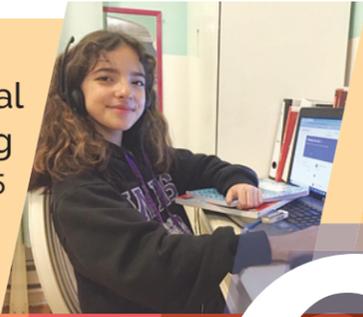


Virtual learning  
see page 5



Honouring our volunteers  
see page 6



Zoothérapie  
voir page 13



Commission scolaire English-Montréal

# express

Volume 24  
Number 2  
SPRING 2021  
[www.emsb.qc.ca](http://www.emsb.qc.ca)

English Montreal School Board

## From Westmount High School to American vice president

While the big party took place in Washington D.C. on January 20, the students and staff at Westmount High School held a special celebration as one of their own, Kamala Harris, was sworn in as the 49th Vice President of the United States. To mark the historic day, while respecting all COVID-19 protocols, Westmount High School students streamed the inauguration in their classes. Students also created a commemorative video, which they shared with the community. The school also received items from the United States Consulate General in Montreal to mark the occasion.

At the age of 12, Kamala temporarily relocated to Montreal while her mother, Shyamala Gopalan Harris, took a job teaching at McGill University and did research at the Jewish General Hospital. While living in Montreal, Kamala attended FACE School for one year before attending Westmount High School from 1978 until her graduation in 1981. The EMSB and Westmount High School are preparing an official



Newly elected American Vice President Kamala Harris has come a long way from her days at Westmount High School (see her year book graduation photo inset).

invitation to Vice President Harris to visit her alma mater during her time in office.

You can see the outstanding video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4GjyE88iJc&t>

The EMSB held its first ever Zoom press conference, featuring EMSB Chair Joe Ortona, Commissioner Julien Feldman, along with some staff members and students from Westmount High School. Principal Demetra Droustas, Vice-Principal Matthew Shapiro, Guidance Counsellors Karen Allen and Mandy Moreno were joined by Secondary IV students Aaron Jay Itovitch, Ava Oxilia, Diya Patel and Secondary V student A'Dejah Edouarzin Merriman. All of the major media tuned in and asked questions.

*continued on page 4*

## EMSB schools adapt to the new normal with virtual open houses

by Daniel Smajovits

When COVID-19 forced educators around the world to re-think how they teach and interact with their students, the English Montreal School

Board (EMSB) realized that the impact of the ongoing pandemic will not only affect those currently enrolled in the

system, but prospective students and parents as well.

Yet, with registration only months away for both Kindergarten and High School, the EMSB needed a solution. Faced with the difficult task of replicating each school's unique environment in each and every home, administrators and dedicated staff members each sought to feature their school uniquely.

For a few schools, this came in the form of beautiful video testimonials from current students and alumni. Others featured tours of their school, some even with a bird's eye view

from high in the clouds. Gerald McShane Elementary School in Montreal North went so far as to outfit a sports concentration student with a GoPro camera to truly let prospective students walk a mile in his shoes.

Yet, perhaps the most dynamic and interactive open houses came from three gregarious high schools and eight elementary schools. They replicated their school's warm environment in real-time into the kitchens and living rooms of homes across Montreal.

*continued on page 11*



**Global News Morning**  
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# Chair's Message We're here for the kids



Joe Ortona

On Thursday, March 11 the English Montreal School Board marked the National Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of COVID-19.

These past 12 months have been difficult and heartbreaking for people around the world. I am so proud of how our entire team at the EMSB has risen to the occasion and faced this monumental challenge head on.

Last year at this time, with no warning, we had to shut down the entire system and pivot to online learning. Let's be fair – nobody had a playbook on how to deal with a pandemic of this scale at that time. In a matter of weeks, our Educational Services Department had a virtual learning system in place. By spring we were able to open schools for special needs services and at the adult level, vocational centres.

When it became clear that classes would resume in person for the start of the 2020-21 academic year our administration made sure that all of the necessary safety measures were in place. For students who could not return to class due to medical conditions for themselves or a family member, we launched a Virtual School with a principal, vice-principal and a full complement of staff at a cost of \$5 million. We also boosted our Home Schooling Division and received a significant increase in registration. Our own Shadd Health and Business Centre in NDG opened up new classes last June for groups of students for a special accelerated Institutional and Home Care Assistance Program, entitled Support for Assistive Care in Long-Term Care Centres. The students soon after began working as orderlies, also known as PABs (préposé aux bénéficiaires).

After the Quebec Court of Appeal granted school boards a stay related to Bill 40, which would have seen entities like the EMSB transformed into service centres, a newly elected Council of Commissioners assumed office in November. We have followed all of the Quebec government protocols. On our very own, one of the first actions we took was to purchase roughly 800 air purifiers in buildings where mechanical



We are proud of the academic success of our students.

ventilation systems are not in place at a cost of \$1.4 million. It should be noted that the infection rate for all staff and students at our board is at about 1.4 percent, probably among the lowest in the province.

The world has faced a crisis the likes of which we have never seen before. We owe a debt of gratitude to all frontline workers,

of which I count our staff in schools and centres.

This is why on March 11 flags at all of our schools and centres were lowered to half-mast from dawn to dusk.

We will all come out of this stronger than ever before as long as we continue to work together!

### A Unified Council

Last fall, the Court of Appeal of Quebec suspended Bill 40 until the Superior Court of Quebec hears the case beginning in April. Bill 40 would have transformed English-language school boards into school service centres. We are very optimistic about our chances in court, and over the last few months it has been made crystal clear why the present form of governance is necessary for the well-being of our educational network. You need only look at the French service centres, which are being run by administrators. The early results at that end are not encouraging.

This was the third time the government has defended this bill in the courts, and they have lost every round. It is my hope that the government works constructively in the interests of the children's education, especially in a pandemic, rather than to keep imposing what we consider to be an unconstitutional law. It was ill-advised to appeal this decision in the first place, and it would be just as ill-advised to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. We, the EMSB, will continue to represent the English minority and defend the fundamental freedoms of all Quebecers, the English-speaking community, religious minorities and others.

The EMSB finally has a unified Council of Commissioners, unlike the last mandate. "We're Here For the Kids!" is one slogan we feel describes our new team best. We all know that good governance has a direct impact on student success.

Operating a school board during a pandemic is no easy task, and I would like to thank all staff, parents, students and volunteers for working above and beyond the call of duty.

### Top success rate

I am proud to share that the EMSB has surpassed our record, set last year, for the highest success rate in graduation and qualification among public school boards in the entire province of Quebec, based on a seven-year cohort at 92.5 percent. These figures were released by the Ministère de l'Éducation de Québec (MEQ). While the majority of students graduated after five years, the Ministry allows each cohort to be followed for an additional two

*continued on next page*

### Here is a list of the 29 school buildings where air purifiers have been installed and the quantity per facilities:

- Bancroft Elementary School, The Plateau, 35
- Carlyle Elementary School, TMR, 22
- Cedarcrest Elementary School, St. Laurent, 20
- Coronation Elementary School, Côte-des-Neiges, 40
- Dunrae Gardens Elementary School, TMR, 23
- Elizabeth Ballantyne Elementary School, Montreal West, 21
- Galileo Adult Education Centre, Montreal North, 10
- Gardenview Elementary School, St. Laurent, 43
- Hampstead Elementary School, 20
- Honoré Mercier Elementary School, St. Leonard, 29
- LaurenHill Academy, Senior Campus, St. Laurent, 51
- LaurenHill Academy, Junior Campus, St. Laurent, 30
- Marymount Academy International, NDG, 28
- Merton Elementary School, Côte Saint-Luc, 20
- Mountainview Alternative High School, Côte Saint-Luc, 17
- Nesbitt Elementary School, Rosemount, 28
- Options Alternative High School, Ville Émard, 21
- Parkdale Elementary School, St. Laurent, 29
- Perspectives I and II High Schools, St. Michel, 17
- Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School, Rosemount, 26
- Roslyn Elementary School, Westmount, 34
- Royal Vale School, NDG, 47
- Royal West Academy, Montreal West, 45
- Sinclair Laird Elementary School, Park Extension, 24
- St. Monica Elementary School, NDG, 25
- Westmount Park South Campus, Ville Émard, 17
- Westmount Park, Westmount, 22
- Willingdon Elementary School Junior Campus, NDG, 33
- Willingdon Elementary School Senior Campus, NDG, 14

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the beat 92.5

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5:30 AM

COGECO MEDIA

# DateBook 2021

## March 28 to 31

Virtual Montreal Regional Science and Technology Fair  
www.sciencetech.ca

## April 7

World Health Day  
Holocaust Remembrance Day

## April 12

Terry Fox Day

## April 18 to 24

Volunteer Appreciation Week

## April 21

Administrative Assistants / Secretary's Day

## April 22

Earth Day

## May 4

EMSB Teacher Recognition Day

## May 6 to 10

Mental Health Awareness Week  
www.mentalhealthweek.ca/

## May 10 to 14

BASE Daycare Employees Recognition Week

## May 11

National Denim Day  
International Day of Families

## May 30 to June 5

Quebec Week for the Handicapped

## May 31

World No-Tobacco Day

## June 15

International Caretakers Day

## June 23

Last day of classes

## Council of Commissioners Meetings

All meetings can be viewed live at [www.emsb.qc.ca](http://www.emsb.qc.ca)

Administration Building at 6 PM:

- May 4
- June 29

The EMSB council of commissioners meets in public several times a year. Stay tuned to our website for special meetings. The session for the public convenes at 6 p.m. and is broadcast live on the web. At the present time, due to COVID-19 safety protocols, members of the public are not permitted inside the administration building. To register for question period please call 514-483-7200, ext. 7264.

