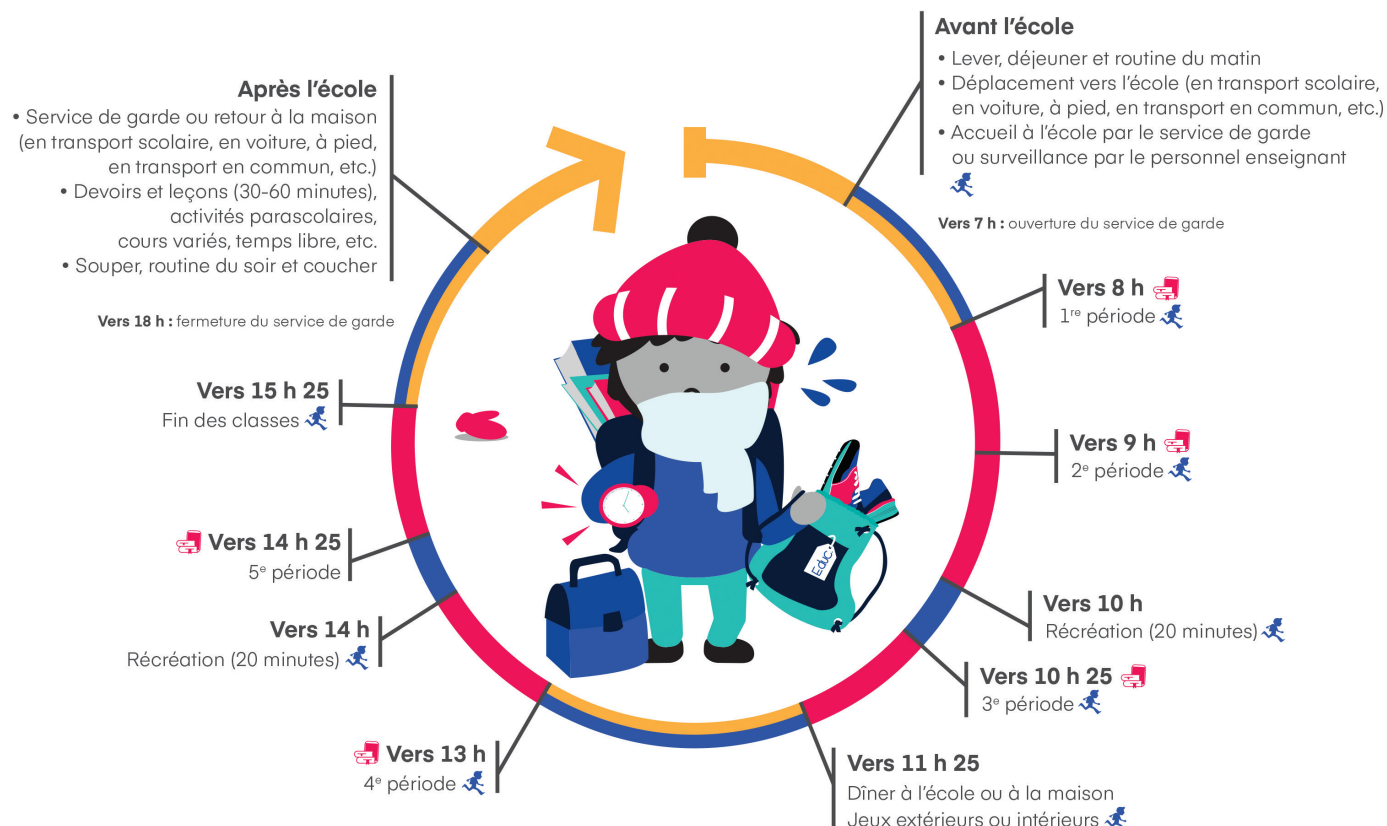
Challenges of collaboration and consultation

Because of the number of people involved and the need to act in a coherent, complementary and coordinated fashion, it is essential to establish close collaboration with all stakeholders, including the education, health and social services networks, educational and school-based childcare services, community stakeholders and of course, the family and child themselves.

Le bien-être de l'enfant à l'école



Le quotidien d'un enfant du primaire



À la maison

En déplacement,
au service de garde,
à la récréation

En classe



Transition (elle implique
souvent l'habillage et
le déshabillage)



Matières (ex. : français),
spécialités (ex. : éducation physique),
orthopédagogie, etc.

This collaboration is essential throughout the child's life to support the development of their full potential. However, it becomes particularly important during transitions from one grade level or school to another, and even crucial when the child requires special services.

Trust and Dialogue

The Conseil believes that it is necessary to build a relationship of mutual trust and create a space for dialogue with the family to exchange information constructively, while respecting the roles and competencies of each. This dialogue must lead to the sharing of information and practices so that the school and the family can better understand, support and accompany the child in his or her school career.

TO KNOW MORE

- [Toolkits](#)
- [Le bien être de l'enfant à l'école : faisons nos devoirs \(in French\)](#)



CO-EDUCATION: ACTING DIRECTLY ON THE WELL-BEING OF YOUTH

When the Quebec Ministry of Education (MEQ) presented the Paving the way for well-being at school symposium last August, it was to highlight the importance of well-being as an essential lever for educational success. It is also a shared responsibility between the school team and the family.

This article offers answers to the questions: What to communicate, when and how?

What to communicate?

The co-educational relationship between parents and school staff aims for a positive impact on students' success and well-being. It is becoming essential to share information on a number of topics. Here are a few:

WELL-BEING	EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS
What does a child need to "be well" and learn?	What does a child need to be successful?
Motivation	Organization of work
Stress and anxiety	Carrying out their work and study plan
Interpersonal Relations	Understanding a subject
Ability to express oneself	Ability to feel capable of success

École branchée
ENSEIGNER À L'ÈRE DU NUMÉRIQUE

Stéphanie Dionne
Project director, digital facilitator
École branchée sur la famille



When?

