

# magAQED

25 years



## SPECIAL FEATURE SECONDARY STUDIES

- Choosing your priorities
- A customizable path
- Post-secondary education



## INSPIRATIONS

TOOLBOX  
ALTERNATIVE  
PEDAGOGIES  
OVERVIEW

## DIVERSITY

DISABILITY  
NEURODIVERSITY  
MENTAL HEALTH

## TESTIMONIALS

HAVING CONFIDENCE  
A FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE  
SUPPORT GROUPS

SEPTEMBER 2022

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### NOTE

Most of the photos found in this magazine have been kindly offered by homeschooling families through Quebec. Thanks for helping us present the true faces of homeschooling!

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## A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL HOMESCHOOLING PARENTS WHO HELPED US

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# DISCOVERING THE WONDERS of Homeschooling

For 25 years now, AQED has been part of daily life for homeschooling families. We have come a long way since 1997! To celebrate our 25th anniversary, we wanted to offer parents from all over the province a magazine that sheds light on homeschooling and its many facets.

Homeschooling sometimes comes as a natural choice. Some families plan to homeschool even before they welcome their first child. For others, it comes as a discovery following the curveballs and surprises that life throws at them. One thing leads to another, and in trying to find the tools to better support their child, they discover a whole new world of possibilities. Sometimes, when the families learn about homeschooling, the choice becomes clear. Other times, parents flirt with the idea until they become confident enough to give it a try. And let's not forget all the families for whom homeschooling was imposed; whether it be because of Covid, health concerns (physical or mental), following a traumatic event, or because they found it hard for their child's needs to be met within the school system.

It goes without saying that taking on the responsibility of your children's education represents a huge undertaking. Whether you have been dreaming of this for a while or not, you might feel intimidated by the required organization or

the administrative load that comes with it. Many questions might come to mind: where do we start? What methods do we want to use? What if we fail to reach our goals? The truth is, there are as many ways to homeschool as there are homeschooling families.

Fortunately, AQED brings together close to 2000 member-families, with different backgrounds and different realities, who are happy to come together to help each other. We have had the chance (and the privilege) to count on many of these well-experienced families in putting together this first edition of the MagAQED.

In it, you will discover an incredible amount of information, advice, interviews, and testimonials, each more diverse than the last, that will allow you to break taboos and discover the richness that is hidden behind this lifestyle. Our hope is that you will find answers to your questions, useful tools, and most importantly, the inspiration and confidence needed to start or continue this journey with your children, young and old.

What if you could offer them a personalized education with confidence?

**The MAGAQED team**





## *Our Mission*

AQED works to promote, support and defend homeschooling in Quebec.

Since 1997, AQED has been informing, inspiring and bringing parent-educators together across the province.

## *Our Vision*

AQED aims to democratize family learning. We want a world where this educational choice is recognized for its true value, and where parents feel confident in offering a customized education to their children.

## *Our Values*

Trust  
Respect  
Mutual-Aid  
Collaboration  
Diversity  
Inclusion  
Fulfillment  
Curiosity  
Open-mindedness  
Educational freedom

# About AQED ?

At AQED, we know that, as a parent, you are the person who cares most about your child's education and well-being. We believe that homeschooling should be an enjoyable and rewarding experience. That said, the administrative framework can bring its share of worries, confusion and frustration to your educational endeavors.

**Don't worry, AQED is here to support you!**

## Here's how :

### **RAISING AWARENESS**

1

- AQED informs the general public and provides relevant information about homeschooling on its website;
- It identifies and promotes different pedagogical approaches;
- It shares the benefits of adopting a personalized education;
- It promotes home-education as a legitimate option for Quebec families.

### **SUPPORTING PARENT-EDUCATORS**

2

- AQED provides parent-educators with the tools they need to make home-education a success;
- It brings together parent-educators in Quebec by offering a community where the values of sharing and mutual aid prevail;
- It offers personalized support to its members in the administrative process;
- It provides access to certain educational resources thanks to the strength of its community.

### **ADVOCATING FOR PARENT-EDUCATORS**

3

- As a leader in the field of home education, AQED represents parent-educators in Quebec with government and public authorities;
- It advocates for the rights and needs of homeschooling families;
- It creates links with key partners in order to promote the democratization of family learning;
- It accompanies its members in their dealings with school service centers, youth centers and the justice system.