### Chair's Message – continued from previous page

years to ensure that students have every opportunity to graduate or obtain a first qualification. In addition to having the highest success rate in the province, the EMSB is also number one in the public network and among English boards. The province-wide success rate, which includes both public and private school results, remained stable for 2019 at 81.8 percent.

### Black History Month

Given the many high-profile acts of racial violence in 2020, Black History Month activities in February took on even more significance. At a Council of Commissioners meeting in December, we adopted a formal resolution to formally recognize Black History Month. Though schools observe Black History Month every year, this year was particularly important. There were a number of events that occurred that make us seriously reflect on issues of race. Though many of the more widely reported events took place in the US, we have issues here as well. These tragedies spark outrage among all people and all over the world. We are witnessing a coming-together of people to denounce racial injustice, and we wanted to show our commitment by voting on and passing a resolution, which we did unanimously.

### Focus on the East End

I am pleased to report that our Communications and Marketing Division and Parent Commissioner Maria Corsi have a new collaborative effort. Ms. Corsi's former "Save Our East End Schools" Facebook page has been changed to "Focus on East End Schools." Please like the page: <https://www.facebook.com/EastEndMontrealSchools>.

A sub-committee of Michael Cohen and Daniel Smajovits from Communications and Marketing will work with Ms. Corsi, myself, Commissioners Pietro Mercuri, Mario Bentravato, Agostino Cannavino, Sophie De Vito, Mario Pietrangelo and Parent Commissioner Tony Speranza. We also plan to take a close look at some of our West End schools.

# EMSB Commissioners

## JOE ORTONA

### Chair

president-chair@emsb.qc.ca  
Member of Executive Committee (Chair), Comité de gestion de la taxe scolaire de l'île de Montréal and Quebec English School Boards Association

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Hampstead, Côte Saint-Luc

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Association and Audit Committee Member of Quebec English School Boards

## WARD 10

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### PIETRO MERCURI

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Member of Executive Committee and Transportation & Safety Advisory Committee

## WARD 6

St-Michel, Villeray, Plateau-Mont-Royal, Ville-Marie East

### AGOSTINO CANNAVINO

#### Vice-Chair

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Member of Executive Committee and Comité de gestion de la taxe scolaire de l'île de Montréal (Alternate)

## WARD 5

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### JAMES KROMIDA

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## Parent Commissioner

### Elementary Schools

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Member of Executive Committee

## WARD 7

Ahuntsic, Cartierville, Montreal North

### SOPHIE DE VITO

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Member of Governance & Ethics Committee

### Parent Commissioner Secondary Schools

#### TONY SPERANZA

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Member of Audit Committee (Vice-Chair) and Transportation & Safety Advisory Committee

## WARD 1

Côte-des-Neiges, Snowdon, Outremont, Town of Mont-Royal, Parc-Extension

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## WARD 8

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### Parent Commissioner ACSES

(Advisory Committee on Special Education Services)

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## WARD 9

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Member of Executive Committee (Vice-Chair) and Human Resources Committee

### Parent Commissioner at Large

#### DANIEL TATONE

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Member of Governance & Ethics Committee

## \*WARD 3

Westmount, Southwest, Ville-Marie West

### JULIEN FELDMAN

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Member of Governance & Ethics Committee (Chair) and Human Resources Committee (Vice-Chair)

\* Since more than one candidate has filed a nomination paper for Ward 3, the previously elected candidate, Julien Feldman, remains in office, pursuant to Decree 1039-2020 adopted on October 7, 2020, until the election resumes.

## TERRY FOX CHALLENGE

On October 9, 2020, students at Willingdon Elementary School in NDG once again rose to the Terry Fox challenge by raising thousands of dollars and shaving their heads for cancer. Every year Willingdon students and/or staff selflessly cut their hair to donate to cancer patients. This year, Lila Charbonneau (bottom left) and Maggie McKenzie (on the top right and bottom right) cut/shaved eight to 10 inches of hair in honour of Terry Fox. Bravo to both of these students for having demonstrated true acts of kindness and for inspiring others to pay it forward!



Kamala Harris – continued from page 1



Westmount High students celebrate the Biden-Harris victory.

You can view the press conference here: <https://vimeo.com/502758709>



Kamala Harris is sworn in.

The United States Consulat General in Montreal **Ana A. Escrogima** produced a video in which she herself interviewed Westmount High students about Vice-President Harris. You can see the video here: <https://bit.ly/3pPzeeq>

EMSB Chair Joe Ortona noted that every effort will be made to have Vice-President Harris visit her old school during the course of her mandate.

## LAURENHILL GRAD A COVID MEDIA EXPERT

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, **Dr. Christopher Labos** has been among the most regular physicians to be interviewed by the media coast to coast. When he spoke to the *EMSB Express* he was proud to recall his time as a student at LaurenHill Academy in St. Laurent and as part of the HOPS (Hospital Opportunity Program for Students).

Dr. Labos is a cardiologist with a degree in epidemiology and based at Hôpital Notre Dame. He is a freelance contributor for the *Montreal Gazette*, *CJAD*, and has also appeared on CBC Radio and CBC Television. But since the pandemic started he has been sought after by media across the country.

At the start of this school year, Dr Labos, Dr. Gerald Fried (an alumni from Hampstead School) and parent Dr. Debbie Schwarcz were guests on the EMSB podcast. You can listen to it at <https://soundcloud.com/englishmtl/podcasts/emsb-podcast-doctors-weigh-in-on-back-to-school>



Dr. Christopher Labos



The 1981 graduating class with Harris circled.

### SOME MEDIA COVERAGE LINKS

- CTV Montreal: <https://vimeo.com/503079215>
- CTV National: <https://vimeo.com/503079050>
- Global TV: <https://vimeo.com/503078716>
- CBC: <https://vimeo.com/503074615>
- City News: <https://vimeo.com/503077596>

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OR



**EMSB PROMOTIONAL MERCHANDISE**

This includes the highly sought after COVID-19 contactless touch tool.

Please cut out this form and bring it to the office of your school and ask that it be sent to Room 109 of the EMSB Head Office at 6000 Fielding Ave. via the internal mail system.

You can also access the form at [www.emsb.qc.ca](http://www.emsb.qc.ca).

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

**The deadline is April 18, 2021.**

## EMSB Express Quiz

**CLUE:** The answers to these questions can be easily found by reading this issue of the *EMSB Express*.

- 1 At which school's Virtual Open House was a sports concentration student outfitted with a GoPro?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2 In his message, how many schools did Chair Joe Ortona identify as getting air purifiers?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Who is the vice-chair of the EMSB?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4 What high school did newly elected US Vice-President Kamala Harris attend?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5 How many students are enrolled in Virtual Learning?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6 At which two buildings are students at Westmount Park Elementary School currently housed while the main facility is being renovated?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 7 What does EMSAC stand for?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8 What do the letters FACE stand for as in FACE School?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 9 What is the name of the former Montreal Impact (now CF Montreal) player who has been giving in-class workouts via Zoom at Gardenvue Gerald McShane Elementary Schools?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 10 At which adult centre is the work training program for those with autism taking place?  
\_\_\_\_\_

# EMSB Virtual Learning fills crucial education gap for students who need to stay at home

by Kristin McNeill

**With a stable enrollment of 545, the English Montreal School Board's (EMSB) very own virtual school, named EMSB Virtual Learning, has been going very well, according to Principal Christy Tannous. And it might even continue to play a crucial role when the pandemic is over.**

Virtual learning at the EMSB has been an innovative experiment in teaching and learning outside of the traditional bricks-and-mortar school building. It continues to evolve under the leadership of Vice Principal Réal Heppelle and Ms. Tannous, who as a bilingual educator was previously a French teacher, vice principal at Pierre de Coubertin Elementary School in St. Leonard and vice principal at Royal West Academy in Montreal West.

Though this was not how she imagined her first position of principal would be when she started in early October, Ms. Tannous said "I would never say no to this position!" She admitted it is a challenging opportunity

school level can continue in their advanced placement courses in subjects such as chemistry, physics and calculus.

EMSB Virtual Learning also has a "closed classroom" for students requiring special environments, such as those with autism spectrum disorder or in Strengthening Educational & Emotional Development System (SEEDS) classes. For students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), there continues to be support outside of the classroom. The EMSB provides students with



Christy Tannous



A student takes part in an activity from home.

prepare for their upcoming classes. She also likes being able to easily communicate with teachers and staff. "What this experience has meant to my family is that the time and stress that otherwise would have been devoted to travel, not to mention the risks to health, is instead permitting my kids the extra time needed to complete their homework in a timely manner, and allow for dinner and valuable family time before bed." Her son, in grade 6, also attends the virtual school.

### What are the challenges?

Besides the now familiar technology hiccups that can plague some online sessions, there are a few challenges that Ms. Tannous and her team are working to improve.

"Our staff has had to revisit the way they were taught to teach as most of it cannot apply virtually. Teachers evaluate differently in the sense that more emphasis is placed on multiple small evaluations rather than one big evaluation," she explained. Teachers have to

is a "work in progress, and we are constantly learning and adjusting based on the needs of our staff and students."

### Differences between EMSB Virtual Learning and in-person learning

With EMSB Virtual Learning, the teacher typically provides instruction for a total of four periods, each 45 minutes, separated

There was also a spike in applications when masks became mandatory in the classroom for certain grade levels later in the fall.