When a change in a child's behaviour is observed, it may be a sign that something important is going on in their life that deserves your attention. Things you can observe:

- lack of sleep
- mealtime
- passions and interests
- academic results
- overall attitude
- the quality of interpersonal relationships
- motivation in performing daily activities

Before communicating with teachers, you can first intervene with your child through constructive dialogue by identifying what you have observed and asking them what is going on in their life.

Listen to them! Use their words to invite them to clarify what they are experiencing. This can provide valuable information that will allow you to work with them until they are feeling well. A young person who is *well*, is willing to *learn*.

Contacting your child's teacher or school staff may be required when your interventions require their input or special support, especially when the situation is related to the classroom or school life. Communication must be two-way between parents and the school team. Each communication has the same function: to put in place winning conditions for the student's success.

The article *The school-family relationship, a condition for success for distance learning* in École branchée sur la famille magazine takes a deeper look at this subject.



Personal Success Plan: A school-family communication tool placing students at the heart of their success

Students are the main players in their success, right? So how can we orient our communications effectively between school and family to promote the engagement of young people and act in concert on their school perseverance?

A personal success plan allows young people to document their strengths, progress and challenges to position themselves with regard to their school career. Shared with their teachers and their parents, it is even simpler and more efficient to orient school-family communications. Here is an example:

THE PERSONAL SUCCESS PLAN

The Personal success plan (in French) is to be completed by the student to allow them to situate their success in relation to themselves. For continuity, it can be combined with the writing of a weekly learning report. The following model is inspired by the coaching report used by students of Grade 6 teacher Julie Chandonnet.

THE LEARNING REPORT

The Learning report (in French) is to be completed each week by students, the teacher and parents.

"Teaming up school and family to create the best possible learning conditions means investing directly in the well-being and success of youth, and that begins at the start of the school year."

Download the special issue of *École branchée* magazine intended for parents:

The school-family relationship - A condition for success for distance learning.

* The Quebec Federation of Parent Committees has proposed in its recommendations within the framework of the Rendez-vous pour la réussite éducative the creation of an Individualized Success Plan for every student.

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REDUCING SCREEN TIME IN FAVOR OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES: PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS

Generally speaking, the more time children spend on their screens, the less time they spend playing outside. Moreover, studies show that children from high-income countries have significantly less contact with nature than previous generations. This phenomenon can be attributed, among other things, to an increase in the amount of time spent in front of screens, which is estimated at an average of 7.5 hours per day for children aged 8 to 18. Conversely, children only spend an average of 6 hours per week outdoors, less than the daily screen time!

Considering the current trend, this column will aim to raise awareness about the psychological benefits of reducing screen use in favour of healthy play habits.

Excessive screen use can have deleterious effects on a developing brain, including cognitive and language development, emotional self-regulation and psychological well-being. It has been shown that excessive use of screens in childhood can have an impact on the development of certain neural networks involved in the regulation of emotions, which consequently increases the risk of later presenting behavioral problems as well as mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that a large consumption of screen time activity reduces the quantity and quality of parent-child interactions as well as the opportunities for children to explore and discover their environment through play. It is largely through interactions with others, as well as through interactions with the environment through play, that children develop their ability to regulate and manage their emotions, concerns and frustrations.

Frédérique Gervais

*PhD candidate in neuropsychology
Mother of two young children*



Spending time outdoors away from the passive stimulation of screens allows children to explore their environment while developing their cognitive and motor skills. This provides a physical and mental space for the child to engage in free play while actively forming a play scenario.

Studies consistently show several benefits of time spent in nature, including stress reduction and a protective effect on cognitive development. A lifestyle oriented towards outdoor activities promotes protective behaviours for mental health, notably by encouraging physical activity. Moreover, sleep quality is also dependent on lifestyle habits and has a considerable impact on mental health. What's more, studies show that blue light from screens before bedtime reduces the quality of sleep, while natural outdoor light helps regulate the circadian rhythm.

¹ Information in this section comes from the systematic review of the following literature: Oswald, T. K., Rumbold, A. R., Kedzior, S. G., & Moore, V. M. (2020). Psychological impacts of "screen time" and "green time" for children and adolescents: A systematic scoping review. *PLoS one*, 15(9), e0237725.

In this day and age, technology is generally a part of our lives and it's not all bad. It's about *balance*! Moderate use of screens can be beneficial for young people, especially when the content is educational. In addition, when used in a healthy manner, social media can provide opportunities for teens to connect with peers and engage in identity exploration.

Here are a few tips you can implement on a daily basis with your children to stimulate their interest in outdoor activities:

- Introduce your children to gardening and give them responsibilities.

- Coming home from school can be a great time to spend energy outdoors, so that your child is more willing and focused during the evening homework period.
- Encourage your child to play outdoor sports and participate in outdoor activities with them.
- Point out the beauty of nature to your child (e.g., a flower blooming, a bird singing) to instill a love of nature.
- Since children tend to copy their parents' behaviours, try to reduce your own screen consumption. You will likely see the benefits for your own well-being and that of your family!



la brigade scolaire

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POUR LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY

When someone asks how you are doing, what do you say? Do you tell the truth every time? Do you hide how you feel to spare those around you? What if I told you that, for the longest time, I kept how I felt to myself? Does that make you want to be truthful about the way you feel?

More and more, we hear about self-care. We are told to take care of ourselves. But if you're like me, your nature doesn't always let you tell others that you are not doing well. We play at being tough and strong. After all, our children need role models, right? We keep telling them that honesty is the best policy, yet we are not always honest. What if it was ok to not be ok?