**Join the largest community of parent-educators in Quebec,  
and offer your children a personalized education with confidence.**

# HOMESCHOOLING

## *Around the World*

### • GREENLAND

It is illegal to homeschool.

### • CANADA

Homeschooling has always been legal in Canada. The conditions are regulated by each province for their territory. In 2016, approximately 60,000 children were homeschooled in the country.

### • UNITED STATES

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled in favor of homeschooling, but the support for and regulation of homeschooling remain at the discretion of each state. In 2019, nearly 2 million children were being homeschooled in the country.

### • MEXICO

Homeschooling is legal, but registration is required. The process can be long and complicated.

### • ARGENTINA

Parents must apply to the Provincial Education Council to obtain permission to homeschool.

### • BRAZIL

In 2018, the Brazilian Supreme Court ruled that homeschooling is constitutional, and that regulations should be put in place. In 2019, a bill was put in place to legalize homeschooling with annual exams. In 2021, over 35,000 youth were homeschooling.

## • UNITED KINGDOM

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring that their child receives an effective, full time education that is appropriate to their age, abilities, aptitudes and special needs. This education can be through school or any other option. There is no requirement to declare your status as a family educator. Regulations are slightly different in Scotland and Ireland. In 2018, it was estimated that nearly 60,000 children were being educated at home.

## • GERMANY

Homeschooling has been illegal since 1919, with a few exceptions. No exceptions are granted for religious or educational reasons. Exceptions are sometimes granted for seriously ill children, children of diplomats, or rarely, children working as actors, for example. The practice of homeschooling is severely punished, going as far as imprisonment, in some cases.

## • FINLAND

Homeschooling is not widely practiced, but is legal. Parents are responsible for providing compulsory education for their child, and progress is supervised by the municipality. Parents are free to set their own curriculum, as are schools. Only a few national principles must be followed.

## • AUSTRALIA

Homeschooling is popular and has a fairly good reputation. Registration with the government is required and regulations may vary from state to state. It is estimated that about 30,000 young people are homeschooled in Australia.

## • INDIA

The government has established a separate agency to oversee homeschooling. It's actually an open school system, where young people can learn anywhere and are required to sit for examinations conducted by the National Open School Institute. Approximately half a million Open School enrollments take place each year.

## • AROUND THE WORLD

It is clear that in all countries where homeschooling is legal, the number of families opting for this form of education is increasing exponentially each year. The reasons for making this choice are both varied, and similar from one country to another.



# ACROSS

## Canada

**In Canada**, it is perfectly legal to homeschool. However, the regulations differ from province to province. Some are more strict, while others are very flexible.

Here is an overview of the regulations in provinces and territories across the country.

### IN BRITISH COLUMBIA



Parents are only required to register their children as homeschooled with the local school by September 30 of each year. Learning is not supervised by a "qualified" teacher, is not subject to provincial expectations, nor is it inspected by the Ministry of Education. Youth in grades 10, 11 and 12 can register for an online course and declare themselves as homeschoolers.

### IN SASKATCHEWAN



Parents who choose to homeschool must select and direct an appropriate educational program based on the child's age and ability. The parent or guardian responsible for home education must have legal custody of the child. Parents must provide notice and a written educational plan to the school division to which they belong. The plan must include the philosophical approach and rationale for choosing to homeschool, the educational activities, teaching methods and resources that will be used, the means of assessment that will be used to record each child's progress, and the areas of study and learning outcomes that will be addressed in the coming year. School divisions may also offer services such as assessment, distance education and support for high school credits.

### IN ALBERTA



Parents have several options. First, they can choose to affiliate with a school board or a private school. They are fully responsible for planning and providing for their child's education, but they are assigned a teacher to answer questions and evaluate the child twice a year. Families have free choice of curriculum and pedagogy. Parents have the opportunity to choose between the ministerial exams in grades 3, 6 and 9, or to complete an alternative assessment approved by the associated teacher. It is necessary to keep a record of learning. It is also possible to enroll the child in a hybrid program. These options allow a portion of the costs to be covered by the school or associated school board through provincial government grants. It is also possible to pursue an unsubsidized homeschooling program. In this case, it is only necessary to notify the Minister of Education. Parents take full responsibility for planning, managing, providing and evaluating their child's education. They must put in place a plan that enables the child to achieve appropriate learning goals, but are not required to share this information with the Minister. No subsidy is available in this case.

### IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



It is only necessary to provide written notice of the intention to homeschool. Textbooks can be borrowed for a \$50 refundable deposit.

## IN MANITOBA



Parent-educators must notify the Minister by form of their intention to homeschool, at the time of the decision, or by September 1, accompanied by a learning plan. Progress reports must be submitted in January and June of each year. A designated liaison may communicate with families regarding their plan or the child's progress. Mandatory subjects are language arts, math, science and social studies, however it is not necessary to follow the provincial curriculum. There is no requirement to write ministerial exams. There is no subsidy available for family educators. A parent may teach children from two families.

## IN ONTARIO



Parents who choose to homeschool should provide written notice to their school board. No further procedure is required unless the school board has reasonable concerns about the quality of instruction the child is receiving. Parents can use the curriculum and learning methods that best suit their family and can access a variety of resources upon request.

## IN NEWFOUNDLAND



Parents must obtain an annual written approval from the Director of Education. It is the duty of the Director to determine if the proposed learning plan provides satisfactory instruction, and is in the best interest of the child. Only curricula approved by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will be accepted. If the parent-educator uses the provincial curriculum, the parent-educator will receive the resources provided by the Department of Education for teachers, and the child will have access to the resources provided by the school. The child must undergo the various assessments required by the Director.

## IN NOVA SCOTIA



Parents must inform the Department of Education and Early Childhood of their intent to homeschool. They must register using a form that includes a learning plan at the beginning of the school year, and must provide a student progress report in June.

## IN NEW BRUNSWICK



Parents are required to complete an annual homeschooling application form and submit it to their school district. The application must be approved by the Minister of Education. In order to provide an effective education in the eyes of the law, the curriculum must include the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, technology, social studies, health, career development, French, music, art and physical education. Neither schools nor school districts are required to provide resources for home schooled youth. In order to ensure an effective education for their child, parents have a duty to document their learning and assess their progress at regular intervals. It is possible to register your child for provincial testing at the beginning of the school year. Homeschoolers are not eligible for obtaining a high school diploma.

## IN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES



Parents must register with a local school and are supervised by an authority from the school district. The school in which the family is registered must evaluate and support the home education program. Youth who wish to graduate from high school must follow the territory's curriculum. It is recommended to keep a portfolio. The child must be assessed twice per school year.

## IN YUKON



Parents who wish to homeschool in English must register with Aurora Virtual School, and those families educating in French must register with École Nomade. The British Columbia curriculum must guide the education of Yukon children. Parents must provide a learning plan, register their child for mandatory testing and ensure that their child's learning is assessed at least twice a year. Financial support is available for some services and resources. A portfolio must be kept throughout the home education program.

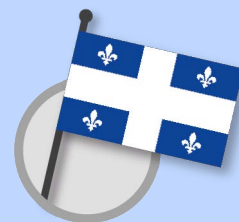
## IN NUNAVUT



Parents must register with their school and inform the District of Education or the Nunavut Franco-phone School Board. They monitor the homeschooling program and reimburse parents for costs incurred, up to a maximum of \$1000. A learning plan that meets the minimum provincial curriculum standards must be approved. Estimated costs must be included in the plan. Parents must provide two assessments per year, using the method previously agreed upon with the Director, and implement any necessary changes. The child agrees to actively participate in his or her education and in parent-director meetings.

# AND...

# *in Quebec?*



## Homeschooling is more than just "school-at-home" - it is a way of life.

In fact, homeschooling is when parents take full responsibility for their child's education as an alternative to full-time school attendance. The pedagogical approach chosen, the schedule, as well as the motivations for this educational choice are varied.

**Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have confronted a new reality: that of distance learning. Often confused with homeschooling, distance learning is actually quite different.**

In distance learning, children are enrolled in a school, which provides them with the materials necessary, and is responsible for their learning, both face-to-face and at a distance.