The teacher typically provides instruction for a total of four periods, each 45 minutes, separated by 15-minute breaks.

and calls upon her professional experience at both school levels as well as ease in both languages for working with teachers and parents.

From her "principal's office" based out of the EMSB's administrative building, Ms. Tannous shared in January how it had been going so far.

With a current enrollment of 310 elementary school students from Pre-K to Grade 6, and 235 high school students, Virtual Learning offers the same gamut of French programs as the board's regular offerings. For those students who normally attend French immersion elementary school and have been re-assigned to Virtual Learning, they are provided the same quality of instruction and coursework. In addition to the regular French options, students at the high

computers and videoconferencing equipment if they need it.

### Who attends EMSB Virtual Learning?

These are EMSB students who normally attend EMSB schools but who have obtained an official medical exemption for in-person school because of health risks associated with COVID-19 for themselves or family members at home. EMSB students who must quarantine due to COVID-19 remain associated with their regular, in-person school and stay connected with classwork and their teacher via different online classroom platforms. So, transience is not an issue for EMSB Virtual Learning. Students enrol and stay for the duration of the school year.

For young people with autism or who suffer from severe asthma,

for example, where mask-wearing proves impossible, this becomes "their school away from school." Other members of the Virtual Learning setting are students who live with a family member with immunity concerns, such as a pregnant mother with gestational diabetes. The school community also has staff with compromised medical issues who, while they can't currently be teaching in a general school setting, can teach from a distance, such as a pregnant teacher.

Ms. Tannous said they do accept new students during the school year, but enrolment has remained steady after the initial surge of incoming students early in the fall. There was also a spike in applications when masks became mandatory in the classroom for certain grade levels later in the fall.

### How well has it been working?

"I am so proud of what we've accomplished and how far we've come," Ms. Tannous said. Some students who have trouble focusing may learn and perform much better in virtual settings where there are less distractions, she explained. Students can play a part in designing their classroom setting by selecting the tiled option to see classmates or "spotlighting" the teacher.

"Parents have shared with us how happy they are to have been given this option to learn virtually, to keep their families safe," she said. She knew of several immunocompromised parents were ready to move out of the house if it meant keeping their children in school.

Like anything unprecedented, the EMSB Virtual Learning setting



EMSB Virtual Learning has been a big success.

by 15-minute breaks. A lunch break separates the morning from the afternoon session, which includes a remediation period and one-on help when needed.

Nancy Amaral, mother of Secondary I student Mia Amaral-Sgouromitis, said what she most appreciates about the system is that the scheduling is "well-thought out," allowing for her kids to

navigate the fact that students have access to many tools normally not available to them in a physical classroom, for example online translation tools, "tutors on call" and adults in the house who can become a much called upon resource.

For our complete feature story and more information, visit [www.emsb.qc.ca/virtualllearning](http://www.emsb.qc.ca/virtualllearning).

## EMSB FOCUS NEWSLETTER



For monthly updates and breaking news about the EMSB

log to our Focus Newsletter at:

[www.emsbfocus.com](http://www.emsbfocus.com)

# EMSB set to honouring volunteers virtually

The annual EMSB Parent Volunteer Appreciation Evening will take place on Tuesday, April 20. This year's event is being held virtually, and it will mark National Volunteer Week, which runs from April 18 to 24 under the theme of "Working Together: Meeting the Challenge."

You will be able to access the program via the EMSB website ([www.emsb.qc.ca](http://www.emsb.qc.ca)), Facebook page (@EnglishMtl) and YouTube Channel ([www.youtube.com/EMSBTV](http://www.youtube.com/EMSBTV)).

## Ambassador of the year

Jamie Orchard is this year's Ambassador of the Year. She recently concluded a distinguished 23-year career with Global TV, where she served as senior anchor and news editor for the evening news. She previously covered the news in Montreal for CTV and CBC. Recently she launched The Second Act Project (SAP), a blog that offers a safe space filled with inspiring stories of courage, compassion and kindness. You can see it at [www.thesecondactproject.ca](http://www.thesecondactproject.ca)

With Jamie as anchor, The Global Evening News was named Best Newscast in Eastern Canada by the Radio/Television News Directors Association in 2007 and earned the award for best breaking news coverage in 2006. In 2004, she was named one of city's most remarkable women by the Board of Trade of Montreal and was a finalist for the YWCA Women of Distinction in 2007. An active volunteer, in 2008 she won the Izzy Asper Community Service Award for her work with the Action Centre, an organization that provides help for physically and mentally challenged Montrealers.

Since the inception of the EMSB's Volunteer Appreciation Evening, Jamie has been a regular co-emcee. "Jamie also had a strong presence at our schools, not only as the parent of two students, but in front of the camera," commented EMSB Chair Joe Ortona. "We thank her for all of the contributions she has made to us over the years."

## Volunteer of distinction

The Volunteer of Distinction for this year is Mary Nitti from

Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School in Rosemount, who for the past 21 years continues to volunteer her time, energy and creative talents to enhance the school. "Mary, is a loyal, devoted and hard working woman" said Principal Tanya Alvares. "She is the heart of the school. Over the years, Mary has helped students, parents, and staff members."

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Food

As a proud sponsor of our 2021 EMSB Virtual Volunteer Appreciation Evening, Joseph Mantagaris of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Food would like to say thank you to the entire EMSB teaching community by offering his Gourmet Home Meal Delivery Service at 25 percent off. EMSB *Express* readers can win some meals as well. Simply participate in our quiz and specify which school you volunteer at. Joseph supported Teacher Appreciation Week at Gardenview Elementary School in St. Laurent, where his two children are students. Two teachers were presented with \$50 towards our Home Meal Delivery service.

## Recognizing volunteers

This year's virtual event will include recognition of all volunteers, notably those with five years of service or more. There will be formal presentations for Jamie Orchard, Mary Nitti, remarks by Joe Ortona and Parents Committee Chair Caleigh Saucier, and a representative from La Capitale, and some student musical performances.

## The roles of a parent volunteer in pandemic times

The COVID-19 pandemic has naturally curtailed the traditional volunteer activities at schools.

In place of lunch buffets served by parents for teachers and staff during Teacher Appreciation Week, there were lovingly assembled individually boxed lunches,

or gifts and cards delivered to the school. Rather than convening in the staff lunchroom for monthly Home and School meetings, it has been sitting at the kitchen table after dinner to meet via videoconferencing. What stands out in the parent volunteer community this pandemic year is the heartfelt will to continue to help out and stay connected with their children's schools.

Principal of Leonardo Da Vinci Academy elementary school in Rivière-des-Prairies, Nadia Sammarco, says it's really a matter of thinking outside the box. For example, the festive and popular "Breakfast with Santa," where some 25 parents would normally be on hand to serve breakfast to large groups of children, was adapted so that individually boxed breakfasts could be brought to

classrooms, while music played on a cart wheeled down the hallway. And there was even Santa, who made a surprise appearance in each classroom doorway.

Please stay tuned to our website and the next edition of the EMSB *Express* for Kristin McNeill's comprehensive look at volunteerism during the pandemic and a recap of our virtual event.



(1) Parent volunteers gather last fall outside of Leonardo Da Vinci Academy in RDP. | (2) Leonardo da Vinci Academy Home and School members, Linda Terrigno and Melissa Fasulo, work at the frozen yogurt distribution day. | (3) Mary Nitti, this year's Volunteer of Distinction. | (4) Jamie Orchard, this year's Ambassador of the Year.

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*Thank you for watching over our kids.*

# EMSB plans for reopening of Westmount Park Elementary School

Project managers at the EMSB remain optimistic that the extensive renovations, which began in summer 2019 at Westmount Park Elementary School, will be completed in time for the 2021-2022 academic year.

At the present time, the EMSB is looking at three possible scenarios:

- Students and staff, presently housed at the former St. John Bosco School in Ville Émard and Marymount Academy International in NDG, move back into the building for the start of classes.
- Students and staff move back in, with the contractor completing any remaining work on evenings and weekends.
- The move is delayed to sometime in 2021-2022, with the Ville Émard and Marymount facilities still available for use.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has caused some delays, construction continues to proceed at a good pace.

The major renovations at Westmount Park include, but are not limited to: roof, interior finishes, accessibility (elevator), mechanical (plumbing, CVAC, sprinklers), electrical (wiring, lights, telecom, fire alarm system, etc.) and exterior work (additional accessibility ramp, public utility works, drainage system and foundation waterproofing). Work began in the summer of 2019, and demolition was completed in February 2020.

Since work on the ground floor and the basement remain the final portion of the building to be completed, in the event of a delay caused by the pandemic, it would be conceivable to temporarily relocate the Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes elsewhere in the facility or to another location until everything is ready.

The EMSB will continue to provide frequent updates.



The Westmount Park School building on Park Place.

## Parents Committee to host Virtual Conference

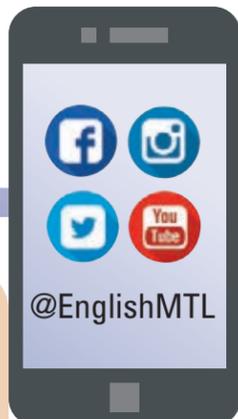


Building up children to help them bounce back from life's challenges will be one of the workshop topics.

The EMSB Parents Committee will host a Virtual Conference for Parents on Sunday, April 18.

Dr. Earl Rubin, Director of The Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases at the Montreal Children's Hospital, will kick-off the event as the keynote speaker under the theme of "Resilience through the COVID Pandemic." He will talk about the science, challenges and impact regarding COVID, vaccines for children and more. This will be followed by a panel and Q&A composed of Dr. Rubin, Dr. Debbie Schwarcz and Montreal Gazette health reporter Aaron Derfel. All three are EMSB parents.