Regardless of all of that, it seems to me like people expect us to say that we are "doing good" when they ask us how we are doing. The question is merely a way to be polite, not a way to really know if you are well or not. Peoples' faces change dramatically if you answer that no, you are not doing well. It is high time we change this, and it starts with our children.

Stéphanie Powers

Member, Parent Committee
Centre de services scolaire des Draveurs



Is there a magic formula to manage our feelings and those of our children? No. There are, however, some strategies that work well for my family. In our house, being honest is the most important thing. If one of us is in a bad mood, he or she can express it. The same applies for times when we are sad or tired. What is not permitted is to subject others to our bad moods.

I am not saying we should pretend to feel well. I am saying that we should express our ill feelings in a constructive manner. In my house, we do not ignore our feelings, we learn to manage them and to achieve that, we can isolate for a period. This strategy works for us, it may not work for everyone.

Not being ok is normal. It is normal to have feelings and bad days. We simply need to find strategies that can help us weather life's storms. What are your strategies?

CONSULTATIONS

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CONFIDENTIELLES

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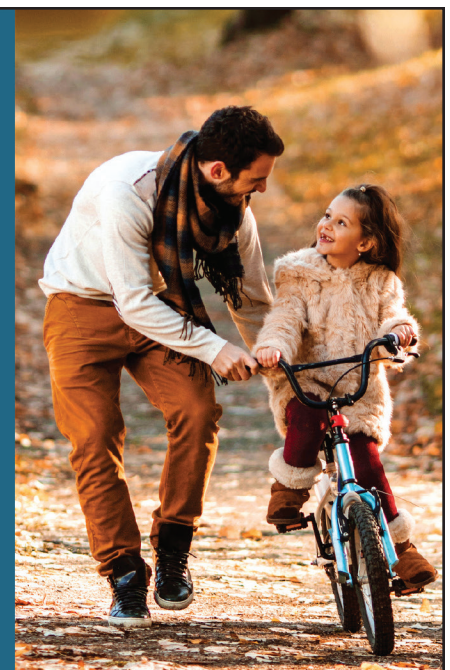
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Corinne Payne, *Director General, FCPQ*

BEING A PARENT!

For nearly 50 years, our Federation has been dedicated to promoting and defending the rights and interests of parents whose children attend public school. Beyond being the official voice for parents, the FCPQ offers training, information, counseling and a host of services to help parents accompany their children toward success.

When the education system as we knew it ground to halt and our schools closed March 13, 2020, after the initial shock and once it became evident schools would be closed beyond two weeks, we went into action. With our partners at English Parent's Committee Association of Quebec (EPCA) we launched an online in-house survey to uncover the needs of parent in the face of COVID-19. Between March 26 and April 1, the response was overwhelming and a great number of parents responded ; not only those that are members on our various committees.

	Responses	% parents/ members of committees	% parents/ non-members (i.e. general public)
French	3000	22%	78%
English	444	43%	57%

One of the key questions was "in which areas of parental competence do you want more information?" three key themes were clear. Yes, in April 2020, parents were already concerned for the children's motivation along with mounting stress and anxiety!

Themes	French	English
Motivation	40%	35%
Work-family balance	33%	41%
Stress - anxiety	24%	25%

This information was shared with the Minister and our educational partners... but we wanted to develop tools to help parents, not just talk!

After over a year of working with the Ministry finding the right partners, researchers, resources, developing scripts, finding a way to film round ongoing COVID restrictions, in June 2021 a series of 24 videos, each 3 to 5 minutes, 12 English and 12 French were finalized. There are three series of videos: support for your child, well-being, and motivation and academic perseverance. My favourite is « How you can help a child manage stress?" ... Yes, there are even tips us parents can use!

Les conférences Web



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avec les mesures
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L'école de votre enfant recherche des ressources de qualité à offrir aux parents?

Les conférences Web **Aidersonenfant.com** offrent aux familles et à l'équipe-école l'accès à des professionnels qui sont les plus grands spécialistes dans leur domaine. Stress et anxiété, conflits, écrans et réseaux sociaux, etc.

Des stratégies pratico-pratiques et accessibles pour accompagner les jeunes dans leur cheminement affectif, social et scolaire.

Pour en savoir plus et pour regarder la bande-annonce

CLIQUEZ ICI



Anaïs Favron
Animatrice et porte-parole

It was with great excitement and pleasure that these videos were launched during the *Symposium de la rentrée* - Paving the way for well-being at school, in August 2021. You can access the videos directly on the Éducation Québec Youtube channel, in the “Being a parent” playlist.







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éducative du Québec

A SOCIALLY SKILLED FAMILY!

Managing emotions, self-confidence, finding solutions to resolve conflicts, assertiveness and empathy are just a few examples of social skills that are closely connected to a child's well-being. The good news is that we can learn these skills together at home!

A new focus on well-being

Recent research has clearly identified student well-being as a fundamental element to consider. With good reason! This well-being is nothing less than a condition for academic success and the development of one's full potential. This observation, which is the consensus of the education community and confirms the intuition of many parents, is nevertheless a small revolution!

In fact, it proposes a new way of approaching the socialization of children at school. If the child's security is still paramount, the basic intention is no longer to simply protect them (against violence and intimidation, for example), but also to better equip them to face life's difficulties and to take full control of their person.

Parents take note, this approach is within reach!



Growing together every day

As a trusted place *par excellence*, the home is a privileged space for developing the social and emotional skills that will forge a child's confidence... and ultimately affect their mental health. You read that right!

Fine, but how do we fit this teaching into our already busy family lives? Quite naturally, actually.

By regularly doing what we call *reflection*, you will help your child observe themselves on a day-to-day basis, through the situations they encounter, with siblings, parents and friends.