In the case of homeschooling, you, the parent, are fully responsible for your child's education. You are responsible for providing an educational experience that is tailored to your child's needs and best interests.

Furthermore, as you are under the authority of the Direction de l'enseignement à la maison (DEM), which governs and supervises home education in Quebec, you must follow the procedures prescribed by law. For more details on this subject, you can consult the [OVERVIEW SECTION](#), under Obligations, on the AQED website.

## Many names, one colorful reality

Just as homeschooling offers flexibility in every aspect, it has many names, which speak to its richness:

- » home education (the term most often used by AQED),
- » homeschooling (a term used in the law and by the Direction de l'enseignement à la maison),
- » home learning,
- » unschooling,
- » a variety of terms in French: éducation à domicile (EAD), enseignement à la maison, instruction en famille (IEF), apprentissages en famille (AEF), scolarisation à domicile, école à la maison, école-maison
- » and others.

## Materials

When you choose to homeschool, you are also responsible for choosing and purchasing educational materials for your child. Depending on your budget, your purchasing preferences (used or new) and your child's needs, you get to decide what resources you will use. For example, you could create your own games or materials that are perfectly adapted to your child. This is not only a tailor-made solution, but also a cost-effective one. In any case, it is important to be resourceful and curious to find the best allies for your child.

To give you some pointers, we suggest you read the following article: [FIVE SIMPLE ITEMS TO USE WHEN HOMESCHOOLING](#), on the AQED website.

## Schedule

Who says learning can only happen during certain times of the day? In homeschooling, we have a great deal of flexibility in scheduling time for learning. We don't need to have fixed time slots; we can navigate our days based on our child's energy, activities, interests, etc..

## OVERVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS IN QUEBEC



Written notice



Learning Project



Status Report



Midterm Report



Monitoring Meeting



Final Report



Annual Evaluation

# HOMESCHOOLING IN QUEBEC

## *a timeline*

By the AQED team with the help of Adèle Dufour

From 2002 to 2010, authorities are on a witch hunt: the vast majority of home schoolers do not declare their status to authorities for fear of reprisals. AQED meets several times with the Ministry of Education to discuss the issues and to put in place a regulation on homeschooling that protects parents and children.



2010

2002

The "Guide de la bonne entente" is published by AQED. This guide explains to parents their rights and duties towards the appropriate authorities. It is also the starting point for all negotiations with the government. It takes two special general meetings for the members to vote in favour of the revised version of the guide. The government issues its ministerial guidelines. Its document is largely based on the Good Housekeeping Guide.

The school boards insist that homeschooling is illegal, the DPJ is very active and, in most cases, children are removed from their family environment with judges' consent. AQED sets up its legal committee to defend its members against abuse.



2017

AQED is consulted early in the process of changing the Education Act to establish clear guidelines for home education. AQED is invited to participate in the parliamentary commission and the National Round Table on Home Education. Real progress is being made. There is recognition of the differences between public school and homeschooling and that it is not necessary to confine learning to the Quebec Education Plan (QEP) and Progression of Learning (PoL) in a homeschooling context.

2018

New regulations go into effect and the Direction de l'Enseignement à la Maison (DEM) is created. This will have the effect of centralizing and harmonizing procedures, but also adds an administrative burden to parents. Quebec becomes the province requiring the most surveillance and documentation on home education. The Round Table is suspended in August of 2018, preceding the provincial election.

One year after the regulation was implemented, the new Minister of Education implements a new regulation requiring family

2019

# 1948

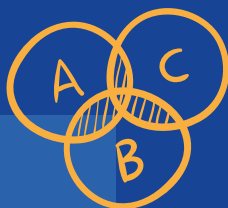
Lieutenant-Governor Eugene Fiset assents to the Act to establish compulsory school attendance for all children between the ages of six and fourteen.



# 1988

An exemption is added to section 15.4 of the Education Act regarding homeschooled children: [A child is] exempt from compulsory school attendance if [they are] provided, at home, instruction and a learning experience which, according to an evaluation made by or for the school board, are equivalent to what is provided at school.