The conference will go from 9 am to 4 pm and focus on a wide array of subjects. Register now at [www.emsbparents.ca](http://www.emsbparents.ca) Early Bird Registration (from March 9 to April 5) is FREE. As of April 5, the entry fee is \$15. For an additional fee of \$10, a meal delivery coupon (valued at \$20) is available to the first 250 registrants. (one per user)



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**Myriam Légaré**  
Teacher

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

## What's on their mind?

### Teen members of the English Montreal School Board's Student Advisory Committee respond to some light-hearted questions

The English Montreal School Board's Student Advisory Committee (EMSAC) is made up of two student representatives from each high school across the network and mentored by staff leadership. Sector Directors Nathalie Lacroix-Maillette and Pela Nickoletopoulos, Commissioners Jamie Fabian and Joseph Lalla, Vice-Principals Andrea Dillon and Peter Mckelvie and Paul Karpontinis, a teacher at Lester B. Pearson High School, serve as its mentors.

Every month, students in EMSAC meet in order to consider and deliberate upon topics that are important to youth across the EMSB and beyond. As formal student representatives to the EMSB, members voice their opinions and declare their recommendations on matters received for consultation. In addition to empowering members as the student voice of the EMSB, participation in EMSAC fosters leadership development and networking for students. EMSAC has been in existence for just over a decade.

EMSAC meetings have moved online for the 2020-21 academic year. Every session commences with ice-breaking activities and discussions, conducted in parliamentary style. This year discussions have encompassed recent developments on Bill 40, COVID-19 and its impact on education and systemic racism and its implications in our schools, as well as the funding of education.

We asked members a few light-hearted questions:

- 1) What are you listening to on your playlist right now?
- 2) What is your favourite thing to binge-watch?
- 3) What is your most prized novel?
- 4) Why is student leadership important to you?

#### BRYANA CATEDRAL SANSALONE Lester B. Pearson High School Secondary IV

- 1) I'm currently listening to *BLEACH* by Brockhampton, *Supermodel* by SZA, and *See You Again* by Tyler the Creator. 
- 2) My favourite thing to binge-watch is *Grey's Anatomy*.
- 3) *Do No Harm: Stories of Life, Death, and Brain Surgery* by Henry Marsh. The author does a great job at fulfilling my thrill of what it's like to stand beside a world-renowned neurosurgeon. He gives readers a great representation of his fascinating yet terrifying vocation.
- 4) Student leadership is important to me since leadership is the art of motivating and influencing others in order to achieve their goals. This is a very important part of school, seeing as though it offers various opportunities for students to build relationships with their team, improve their discipline and communication skills, while completing tasks effectively. In addition, being part of a leadership group offers its own kind of accepting family for so many kids.

#### KAYLA NUNES-COSTA Rosemount High School Secondary IV

- 1) I've been listening to older songs from 2010 and on. 
- 2) *Lucifer* and *Grey's Anatomy*.
- 3) *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.
- 4) I think student leadership is important because it shows kids not only that their voices should be heard, but also how to use their voice in the most productive way.

#### DAVIDE SANZARI Laurier Macdonald High School Secondary V

- 1) Currently, I listen to pop music, with no specific artist being preeminent or favoured. For instance, I fancy hearing certain songs from the artist, *Tones And I*. 
- 2) I hardly ever binge-watch movies, television, or YouTube videos, though one of my favourite types of movies (or movie clips) to watch would be superhero movies created by Marvel Studios.
- 3) *The Alchemist* would likely be my most prized possession, as far as a novel. It was purchased during last year's winter break due to my growing passion for reading. It contains numerous quotes that possess a direct relationship that can be applied to many situations.
- 4) I value student leadership due to the aspect of possessing a "voice". It is a place where diverse minds are able to express ideas on school matters, usually with a common goal of improving education. Students can freely express matters they believe are fundamentals in ameliorating education, or are even bothersome to the student population. All of this is completed in a safe and amicable environment.

#### SOFIA DEL RASO Royal West Academy Secondary V

- 1) *Mediterranea* by Irama. 
- 2) *Money Heist*.
- 3) *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a S---: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living*.
- 4) Student leadership is important to me because I've always been someone who likes helping others. As a student leader at my school, I always try my best to be as helpful as I can and make the school environment more enjoyable for, not only my friends, but all students.

#### GARRYSON BÉLIZAIRE SCOTT James Lyng High School Secondary IV

- 1) A song I have been listening to a lot lately is *Say so x Goodnight N' Go*. It is a remix of two songs made by Dojo Cat and Ariana Grande. The remix just has this nice slow, aesthetics feel to it, so definitely something you should listen to in your free time. 
- 2) I really enjoy binge-watching anime like *Soul Eater* and something I have recently been watching is *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure*.
- 3) I cannot remember any of my prize novels since I am not a big reader. I have been reading a lot of manga. The name of the manga is *Beastars*. This anime really does have a good concept to its story with the different characters shown in their comic/anime.
- 4) Well I believe student leadership is important because it gives some of the students the chance to practice their leadership skills for their future, showing that they can guide others and put their ideas out there. I do believe that every group needs a leader.

#### ANASTASIA MARKOU Lauren Hill Academy Secondary V

- 1) My playlist right now is lots of Broadway soundtracks and way too much Taylor Swift. 
- 2) My favourite show to binge-watch has been, and always will be, *Gilmore Girls*, but I'm currently enjoying *Superstore* and *Grey's Anatomy*.
- 3) I don't know if I can pick just one! But recently an amazing book I read was *The Letter* by Katherine Hughes.
- 4) Student leadership is important to me because it gives students an opportunity to have their voices heard! I love interacting with my other like-minded peers. It's such a great opportunity to come out of your shell and make new friends.

#### ALIÉNOR TURREL James Lyng High School Secondary V

- 1) Mostly anime openings. 
- 2) Anime.
- 3) I don't read much, but the only novel that I ever really liked was the *Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.
- 4) I guess that having a class that works well together brings me peace of mind in some way.

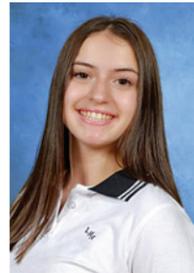
**SHAUN PEARCE**  
**Royal Vale High School**  
**Secondary V**

- 1) Currently I am listening to hip hop/rap songs by artists like Drake.
- 2) I like to binge-watch comedic sitcoms like *The Office* or *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*.
- 3) My most prized novel would be the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling. It was the first novel I read when I was young, and I loved the entire series.
- 4) Student leadership is important to me because it teaches young people how to be leaders, and it helps us socialize with others.



**REBECCA ROMANO**  
**LaurenHill Academy**  
**Secondary IV**

- 1) In general, I usually listen to different genres of music, but lately I've been listening to *Drivers License* by Olivia Rodrigo.
- 2) My favourite show to binge-watch lately is *Gilmore Girls* on Netflix.
- 3) I cannot just pick one book that I love, however I did love the Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling.
- 4) Student leadership is important for us to voice our opinions and express ourselves. Student leadership is important because we get the chance to take the lead in our educational system. Overall, I think student leadership is very important to teens.



**LIVIA SANTINI**  
**Royal Vale High School**  
**Secondary V**

- 1) Recently I have been listening to *Folk Punk* and the *Front Bottoms*.
- 2) *Grey's Anatomy*.
- 3) My most prized novel is *Catcher in the Rye*. It looks inside a character's mind, heart and soul like no other book I've read.
- 4) Student leadership is important to me because it brings people together, and it makes school a more welcoming environment. I believe making the world a better place starts in schools. It gives the opportunity to speak to other students, enriches and broadens our views and gives a chance to participate and take action in things that matter and benefit all. I believe the student body should have a voice, not only in schools, but in the greater community.



**VANESSA SHAHINI**  
**Vincent Massey Collegiate**  
**Secondary V**

- 1) For the past few weeks I have, oddly enough, listened to the same song on repeat. The song is *867-5309/Jenny* by Tommy Tutone, released in 1981.
- 2) The last thing I binged-watched was the entirety of *Game of Thrones*.
- 3) My most prized novel would be my copy of S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*. This was the first book that I absolutely fell in love with.
- 4) Student leadership is important to me because of multiple reasons such as it helps the student body in general by offering them the chance to use their voice and be heard by people who can actually make changes. It also helps the student leaders by helping them build self-confidence and making them feel like their thoughts and feelings are important and that they matter. Finally, it helps all of us forge lasting relationships with our classmates, other student leaders, and even teachers and administrators.



**EMMA POMPONI**  
**Lester B. Pearson High School**  
**Secondary V**

- 1) I have been listening to a lot of songs from Tik Tok lately, but I have been obsessed with *Good Days* by SZA! *Sweater Weather* by the neighborhood is also really good, but I honestly listen to anything on the *Teen Beats* playlist on Spotify!
- 2) I love *Supergirl* and *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*! They are my two favourite shows, other than *Grey's Anatomy* and the *Twilight* series!
- 3) The *Divergent* series, but specifically the *Allegiant* book!!
- 4) Student leadership allows students to have an input on what happens in the school they attend. And who better to organize activities and make change than the ones who experience it day by day? I find student leadership let's me go from a shy girl to the one who is able to effectively voice my ideas and opinions. It gives a voice to people who may struggle on finding ways to communicate, but student leaders become a little family of its own as well. If I wasn't in student leadership, I have no idea what type of version of myself I would have become.