As a parent your role will be to guide your child in the proper management of their emotions and to help them understand and respect those of others; to help them communicate in a respectful manner and refine their listening skills and develop critical judgment; and to guide them in finding constructive and satisfactory solutions to challenges they face. All of these skills developed with your help and encouragement are protective factors and key elements of their well-being.



ABOUT THE INSTITUT PACIFIQUE

Named **Partner Emeritus** in the fight against bullying by the Quebec government, the Institut Pacifique has been helping children and parents develop social and emotional skills for several decades. Its educational programs in schools, here and abroad, including the renowned **Vers le pacifique**, have accompanied more than one million young people!

Here are the tools!

By now, you'll be well on your way and will be able to use tips and tricks to go even further. The Institut Pacifique offers dozens of free tools to help children aged 5 to 12 develop their social skills. Psst! They are easily found on [their website](#).

Simple concepts, effective illustrations and fun exercises help guide children towards healthy and harmonious relationships, in person or in cyberspace. Parents may even find a couple of tips for themselves! When you develop social skills, the whole family grows!

Outils gratuits

Des contenus éprouvés et ludiques pour guider l'enfant de 5 à 12 ans vers des relations saines et harmonieuses (en personne ou dans le cyberspace). Les utiliser régulièrement contribue au développement de compétences sociales pour la vie!

Découvrez nos thématiques

Gestion des émotions

Estime de soi

Solutions pacifiques

Empathie

Résolution de conflits

Inclusion et ouverture à la différence

Écoute

Communication dans le cyberspace

Intimidation

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La trousse pacifique

Défi 21 jours / 21 Day Challenge

Gestion des émotions

Estime de soi

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Résolution de conflits

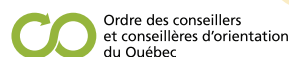
Inclusion et ouverture à la différence

Écoute

Communication dans le cyberspace

Intimidation

GUIDANCE COUNSELLING AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONG YOUTH



Ordre des conseillers
et conseillères d'orientation
du Québec

Mireille Moisan

Inspector, Project Manager



To show their true colours

Guidance counselling for youth is often viewed as limited to providing information on course choices, taking 'orientation tests' or distributing school and career information. However, guidance counselling goes far beyond that. It is a process that involves students in all spheres of their lives: personal, social, academic, family, etc., and that helps them discover themselves by identifying the different facets of their personality that are as varied, radiant and numerous as there are young people in this world!

The guidance counsellor is comparable to a guide who leads students to use this self-discovery to shed light on the many decisions that will shape their path. Let's not forget, there is no perfect path or single choice!

Troubled colours

Some youth who suffer from mental health problems may experience additional emotions related to the various choices to come, or see their challenges exacerbated because of major events, such as a global pandemic. Nevertheless, these young people are first and foremost unique individuals with their own characteristics, qualities, aspirations and dreams. They aspire to life projects in which they can flourish to achieve happiness at work.

To intervene with these young people, guidance counsellors must bear in mind the difficulties they encounter, any diagnoses and the impact on their daily lives. The counsellor must ensure a certain stability in the student's psychological functioning to help them progress throughout their studies and make decisions in consideration of their multi-faceted self. The orientation assessment of a young person with mental health issues, therefore, involves multiple nuances and subtleties that must be considered by the counsellor throughout the process.



The ultimate goal is always to help the young person determine the right path to follow to build a satisfying, realistic and achievable life plan.

A competent professional

When it comes to mental health, certain professional activities are reserved for guidance counsellors because of the risk of harm associated with their performance and the skills and knowledge required to perform them. One of the main activities reserved for guidance counsellors is to:

"Assess the psychological functioning, personal resources and environmental conditions of a person with a mental or neuropsychological disorder as evidenced by a diagnosis or assessment by a licensed professional."

Thus, with his or her knowledge and skills, the counsellor can:

- rule on the nature and severity of the problem
- qualify the vocational path or career integration
- estimate and anticipate the impact of the problem on the person's life

In short, while considering the multiple difficulties encountered by young people as well as any mental health problems, the guidance counsellor strives to help them reveal all the facets of their personality to better grasp their current reality, and to integrate and transpose this into future projects that reflect who they are. In the school environment as well as in all other sectors of practice, the intervention of a guidance counsellor brings about significant changes in individuals that manifest themselves in school, at work and in their personal lives.

A professional order to protect the public

Guidance counsellors must be members of a professional order, the Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec (OCCOQ), whose mission is to protect the public and ensure that the counsellor respects the code of ethics. Only members of the Order have the right to use the title of Guidance Counsellor.

Help for parents

To help parents better understand guidance counselling and accompany their children on this wonderful adventure, the Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec, in collaboration with the Quebec Federation of Parent Committees (FCPQ), has designed a virtual space specifically for parents, accessible at [Espaceparents.org/en](https://espaceparents.org/en).



(French only)

Naître et grandir, c'est aussi des vidéos

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5 TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD OVERCOME PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

It is normal to be nervous before a test, to have “butterflies in your stomach.” However, it is not normal when this stress becomes uncontrollable and intrusive thoughts. In this case, it may be a question of *performance anxiety*. Luckily it is possible to manage with a little help.

Understanding performance anxiety

A child who experiences performance anxiety is very afraid of failure and tends to conceive disastrous scenarios. For example, they will imagine that by failing an exam, they will have to repeat their school year, disappoint their parents and lose all their friends. Basically, he or she reacts to certain situations (like exams, oral presentations, etc.) with the same intensity as if they were being chased by a four-headed monster! Some situations are more likely than others to increase one's anxiety level.

You only need think of those that are:

- hardly controllable
- unpredictable
- new
- ego-threatening
- etc.

Recognizing the symptoms

Performance anxiety can start as young as 7- or 8-years-old! Symptoms are numerous and can often be similar to those of other disorders. For this reason, one should consult a health professional to obtain a medical opinion. A diagnosis (not mandatory) can make it easier for you to help your child. For information purposes, here are some of the main signs of performance anxiety:

- a tendency to “not feel good”
- memory lapses
- fear of disappointing
- anxiety attacks
- feeling ineffective
- tendency to avoid criticism
- exaggerated perfectionism

alloprof parents

In stressful situations, performance anxiety can also present as physical symptoms such as:

- migraines
- muscle tension
- insomnia
- digestive problems
- etc.

Building self-confidence

If your child suffers from performance anxiety, you can definitely help them by reinforcing their self-confidence. Invite them to:

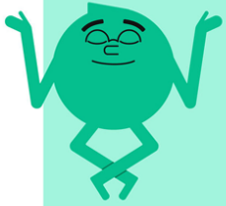
- list the people who love them
- listen to stories of your own failures and the lessons they taught you
- accept positive feedback
- list their successes

Fostering positive thoughts

To help your child better manage their anxiety, you can encourage them to see themselves as a magician who is the only one that can make their symptoms disappear. Of course, this is only possible if you have the right magic spells! Here are some self-affirmations they can repeat to regain control of their thoughts and emotions:

- “I am capable.”
- “I’m doing my best and that’s what matters.”
- “My parents will always love me.”
- “I am not merely the sum of my academic results.”
- “I’m fine, I’m safe.”





Tips on helping your child manage performance anxiety

- 1 Understand what performance anxiety is.
- 2 Recognize the symptoms.
- 3 Build your child's self-confidence.
- 4 Help your child think positively.
- 5 Incorporate strategies into their daily routine.

Establish daily strategies

Children with performance anxiety tend to dramatize the scope and consequences of failure. To help them, encourage them daily to:

- view the stressful situation as a *challenge* rather than a threat
- put the consequences of a possible failure into perspective
- engage in positive visualization
- establish reassuring routines
- listen to music to clear their mind
- release tension by moving
- do relaxation and breathing exercises
- etc.

ABOUT ALLOPROF

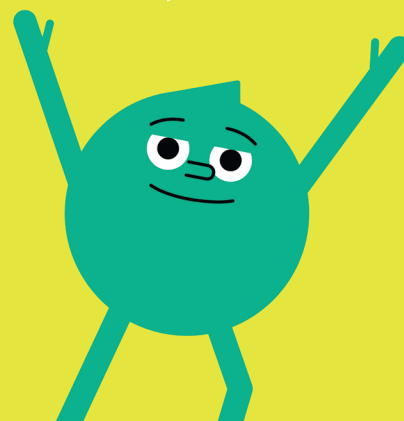
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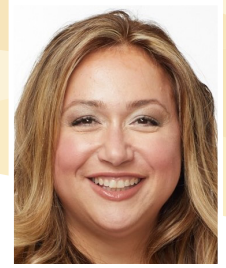
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Help Zone



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MENTAL HEALTH TIPS

This year has seen a significant surge in mental health difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Students are more stressed and anxious than ever before, and many are struggling to cope and connect with others.

Teenagers spend the most of their time in high school taking classes, participating in extracurricular activities, and doing homework. There is constant pressure to complete everything correctly in order to prepare for a successful vocation or post-secondary education. This can cause a significant amount of stress. I make no attempt here to provide grandiose solutions to these problems. However, given the circumstances, let us investigate how young people may care for themselves and cope with the multiple stressors they face.

The vast majority of adolescents engage in media and communication activities such as watching television, using social media and the internet, and calling or texting friends. While these may be useful stress-relieving approaches, over-reliance on technology can lead to a loss of personal connection and feelings of loneliness.

Use these techniques to separate from the constant barrage of communication and manage your stress in a healthy way.



1. Get some rest.

Most teenagers require eight to nine hours of undisturbed sleep in order to perform optimally. Getting adequate sleep allows you to develop normally, pay attention during the day, and preserve your general health.

2. Engage in activities that bring you happiness.

Make it a point to include activities or interests that bring you joy in your daily life. Physical activity, artistic expression, or simply spending time with family and friends may be examples of this.

3. Include physical activity in your daily routine.

Exercise takes our focus away from stress and encourages the synthesis of chemicals in our brain that make us feel better. This might be anything from a stroll around the park to a bike ride or a game of basketball with friends.

4. Focus on your strong points.

Consider what you are good at and how you might do more of it. You may put present stresses into context by focusing on and enhancing your strengths.

5. Get in touch with someone.

It may be difficult to manage stress on your own. Discuss your concerns with a parent, teacher, or other trusted adult; they may be able to help you build new stress coping techniques.



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THEATRE TO UNDERSTAND, PREVENT AND ACT



Ariane Coddens-Bergeron
Campaign and distribution manager

There is nothing left to prove: art has no equal when it comes to opening dialogue and awakening minds. Thanks to its human, vibrant and lively side, theatre is at the forefront in social intervention. But what if theatre could also be a tool for raising public awareness?

That's what Théâtre Parminou has been doing since its founding in 1973, the Victoriaville theatre company making intervention theatre its driving force. By raising awareness through theatre, Parminou seeks to educate, make people think and launch a dialogue on social issues.

The play *Un parent presque parfait* (A nearly perfect parent), created by Théâtre Parminou from an initiative of the FCPQ and with its support, addresses the issues experienced by parents whose children are bullied... or bullies.

This play allows the audience to recognize themselves in the three parent characters who are trying to support their children in a bullying situation. It is by observing the characters evolve on stage that audience members can recognize themselves, and thus work through their emotions, fears and reactions. It is a way to better understand oneself.