**KALEESIA BAILEY**  
**Westmount High School**  
**Secondary V**

- 1) At the moment I'm listening to *Little Women* and *Moon* by Camilla Covington and *Last Words of a Shooting Star* by Mitski.
- 2) My favourite thing to binge-watch is *Charmed* (1998).
- 3) My most prized novel is *Throne of Glass* by Sarah J. Maas.
- 4) Student leadership is important to me because I feel as though it's important that students are able to share their opinions and viewpoints, especially in regards to things that personally affect us.



**BLAIRE LALONDE**  
**Westmount High School**  
**Secondary V**

- 1) I listen to many different kinds of music, but recently I have been finding myself listening to *Mr. Loverman* by Ricky Montgomery and *Achilles Come Down* by Gang of Youths.
- 2) My favourite show to binge-watch is *RuPaul's Drag Race*. I specifically enjoy season six.
- 3) I don't read too often, but a novel I enjoyed reading was *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest J. Gaines.
- 4) Student leadership is important because as we grow we have to learn how to express our opinions and how we will be able to change things for the better. Beginning the process of being a leader when we are students teaches us these skills young, so we are able to express our opinions confidently and eloquently in the future.



**ALYSSA MIRARCHI**  
**Royal West Academy**  
**Secondary V**

- 1) A lot of older music from so many different genres (Queen, Billy Joel, Frank Sinatra).
- 2) *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*.
- 3) *Audition* by Michael Shurtleff.
- 4) It is important to me because it's crucial that the student community hears positive things about their school and gets encouraged to participate in events hosted by their school, especially from fellow students.



**AMAYA SEALY-LEPAGE**  
**FACE**  
**Secondary V**

- 1) I listen to many different kinds of music, but I like soundtrack music quite a bit. John Powell's soundtrack for *How to Train Your Dragon* is one of my favourites.
- 2) I don't have a favourite show to binge-watch, but I would say cartoons are what I binge-watch most often. Shows like *Steven Universe*, *Ducktales* and others are very binge watchable in my opinion.
- 3) If I have to pick one, I can't, so I will say two. I like both the *Kingkiller Chronicle* by Patrick Rothfuss, and *Hyperbole and a Half* by Allie Brosh.
- 4) I think student leadership is important because without it, a school is a prison of rules. This is not to say that school tries to be as such, but knowing that a student voice exists creates a better environment among students. Having the ability to change the way of things was something my school's student council cared most about. It also gives students the opportunity to develop organization, leadership and social skills.



# Accolades

## SPIRIT OF GIVING

CTV Montreal has extended a big thank you to the EMSB and everyone involved for making 2020's virtual campaign a great success! "Our strategy had to change quite a bit for this edition of the Spirit of Giving, where as in past years, food drives were the main focus," a CTV statement reads. "Considering it was a first real attempt at driving all our efforts to online donations, we consider this year's efforts a huge success. These funds will be evenly divided among our 10 deserving recipients. The charity partners are thrilled as these funds give them exponentially much more buying power than receiving canned goods: Batshaw; Share the Warmth; West Island Assistance Fund; Sun Youth; Renaissance; Nazareth House; La Mosaïque; MultiCaf; The Depot Community Food Centre; and Mile End Mission.



Dunrae Gardens students take part in the Spirit of Giving.

## OPERATION ROSIE CHEEKS

Students at four east-end EMSB schools were busily preparing cards and holiday decorations for "Operation Rosie Cheeks Holiday Cards for Frontline Workers," an initiative to bring some cheer to two Montreal-area hospitals. East Hill Elementary School in Rivière des Prairies and Edward Murphy Elementary School in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, as well as LINKS in Ahuntsic and John F. Kennedy High School in St. Michel participated in making festive creations to hang in the elevator and in common areas on the sixth floor at the Hôpital Notre-Dame and in an area at the Jewish General Hospital. The idea started in the fall and was promoted by Spiritual and Community Animator Rocco Speranza, who named the project "Rosie Cheeks" after Hôpital Notre-Dame's head nurse Rosie. The idea was "to brighten up the days" of doctors, nurses, hospital staff and patients. Mr. Speranza said he had positive feedback. An orderly with Hôpital Notre-Dame, Liliane, told him during the "heavy days" of the second wave of COVID-19, "it gives me a ray of sunshine and makes my day" when she sees the decorations on the wall. Another staff member, nurse Abdel said, "It makes me smile knowing that the kids are thinking of me."



Students display their holiday decorations.



## KINDERGARTEN AMBASSADORS

For this year's EMSB Elementary School Registration Week, we introduced our three Kindergarten Ambassadors: Mia Fanzolato from Our Lady of Pompei Elementary School in Ahuntsic; Maharli Musgrave from St. Monica Elementary School in NDG and Yebom Suh from St. Gabriel Elementary School in Pointe St. Charles. Their images appeared on promotional billboards and information flyers. See the back page of this edition.

## MS. PIA

During the pandemic, Our Lady of Pompei Elementary School day-care educator Pia Di Bacco-Falconi has been absolutely amazing at keeping her students in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten safe and entertained. Despite everything going on, she ensures that the students sing songs about positivity, and keeps them moving to catchy tunes that all the students enjoy! Ms. Pia is also well-known for her catchy phrase "We don't want any double bubble trouble." This phrase reminds the students that everyone should stay in their bubble, in order to avoid trouble! The youngest students at Our Lady of Pompei are able to maintain social distancing while having fun! The school also purchased Ms. Pia a t-shirt with her famous slogan.



Ms. Pia

## TEACHER INTEGRATES TECHNOLOGY INTO LESSONS

Nahal Derayah, better known to parents and children as Madame Nahal, is a French Kindergarten teacher at Dante Elementary School in St. Léonard, who has been teaching at the EMSB for 18 years. Over the past four years she has been innovatively integrating technology into her teaching. By posting YouTube videos she records of herself in the classroom and on a private Facebook group called "Mme Nahal et Ses Amies," she manages to stay connected to parents and children in and out of the classroom. It started four years ago when Ms. Derayah attended an EMSB workshop to learn new skills on how to integrate technology into her teaching because she felt that she was not "tech savvy." She said she was inspired to use the Facebook medium to communicate with parents because that is what she uses to feel close to her friends and family. So far, she never had a parent who did not want to participate, and her Facebook groups have been a huge success, increasing her popularity with parents and students alike. "As a working mom of four children, I always wanted to see what is going on when my children are at school, wishing I could be a fly on the wall," she said. "I felt like I was missing an important part of their life because they spend so much time at school. I saw a Facebook group as an opportunity to help parents feel connected with their children even when they are at school and to help parents and children with homework."



Mme Nahal

## JFK FOOD DRIVE

With the ongoing pandemic stretching community resources to capacity, the team at John F. Kennedy High School in St. Michel decided they were going to do their part to help ease the load on local food banks and charities. The team began meeting in October and started collecting donations at the beginning of November. The team started the project with the goal of providing at least \$100 worth of products to the families. With the help from the JFK and LMAC communities, as well as over 30 corporate and community donors, the team was able to create baskets that were estimated at a value of \$300. Overall they created 40 baskets for needy families (36 JFK and four LMAC), as well as providing food to St. Brendan's Parish, Second Chance Café and The Old Brewery Mission Patricia Mackenzie Pavillion. Families from the EMSB's Edward Murphy, LINKS, and Our Lady of Pompei schools.

## DONATION OF SCARVES



Edna Janco

Edna Janco of Côte Saint-Luc donated a bag full of beautiful brand new men's scarves to students at James Lyng High School in St. Henri. Principal Lino Buttino expressed his thanks for her generosity.



Principal Lino Buttino and some of his staff accept the scarves.

# FACE string students produce virtual concerts during the pandemic

Following the lockdown last March, FACE (Fine Arts Core Education) School's students and music teachers were devastated that the traditional series of instrumental and vocal concerts at the end of the year could not take place.

Desperate to reconnect with her string students and eager to provide motivation for them by making music together, string department teacher, Theodora Stathopoulos, launched a virtual orchestra project in May 2020 that she named "A Ray of Sunshine." The pilot project was a great success and has attracted close to 1,000 views since June 2020.

The restrictions in the schools, due to the pandemic, continued into the 2020-2021 academic year and instrumental music was put to a halt with minimal performance opportunities. Ms. Stathopoulos launched the Virtual Orchestra Project, with an objective to involve more students and produce two concerts: one in January 2021 and another at the end of the year.