If intervention theatre can reach its target of sensitive emotions, it is because it draws its strength from research upstream of the creative process. Théâtre Parminou's artists were able to take the pulse of groups of parents to get a realistic view of the bullying phenomenon among youth. Not only does *Un parent presque parfait* touch on deplorable and unfortunately widespread problems, but the play also brings the audience face-to-face with the discomfort felt by parents trying to help their children through these situations.

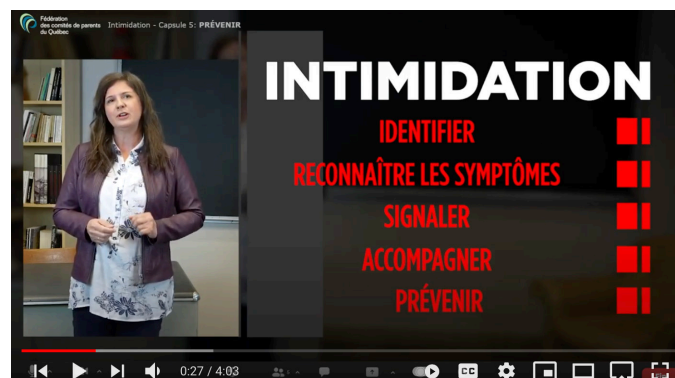
Although prevention is better than cure, when the damage is done it is necessary to put a salve on the wounds. After the wounds are healed, words must be used to prevent them. In this play, we also share solutions to counter bullying and to eradicate it before it even starts. After viewing this play, many parents will be better able to recognize the warning signs of bullying and put out those fires before they wreak havoc on their children's self-esteem.

Un parent presque parfait is a tool for understanding and preventing the evils of bullying. If the play is successful, it is because parents will recognize themselves in the characters and will surely feel better, leaving equipped to support their children.

Un parent presque parfait will be presented as a premiere for FCPQ delegates at the FCPQ's November General Council.



In addition, parents who want to find more tools can visit the FCPQ's [YouTube channel](#) which features informative and humorous vignettes (in French) that summarize and popularize the content of [Guide for parents whose children are confronted with situations of violence and bullying in school](#) (in French). These vignettes, produced by the FCPQ and Théâtre Parminou, can be used to nourish and bolster reflections that will have evolved following the play.



Dominique et compagnie

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Sylvie Barma, Ph.D

Professor, Université Laval, Researcher, CRIRES

Rollande Deslandes, Ph.D

Associate and Emeritus Professor, UQTR, Researcher, CRIRES

Nathalie Ste-Marie, MSc.

Research professional, CRIRES

ADOLESCENTS IN PANDEMIC TIMES

A Study of Perceptions and Adjustments

The research project of the Centre de recherche et d'intervention sur la réussite scolaire (CRIRES) entitled "*L'adolescent au cœur d'un système d'activité en contexte de COVID-19: redéfinition des routines et des relations au cœur des apprentissages*" (*The adolescent at the heart of system activity in the context of COVID-19: redefining routines and relationships at the heart of learning*), aims to better describe the experiences of adolescents following the confinement linked to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and the return to class in September of the same year until April 2021.

Analysis of this study highlights tensions experienced by 1,057 adolescents from 37 Quebec schools as they redefined their relationships with family members, their studies and their schools. Specifically, the study looked at teens' perceptions of their adjustment, routines, state of mind, as well as relationships with friends, teachers and family.

Following ethical approval and accessible by implied consent, a 52-point questionnaire was distributed online, divided into four sections:

- 1) characteristics of the student and their family
- 2) the adolescent's physical and educational organization
- 3) perceptions of their school environment
- 4) relationships with parents, friends, teachers and school personnel

The socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants were diverse in terms of age (13 to 18 years), gender (59% girls, 38% boys, 3% other), schools (83% public, 17% private), program type (65% regular program, 25% special program, 2% vocational program, 8% other) and language (98% studying in French). More than



63% of young people surveyed live with both parents (biological or adoptive), and a majority of parents have a college/university degree.

Results

The teens spoke of sadness, demotivation, disruption of daily routines and a loss of bearings with their learning environments. Not everyone had access to quiet spaces and computers at home, their sleep was affected, and many had less time than was needed. Many were engaged in paid employment and spent time on video games and social media.

They also think that their parents, especially their mothers, were more stressed, and some were unable to receive the emotional support they needed from their parents.

According to their statements, many parents experienced job insecurity.

When they talk about emotional support from their parents, they mean encouragement, heartfelt praise and openness to listening to their concerns. Most teens said they could talk about their issues and concerns with

both parents, but when asked if they were praised for their accomplishments, 12% said they were only praised by their mother. Teens also report missing their friends, but not so much their teachers.

Conclusion

Teenagers experienced a difficult time. The data makes it possible to suggest relevant and realistic avenues for their benefit: more flexibility by parents during stressful periods, more informed supervision of social media, and more links with school to better understand the technical means to support students and their families during periods of confinement.

Indeed, adolescents need to self-regulate and break away from isolation by being more aware of what their school and their family can offer them.



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Solutions for families

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, children had to adapt to many changes in the different spheres of their lives (e.g., daily routine in class or at home, medical follow-up, hobbies). In order to document the impact of these changes on children's mental health, a team of approximately 30 researchers, health professionals and partners from various organizations conducted literature reviews to synthesize the actual scientific knowledge on this subject (Camden et al., 2020A).

What's the situation that is described in the scientific literature?

The various studies report concerns about the mental health of children and families, particularly regarding anxiety, boredom, irritability and sleep, among other things (Camden et al., 2020A, pp. 19-33). However, at the time we did this literature review (July 2020), none of these studies had been conducted in the Quebec context.

What's the situation in Quebec?

In order to better understand our Quebec context and the experience of families, by comparison to what was presented in the literature, interviews were conducted with 18 parents from Quebec during the summer of 2020. Various family experiences are described in the report of this study (Camden et al., 2020A; p.36-44). The parents interviewed mentioned several concerns related to disrupted routines and sleep cycles, unusual feelings of anxiety (whether generalized or specific to certain fears, such as being affected by COVID-19 or that a loved one is affected) and isolation, or signs of psychological distress (confrontation, anger, avoidance). These impacts are consistent with those found in the scientific literature. Some parents also mentioned positive impacts of lockdown and social isolation, including the possibility of having more family time, reduced social expectations (e.g., parties, meetings), and the development of their child's creativity and independence.



Chantal Camden, accredited professor at Sherbrooke University and researcher at Centre de recherche du CHUS
Élodie Héroult, research professional at Centre de recherche du CHUS
Mégan Casoli, master's degree student in health sciences research

Mental health of many families has been weakened

The social and support networks have been reduced or, for some, have completely disappeared. Some parents, especially those with a child with more complex needs, noted that their mental health suffered more from the pandemic, compared to their child's.

"It was very frustrating for me [...], we didn't think about the psychological impact on parents, and then unfortunately [...], it also had a psychological impact on children."

In addition to the lack of support, other reasons were given to explain the difficulties expressed by families, including feeling overwhelmed by responsibilities (e.g., professional, educational), or the lack of caring and attention (e.g., from the social, professional, or school network) to their child's needs and to their own parental needs. This feeling may be higher in families whose children had more complex needs, which are more difficult to meet adequately. Moreover, families who had a strong and diverse social network around them (family, friends, school, colleagues), including pivotal people (family, caregivers, educators, teachers), appreciated the rest offered by their presence/support. "We had the grandparents who gave a helping hand [...]. It helped, and sometimes it changed the family dynamic. [...] [Our children] had several people to talk to."

How to pay attention to your child's mental health?

- As a parent, you are at the forefront of caring for your child's mental health. The results of our study have highlighted some elements that you can apply to make family life easier during a pandemic; some resources are also provided below to help you: Communicate with your child using a positive language. The quality of your relationship is essential. For support, see: [Improving the quality of adult-child relationship during the pandemic for parent of 0-5-year-old children](#)

- Maintain a predictable and consistent routine and activities that are close to normal for your child. If your child is home-schooled, organize the day by alternating structured times (such as “classes”) with more flexible times (such as “recess”) and, if possible, schedule regular, predictable times for follow-up with the educational network. To help you, consult: [Routines and family organization: a winning combination!](#)
- Pay attention to your child’s emotions (e.g. frustration, anxiety) and help him/her manage his/her emotions:
 - [How do we recognize children’s emotional regulation difficulties?](#)
 - [How can we help children better manage their emotions?](#)
 - [My emotions thermometer](#)
 - [How can we help children express their emotions?](#)

Reference

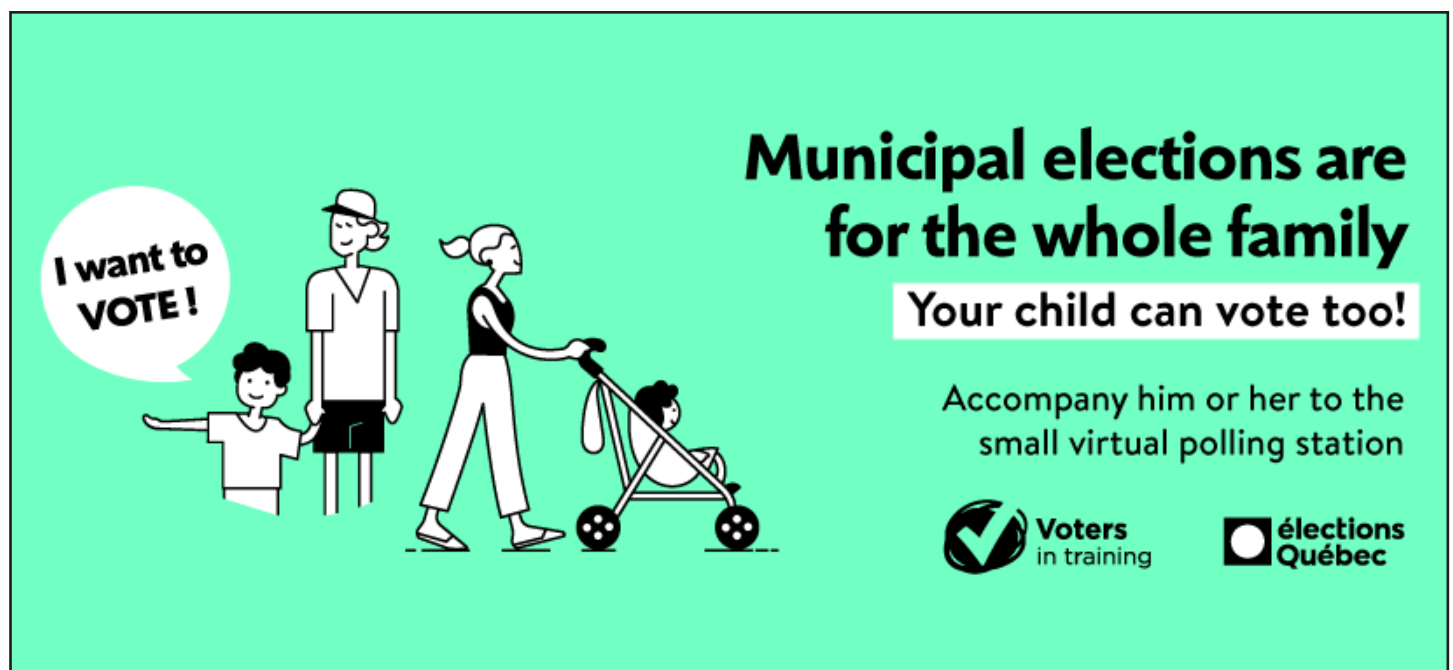
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The Importance of Network Collaboration: A Winning Recipe!