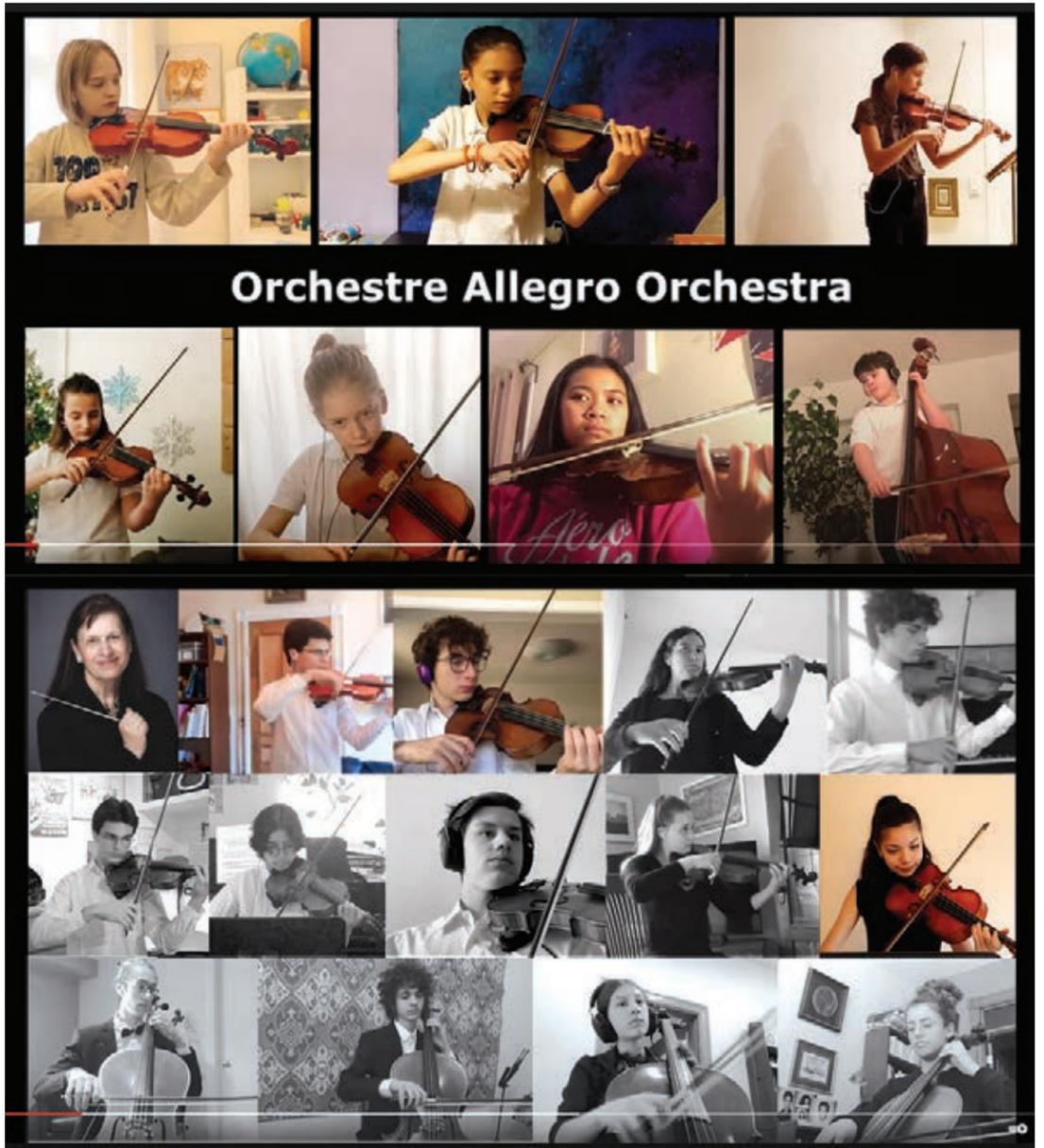
In spite of the fact that participation in this project is voluntary, over 40 string students from Grades 5 to 11 responded to the call to participate in September 2020. The students were placed in a "virtual" orchestra of their technical level regardless of their age or grade. Following orchestra, the students were provided with a pre-recorded track of their part and were given several weeks to practice using it with occasional support from teacher and/or a tutor, if required. When they had learned their part, the participating students

had to record themselves and send the recording for montage. The montage of the individual recordings is a long and difficult phase of the virtual orchestra process and requires additional tech support.

Ms. Stathopoulos deems that the resources and efforts to create the virtual orchestras, and produce a virtual concert, have numerous advantages in the present context, including flexibility to return to live rehearsals/concerts if the distancing conditions lift, to continue virtually for as long as the situation remains status quo or to continue with hybrid teaching. Although a click track can never replace the richness of the orchestra ensemble experience, a virtual orchestra concert is a tangible product, a souvenir of the perseverance and determination to engage in musical expression and make music with others in spite of tremendous challenges.

For the students who submitted an audiovisual recording, it is an incredible achievement. Most of them worked with a click track/metronome for the very first time and the time spent learning to play with it offers many advantages to instrumentalists!

Most importantly the virtual orchestra creates a connection to classmates and orchestra members and gives a sense of unity and collaboration. Above all, the virtual concert provides participating students with a tremendous sense of pride and satisfaction and a "concert" that they can share with friends and family anywhere in the world.



Images of the performers.

### Listen to our podcast:

<https://soundcloud.com/englishmtlpodcasts/facevirtualconcert>

### The YouTube videos of FACE's virtual orchestras are already going viral!

#### Ray of Sunshine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcHkDKP9Zco&feature=youtu.be>

#### Allegro Virtual Orchestra

<https://youtu.be/luraGyGF0Zw>

#### Vivace Virtual Orchestra

<https://youtu.be/dyze9amsRdY>

#### Presto Virtual Orchestra

<https://youtu.be/-40GoXrm354>

### EMSB schools adapt to the new normal with virtual open houses

continued from page 1

Leveraging technology and social media, these schools hosted the EMSB version of a live talk show, where over the course of an hour, in lieu of an in-person open house, parents were treated to all the highlights that their prospective school had to offer.

As is the case with any live production, bloopers were not only to be expected, but simply added to the fun and excitement of the hour.

Questions? They were as simple as writing a comment on the Facebook or YouTube feed and always answered in real-time by those most qualified.

Whether they were students, parents, teachers or administrators, each school's community came together to ensure that despite the pandemic, the best of their institution was on display.

To watch any of the virtual open houses for Lauren Hill Academy, Westmount High School, Marymount Academy International, Merton Elementary School, Leonardo Da Vinci Academy, Willingdon Elementary School, Gardenvue Elementary School, Edinburgh El-



ementary School, Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School, Dunrae Gardens Elementary School and Carlyle Elementary School, please visit: <https://www.youtube.com/c/EnglishMTL/videos>.



**LA CAGE**  
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YOUR TEACHERS DESERVE TO BE APPRECIATED.

**HELP THEM WIN A DINNER AT LA CAGE!**

On the occasion of EMSB Teacher Appreciation Day on May 7, La Cage wants to celebrate the great teachers in your life. Nominate your, or your kid's, favourite youth and adult sector and physical education teachers to win a \$100 gift card to a La Cage location.

Please tell us why the person you are nominating is special and why they deserve a night out or take-out order at LA CAGE. Entries can be emailed to [mcohen@emsb.qc.ca](mailto:mcohen@emsb.qc.ca) by April 15, 2021.



# In conversation with Caleigh Saucier, chair of the EMSB Parents Committee

by Kristin McNeill

**Elected as chair of the English Montreal School Board Parents Committee for the 2020-21 academic year, Caleigh Saucier comes into the position with an impressive history of parent involvement.**

For nine years, on and off, Ms. Saucier has been a parent volunteer, attending monthly meetings of the EMSB Parents Committee (PC), which she now chairs. She started out on the Parent Participation Organization (PPO) at Sinclair Laird Elementary School in Park Extension, from the time her son started Kindergarten until Grade 4. She continued the PPO work at Parkdale Elementary School in St. Laurent, where he graduated. She helped form its Governing Board, where she was chair for one year and delegate for another, as well as assuming the position of its parent delegate for three years.

Ms. Saucier's son, 13, is currently in his second year at Marymount Academy International in NDG, where she sits on its Governing Board. She is also president of CSAssurance et Associés, where she works as a financial securities advisor and damage insurance broker. She is also mother to twin girls, age 3.

In the Fall, we asked Caleigh Saucier some questions about what motivated her to take on this highest level in parental involvement in school governance and what she hopes to accomplish during her one-year mandate.

## Why did you run for the position of chair of the Parents Committee?

I attended the large PC meeting, which was done on Zoom. It's not always easy to be heard in a videoconference, but it was here that I became committed to making sure that every single person – who takes time away from their family to come to that table to speak for the parents at their school – is really heard. I feel in my position I can make that possible. I don't have any motivations of being on any of the committees, other than to make sure the future of the children eligible to go to English school have English schools to go to, and that the population is well represented. That's all I want: to have the voices heard; to make sure our children are treated fairly; and that our grandchildren and their grandchildren still have an EMSB school to go.

## Did something in particular spur you to move to this higher level of engagement, for example any of the provincial bills



Caleigh Saucier with her children.

## affecting education that the EMSB is currently arguing in court?

No, it was really to have the parents' voices heard. The government can pass bills or not pass them. My view on the bills is that the law will be in good faith, *de bonne foi*. That's my assumption, right or wrong. However, my purpose to coming to that table is to make sure everyone there who wants to put in time, contribute, say something – that we're able to hear them, that we're able to help. We have huge agendas and many things to cover at these meetings, but it's also an opportunity to learn from parents from other schools – what's working, what's not – so we can be in a position to offer solutions. It's community – we're help to help each other, west or east, north or south.

I want to see this community growing. There's no reason why we should be losing schools. Aside from eligibility, there's no reason to go outside what I consider the best English school board. When you look at our numbers, our students are doing really well. It should encourage people to come to the English sector, if they can. Why aren't you here? We can have Français Plus; we have French Immersion, English Core. We have schools in every sector; class sizes are good; activities are good. I haven't seen a school in the EMSB that isn't welcoming and that isn't a safe place for a child to go. For me, it makes sense to be here, and do my best to make sure parents' and stakeholder voices are heard.

## What would you like to accomplish during your term?

I'm concentrating on having voices heard. It seems to be a different environment this year. It's been great so far. As much as COVID-19 is an issue, this pandemic has brought us back to the basics. What's important? It's the basics: Health, family, enjoyment of life, and education. My view of these times is that it's

been a humbling, human experience. People seem to take less things for granted.