This study highlights the importance of ensuring the mental health of all children, identifying those who are experiencing difficult times and ensuring that they receive the necessary support (e.g. educational support, health services). This involves collaboration among families, school teams, health and social professionals and community partners across a continuum of services (Camden, et al., 2020B). Do not hesitate to raise your concerns with your school team; they will be able to tell you if any action has been taken with your child, or if there are any actions planned to address them.





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HOW TO SUPPORT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUTH AND THEIR PARENTS AFTER MORE THAN A YEAR OF PANDEMIC?

Christine Gervais, Isabel Côté and Milica Miljus

Several studies have highlighted the deterioration in the mental health of young people (Tardif-Grenier et al., 2021, Orgilés et al., 2021) and their parents (Gassman-Pines et al., 2020) since the start of the pandemic. The *Réactions* study aims to identify the factors that contribute to and hinder the well-being of children, adolescents and their parents in a pandemic context.

Methodology

Online questionnaires completed during the month of May 2021

Main variables studied:

- **Parents:** Effects of COVID-19, stress, depression, anxiety, burden of care, post-traumatic growth, sense of coherence and hope for the end of the pandemic.
- **Children and adolescents:** Exposure to COVID-19, fear of COVID-19, depression, health-related quality of life, attachment to parents, sense of coherence, hope for the end of the pandemic.

Participant Profile

206 parents (193 mothers and 13 fathers):

- Average age of 41
- 81% live with a partner; they have between 1 and 5 children ($M = 2.4$ children)
- 70% have a university degree and 85% are employed
- From all regions of Quebec

229 children and adolescents:

- 129 girls, 99 boys and 1 non-binary youth
- Aged between 7 and 18 years ($M = 11$ years old)

Analysis

Multiple linear regressions using depressive symptoms as dependent variable identify factors that predict depressive symptoms¹.



Depressive symptoms in parents

Perceived stress and the burden of caring for children contribute to depressive symptoms. The feeling of coherence, i.e., the ability to perceive one's life as structured, understandable and manageable (Antonovsky, 1996), and post-traumatic growth, that is, the capacity to perceive positive consequences of the pandemic, appear to act as protective factors for parental mental health².

Depressive symptoms in youth

Mode of school attendance, school experience, fear of COVID-19, sense of coherence, attachment to parents and hope for the end of the pandemic predict depressive symptoms in young people.³ More specifically, being remotely schooled and fear of COVID-19 contribute to depressive symptoms in youth. Conversely, a sense of consistency and the impression that things are going well at school seem to be protective factors for their well-being.

¹ In order to lighten the text, statistical values are not reported here but can be obtained by contacting the lead author directly at Christine.Gervais@uqo.ca.

² The identified model explains 62% of the variance of parents' depressive symptoms.

³ The model explains 37% of the variance of depressive symptoms in young people.

Further analyses by dividing children (N: 154) and adolescents (N: 53) provide insight into their specific experience. Thus, the fear of COVID-19 contributes to the depressive symptoms of young people aged 13 and under. The sense of being able to manage one's life, that things are going well in school and hope that collectively people want to and will end the pandemic all act as protective factors. For teens, it is the attachment to their parents, the feeling that school is going well and their understanding of the events in their lives that seem to protect their mental health.

Discussion and conclusion

These results confirm the school's central role for the well-being of youth and their parents. Keeping schools open appears essential, as distance education contributes directly to the depressive symptoms of young people and indirectly to those of their parents, through the increased stress and burden of childcare that school closures imply.



Beyond keeping schools open, these results underscore the importance of the school being a pleasant and stimulating place, both academically and socially. Highlighting the efforts and successes of young people as well as supporting positive relationships appear to be promising strategies to support their mental health.

Furthermore, for elementary school aged children, interventions should focus on strategies aimed at strengthening their sense of control over their lives, for example by emphasizing their efforts to organize their academic work, deal with health measures, etc. Maintaining the hope of children by explaining to them the efforts made by each to end the pandemic is also desirable. For adolescents, it is about building on their understanding of their environment, e.g., explaining the reasons behind the health measures which sometimes seem contradictory. These results also highlight the importance for adolescents to feel close to and supported by their parents in the context where access to school, their peers and extracurricular activities has been greatly limited over the course of the last year.



Finally, it is important that parents also put in place certain strategies to protect their mental health and to continue to be present and support their child. Taking time for yourself, identifying and appreciating the positive consequences of the pandemic, taking an interest in pandemic events in order to understand them and create meaning in them, as well as identifying the help available, all seem to be interesting strategies.

The results of the Réactions study are being shared via Facebook (@EtudeReactions) and Instagram (Projetreactions)! Throughout the fall, infographics will be published, which are intended as tools to initiate discussions with young people or parents about their pandemic experience, their mental health or the best coping strategies.

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Christine Gervais, RN, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Nursing at the Université du Québec en Outaouais and a researcher at the Sherpa University Institute: Immigration, Diversity and Health.

Isabel Côté, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Social Work at the Université du Québec en Outaouais and holder of the Canada Research Chair on Gestational Surrogacy and Family Ties.

Milica Miljus is a doctoral student in Educational Sciences at Université de Montréal. Her research interests focus on the experience of young people of the intercultural school climate of their school.

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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.

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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 capsules are available on our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/FCPQofficiel.



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