## What are some of the challenges you are ready to tackle in this job (if you call it a job)?

This is definitely a job! It takes time each day. There are lengthy meetings and connecting with people, and we do this on Zoom, which makes it efficient. At the

**‘I want to see this community growing. There's no reason why we should be losing schools. Aside from eligibility, there's no reason to go outside what I consider the best English school board.’**

moment, there is a lot of waiting for answers. When we get it, we'll want to digest that information and figure out how can we make the best of the situation and how do we keep our children safe, our teachers safe, our communities safe. Once we have some answers, we'll need to turn our attention to next year's enrolment and how we can boost our numbers – which is a topic every year.

## Though early in your tenure as chair, what is satisfying about working in this role?

In an in-person meeting, you can't necessarily see everyone's faces and expressions, but because we're meeting on Zoom, I can see

people's expressions. I can see when they're passionate about something! I can actually have the opportunity to hear, see, understand – these are not necessarily things we had time for in physical meetings. The first official meeting in November was so efficient. I made enough time on the agenda to hear from each individual about their school. It was really a wonderful experience. Regardless of who sits in this position next, even 20 years from now, I hope that the Parents Committee continues to take the time – even if it's extra time – to really make sure every person around the table has an opportunity to speak.

## How is it going, meeting via video conference instead of the traditional large, in-person meetings?

It's not always easy to stand up in a big room in front of many people to say something: People are murmuring in the background; texting each other across the room; someone gets up for coffee. In a videoconference call, all that background noise has been muted. Noise and distractions were not problems. Everyone who wanted to listen to every word had the opportunity to really hear what someone else was saying. At a regular physical meeting, you can blend in, observe, not say anything. At this meeting, it gives

you no choice – you have to talk, you have to tell us something: what school and area are you coming from? What are you passionate about? Every single person attending can really take in that information and hear from others. If I do nothing else but go through the agenda the rest of the year, that's a win for me. Because we've never successfully done that.

## How have you organized the sub-committees this year?

We've formed sub-committees with people who are passionate in certain areas. Everyone here seems to have the best interests in mind for all the children. For example, if one parent can figure out virtual enrolment so that no other parent has to camp out for registration, they will have contributed to a better way of doing things. The parents on the sub-committees have a passion about the topic, and some have the background to support their work. All are willing to go the extra time for all EMSB families. They'll have their own meetings and present back to the PC, which is monthly. Normally all those meetings would be done in person. I don't know about others, but with my business and my kids, it's not always physically possible to be outside my house in the evening. Virtual meetings save participants from commuting, whether sitting in traffic in your car or taking public transport, to the meetings. We're volunteers! In my personal experience, the balance is so much better. I can be having a meeting at the office, or at home. Depending on the situation, I can be on my laptop at home listening to someone while cutting up vegetables. My kids are happy I'm at home. I don't have to drag my son to the meetings!

The sub-committees this year include making the parent conference virtual, and a subcommittee for enrolment, making it easier for parents to register. Another one is for high school and for elementary schools – equally split between west and east – to see how we can better promote them.

## Information on the EMSB Parents Committee

The EMSB Parents Committee (PC) represents all parents at every EMSB school. Its members are made up of two delegates from the Governing Board of each school, which is made up of parents elected by their school's general assembly. These are volunteer positions. The chair of the PC is elected at the general assembly of the Parents Committee by the parent delegates and serves in the role for a one-year term. The PC currently represents the families of more than 19,000 youth sector students.

# BULLETIN

de la

## CSEM

## Gagnants du concours La diversité parmi nous



Les lauréats ont reçu chacun un chèque de 500 \$, tout comme leur école et l'enseignante Gloria Koyounian.

Deux élèves de l'Académie Royal West de Montréal-Ouest ont remporté le concours d'écriture littéraire *La diversité parmi nous* (*Diverse Minds*) de B'nai Brith Canada, tenu à Montréal en 2020. Dans la catégorie création anglaise, les corépondants du premier prix sont Liem Yip et Gabriel Morin, deux élèves de 4<sup>e</sup> secondaire à Royal West. Ils sont coauteurs de leur livre *The Eggnapper*, lequel aborde la nécessité d'être aimable et compréhensif envers les autres et de s'abstenir de porter des jugements. Les livres gagnants, sélectionnés par un jury composé de célébrités, ont été publiés professionnellement et seront distribués gratuitement dans les écoles primaires et les bibliothèques publiques de Montréal. « À mon sens, chacun des élèves qui a pris part à ce concours est gagnant », s'est exclamée Adriana Glikman, coordonnatrice du programme national de B'nai Brith Canada. « Nous avons été ravis de voir autant de talents dans la région du Grand Montréal et nous sommes impatients de voir ce que l'avenir réserve à cet important concours d'écriture ». Les lauréats ont reçu chacun un chèque de 500 \$, tout comme leur école et l'enseignante Gloria Koyounian.

Le concours *La diversité parmi nous* vise à encourager la diversité et l'inclusion au Canada par l'entremise de récits et d'illustrations. Cette toute première compétition à Montréal s'est déroulée dans les deux langues officielles. Les élèves du niveau secondaire ont été invités à écrire et à illustrer une histoire destinée aux élèves du primaire, puis à la soumettre pour courir la chance de remporter des prix en argent pour eux-mêmes, leur école et leur enseignant. Pour infos : <https://www.bnaibrith.ca/dpm/>

## LIGHTS, CAMERA, READ!

JOHN CABOTO'S  
RED CARPET  
HOLLYWOOD  
BOOK OF  
FAME

## Semaine de lecture

Les élèves de tous les niveaux ont créé un Mur de lecture.

Pour célébrer la fin de l'année 2020, l'Académie John Caboto à Ahuntsic a organisé à la grandeur de l'école l'activité de littératie : Lights, Camera, Read! Il s'agissait de faire participer les élèves à des activités quotidiennes de lecture. Les élèves de tous les niveaux ont créé un Mur de

lecture, ont participé à la réalisation d'une chanson et d'une vidéo sur la littératie, ont regardé des pièces de théâtre virtuelles présentées par des troupes de théâtre, ont organisé en classe une activité de lecture dans le noir (avec des lampes de poche), et plus encore. Des prix ont été décernés aux élèves

dans le cadre de divers concours et les parents se sont eux aussi impliqués en envoyant des photos d'élèves en train de faire de la lecture à la maison. Cette semaine de lecture fut planifiée et animée par une équipe d'enseignants afin de promouvoir l'amour de la lecture.



Ces ateliers sont une façon efficace pour les élèves de s'engager.

## La zoothérapie pour diminuer le stress et apaiser les élèves

Les élèves de l'école primaire Edward Murphy dans Hochelaga-Maisonneuve ont eu droit à des ateliers interactifs et éducatifs sur la zoothérapie/l'animation. Rocco Speranza, animateur de vie spirituelle et d'engagement communautaire, a fait équipe avec le personnel de l'école, l'administration et les animatrices en zoothérapie, M<sup>me</sup> Audrey et M<sup>me</sup> Ann Sophie, afin de présenter des ateliers interactifs. « Ces ateliers sont une façon efficace pour les élèves de s'engager, s'amuser et d'apprendre à prendre soin des animaux et d'eux-mêmes. Un lien particulier se crée avec les animaux et les élèves qui y participent. Dans le contexte actuel de la COVID-19, aller à l'école s'accompagne d'un certain niveau de stress cette année. La zoothérapie est un excellent moyen de remédier à cela et d'apaiser les élèves », de dire M. Speranza. Ces ateliers font désormais partie intégrante de la culture à l'école Edward Murphy et appuient son programme de persévérance scolaire. Ils aident les élèves à travailler sur les capacités d'attention conjointe, la mémoire, le développement du langage, les émotions, le travail d'équipe et la relaxation. Les deux grandes vedettes des deux ateliers présentés – un lapin doux, apaisant et affectueux de même qu'un adorable chiot de six mois – ont fait sourire les élèves et les membres du personnel. Plusieurs d'entre eux ont affirmé que ces petites bêtes poilues leur ont fait vivre une journée inoubliable.



## Listen to the EMSB in-house radio show

with Suzanne Desautels

<https://soundcloud.com/englishmtlpodcasts>

Here's how:

### Apple:

- Launch the "Podcasts" app from your home screen or download it the App Store
- Search "EMSB"
- Click on the EMSB Podcasts logo
- Tap "Subscribe"

### Google:

- Launch the "Google Play Music" app from your Home screen or from the app drawer.
- Tap the menu button on the top left of the screen (three horizontal lines).
- Tap "Podcasts"
- Search for "EMSB"
- Click on the EMSB Podcasts logo
- Tap "Subscribe"





## SPORTS CAPSULE



### Gerald McShane sports concentration program continues in its 4<sup>th</sup> year



Gerald McShane students on the ice.

The Sports Concentration at Gerald McShane Elementary School in Montreal North, now in its fourth year, is designed to assist student athletes from Grades 4 to 6 in their search for academic and athletic excellence. The goal of this program is to allow students to balance the demands of their sports training program and their academic program. It provides for a personalized daily schedule, daily study hall and flexible deadlines,

which allow students to practice and compete in a sport. The school presently offers hockey, soccer, gymnastics and figure skating. However, they are able to accommodate other sports upon request. In addition to Gerald McShane's own gymnasium and sports equipment, the Sports Concentration Program has quick access to fantastic sports facilities throughout the city of Montreal. Whether it's playing hockey at the

Rolland Arena, swimming at the Complexe Sportif Marie-Victorin or playing soccer on our very own soccer fields in our school yard, the options are just steps away. For more information, please contact Mauro Di Ciocco (Sports Coordinator) at [mdiciocco@emsb.qc.ca](mailto:mdiciocco@emsb.qc.ca) to help you determine whether your child meets the eligibility requirements for the program. Efforts are being made to expand this to Grade 3 as well.

### Former Impact player launches "stay active" program



Rocco Placentino

It may be nine years since Rocco Placentino last suited up for a professional soccer game. Many of the memories, however, are still fresh in his mind, as if they happened just yesterday. Mr. Placentino still thinks back fondly on his six years spent playing for Italian soccer clubs and his experience representing Canada at the Under-20, Under-23 and Senior levels. There were also, of course, his two separate stints playing for his hometown Montreal Impact, winning a USL First Division league championship in 2009, and playing a CONCACAF Champions League quarterfinal match against Mexican club Santos

Laguna in front of over 55,000 people at the Olympic Stadium on Mr. Placentino's 27<sup>th</sup> birthday, among other highlights. He attributes much of that success to his time spent at the EMSB's Gerald McShane Elementary School and, later, Lester B. Pearson High School in Montreal North. As a way of giving back to the school board, he is offering free live Zoom sessions with EMSB students, with the goal of promoting physical literacy and keeping them active, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The in-class workouts have been offered weekly at Gardenview Elementary in Saint-Laurent, with the ultimate goal of expanding the program to other EMSB classrooms. He recently started at Gerald McShane as well. Schools interested can email [mcohen@emsb.qc.ca](mailto:mcohen@emsb.qc.ca).

## Welcome to the Sharks: John Caboto Academy brands its athletic department



John Caboto Academy in Ahuntsic celebrated Hooked on School Days in February with the unveiling of their newly branded athletic department and mascot, the JCA Sharks! Shark Day was preceded by weeks of student voting to first select the shark as their new school mascot and then a second series of voting to officially name the new mascot. The choice was "Jawsy", and he spent a morning circulating the hallways and visiting the classrooms to greet the students and give out temporary tattoos of the new athletic logo. In class, students worked on an arts-and-crafts activity making special shark hats. An educational component included each class being assigned a specific type of shark, where students researched their type and created an information sheet, which has been compiled to create a display board in the front entrance of the school. John Caboto Academy will also be adopting a shark through the World Wildlife Foundation in honour of Shark Day at JCA.

John Caboto Academy students are thrilled with their new mascot.

# ADULT EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL SERVICES

## Work training program offers opportunity to those with autism

by Jordan Stoopler

During his many years as a principal, vice-principal and teacher in the education system, Nicholas Katalifos has heard his fair share of misconceptions surrounding those on the autism spectrum.

“A lot of people automatically assume that a person on the spectrum can’t work,” said Mr. Katalifos, Principal at the English Montreal School Board’s Wagar Adult Education Centre and chair of Giant Steps School and Resource Centre. “That is just completely wrong.”

To the contrary, Mr. Katalifos says those with autism offer added benefits to their employers.

“Most companies find they are exceptional employees,” said Mr. Katalifos, who is also the father of an 18-year-old son on the spectrum. “They do their jobs well, and they are happy doing their jobs. They might need different kinds of support, but they’re excellent employees. They are very reliable, very loyal and they’re happy to work, which helps the atmosphere at any company or organization.”

Mr. Katalifos is hoping a new pilot project at Wagar, resulting from a partnership with Giant Steps, the Transforming Autism Care Consortium (TACC), Weston and the federal government, will bring these traits to the forefront.

The program recently had its official launch and you can see it here: <https://youtu.be/PfYzUP9mNaA>

Nine Wagar students, ranging in age from 21 to 62, are enrolled in an intensive nine-month bilingual work training program. Students meet daily with a Wagar teacher and two job coaches as they integrate and prepare them for future employment opportunities within the retail and supermarket distribution centre setting.

In addition to the theoretical training in the classroom, students are able to practice working the cash or stocking the shelves thanks to the installation of a mini-supermarket in one corner of the Wagar cafeteria. There are even virtual reality goggles students can wear to fully immerse themselves in the store. Other highlights of the program include online workshops, guest speakers and an internship



Students at the makeshift grocery store in the Wagar cafeteria.

at a Maxi store or one of two distribution centres. If all goes well, a job offer with full pay and benefits may be given.

“It’s a good program because it’s practical and it’s real,” said Mr. Katalifos. “It can truly change the life of a person. We’re excited about it.”

Andre Pereira, Project Manager-Employment Initiatives at Giant

Steps School and program coordinator, also notes intrinsic benefits to the initiative.

“We don’t just prepare them to find a job, but we’re looking at their personal development,” said Mr. Pereira. “We’ve seen, so far, some have evolved in terms of their independence. It’s the first time for many that somebody has asked them to make decisions. One of the big things we want to do is build up self-esteem.”

The program draws inspiration from one initiated by retired Walgreens senior vice-president Randy Lewis in the United States. Mr. Lewis, who has a son on the autism spectrum, presented an inclusive business model to the company’s board, outlining the importance and benefits of hiring not only those with autism, but other types of disabilities as well. Since the program launched 11 years ago, thousands of individuals with disabilities have been trained by Walgreens, with nearly 12 percent of employees at the company’s distribution centres currently self-identifying as having a disability.

Mr. Katalifos is grateful for the support and commitment from Weston CEO Richard Dufresne and all those within the Loblaw Company and their help in bringing the program north of the border.

“The people from Maxi have been superb,” said Mr. Katalifos. “They came in voluntarily and not only donated all the equipment

and products in the cafeteria, but also volunteered their time to set it up. They are very supportive and are very excited about the whole thing. It wasn’t so much about the monetary donation, but their donation of their time. Everybody at Weston has been amazing.”

For Mr. Pereira, it has been an “eye-opening” experience thus far. Since the program first began in late August, he says participants are “listening to others” and showing “more respect to one another.” He also has seen many come out of their shells in the class setting, which has since translated to their home environments.

“One mother has e-mailed me to say her son is more present at home and helping out with chores,” said Mr. Pereira. “There is that direct effect of the program, where already he feels more empowered about himself. That was pretty rewarding, to hear her say how much he is enjoying the program and helping at home.”

Researchers at TACC are monitoring the progress of the program, with the hopes of scaling it and adding more students next year. Guides for both autistic adults looking for work and for employers in search of hiring autistic adults are also to be created in an effort to promote autism-inclusive hiring practices beyond the pilot project.

Please see the official Polaris Program press release: <https://bit.ly/3cSFizj>

## Galileo reopens its Sensory Room

Since the Galileo Adult Education Centre in Montreal North has welcomed back their Social Integration Service (SIS) and the Socio-Vocational Integration Services (SVIS) students, the focus of teachers and staff has been the safety and security of all. Incorporating and reinforcing health rules has become part of the daily practice and remains a priority at the school. Students responded to these new directives with resilience and tremendous effort. However, during the month of November, the school realized that the students would greatly benefit from their sensory room to help cope with the many changes that COVID-19 set upon them. The secure re-opening of the room soon became a priority for the mental health of the students – now more than ever. A sensory room can help deal with both stress and anxiety, two conditions affecting many individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

After careful planning and organization, the SVIS team, with the help of students, made it possible to use this room once



The Sensory Room is a special place for these students.

again! Providing access to students put a spotlight on necessary adaptations, to preserve the environment, in line with health and safety guidelines. SIS students practiced cleanliness by disinfecting all the equipment used during their visit to the room. This was beneficial to all. SVIS students have been positive role models, inspiring others to follow in their footsteps. Some of the new protocols that we have applied include limiting the use of the room to one class per day and allowing a 24-hour

ventilation period before another class (bubble) enters. In addition, the number of visitors allowed in the room at once is limited to eight (seven students/one staff), and everyone must wear a new blue medical mask in addition to disinfecting their hands upon entering the room. While not all sections of the room are being used because of COVID-19 risks, students do have access to a weighted bag, vibrating pillows, rocking chairs and mats, which are all wiped down and disinfected daily by the class.

The relaxing music, soothing lights and imagery all positively contribute towards students’ mental health and well-being. This room allows students to refocus their energy from stress, anxiety, fear, anger and sadness to regaining control of their emotions and calming their thoughts. Since the re-opening of the sensory room, we have had overwhelming success with the participation from our classes. Students look forward to their time to unwind and escape into an environment that inspires tranquility and a sense of freedom.

## A word from our Shadd PABs

A total of 160 Shadd Health and Business Centre students met the incredible challenge of completing a condensed 375-hour course in patient support this past summer to become PABs. Listen to our podcast as Mark Bergman chats with Principal Joe Cacchione about what it took to put the course together. You will also hear from two graduates, Maria Dhe Paganon and Dave Morin, about their incredible experience in the program and on the field. Here is the link: <https://soundcloud.com/englishmtlpodcasts/graduating-orderlies-from-shadd-health-and-business-center>

Call your local school to see if there is still space at your preferred grade level.

[emsb.qc.ca](http://emsb.qc.ca)

# Elementary School Registration



Commission scolaire English-Montréal  
English Montreal School Board

514-483-7200



## It is time to choose a high school?

Explore what the EMSB has to offer in your area.

Our EMSB High School Guide ([emsb.qc.ca/highschoolguide](http://emsb.qc.ca/highschoolguide)) takes you through our secondary school network. You will discover what makes each school unique, and what each school offers as part of their focus programs and extra-curricular activities.

James Lyng High School  
John F. Kennedy High School  
John Grant High School  
F.A.C.E. High School  
LaurenHill Academy  
Laurier Macdonald High School  
Lester B. Pearson High School  
L.I.N.K.S. High School

M.I.N.D. High School  
Marymount Academy International  
Rosemount High School  
Royal Vale High School  
Royal West Academy  
Vincent Massey Collegiate  
Westmount High School



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