# 1997



Statistics Canada profiles home education in Canada. It is noted that unlike the other provinces and territories, the Quebec Ministry of Education does not collect data on homeschooling. There is no consensus on how to handle the files and the information is not centralized.

**Marguerite Corriveau, Lauraine Gouin and Marie Tremblay found AQED, the first secular and bilingual homeschooling association.**



The entire world is plunged into the Covid-19 pandemic. The number of homeschooling families explodes. AQED's membership doubles over a short period of time. AQED takes its place as a leader in the field of home education.



educators to follow the QEP and demonstrate learning progress according to the PoL. It becomes mandatory for children to attend follow-up meetings. Ministerial exams become mandatory as of the 2021-2022 school year. The new regulations also require parents to comply with any other terms and conditions dictated by the government.

The school system uses several digital means to provide distance education for its students. In most cases, classes are held on platforms such as Zoom and Teams. Children must be connected to their screens a minimum number of hours per day. This practice is often mistakenly associated with homeschooling.

# 2021

# 2022

The various associations for homeschooling in Quebec join forces to demand the reopening of the round table. This request is refused. Legal steps are taken to put an end to the obligation of ministerial examinations. The first mandatory ministerial exams were held, adding a huge burden to home-educating families.

# HOMESCHOOLING BY THE NUMBERS

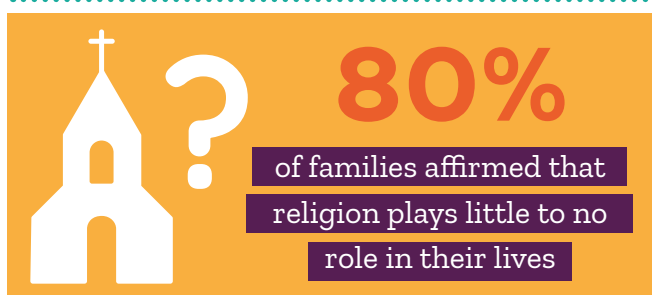
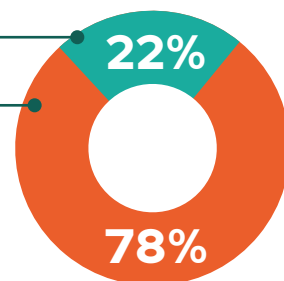
In the spring of 2021, AQED conducted a survey of parent-educators in order to have a clearer picture of homeschooling in Quebec. Here is some of the data we collected from that survey. Some numbers might surprise you!



These families represent

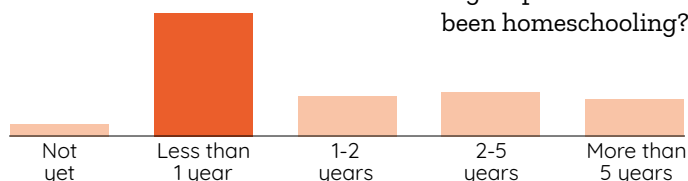
**1 544** children  
of which **892** are homeschooled

high school  
elementary



## MANY NEW FACES

How long respondents have been homeschooling?



## TOP 5

regions in terms of homeschooling families

5. Lanaudière

4. Estrie

3. Montréal

2. Laurentians

1. Montérégie

**47 %**

of families have



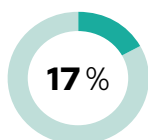
or more kids

**84 683,54 \$**

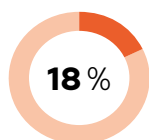
median household income in responding homeschooling families

## A personalized, diversified education

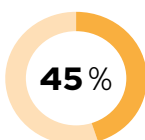
When asked, "Do these approaches inspire your educational philosophy?" parent-educators answered yes to...



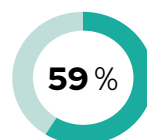
Classical Education (based on the trivium)



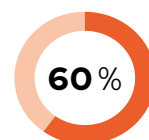
Methods of Montessori, Frenet, Mason, Waldorf



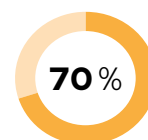
Traditional schooling



Project or theme-based education



Unschooling



Traditional for the basic subjects



A **critical view of the Quebec school system** and the desire for **greater parental involvement** are the reasons most-cited for the decision to homeschool.

# 70.4

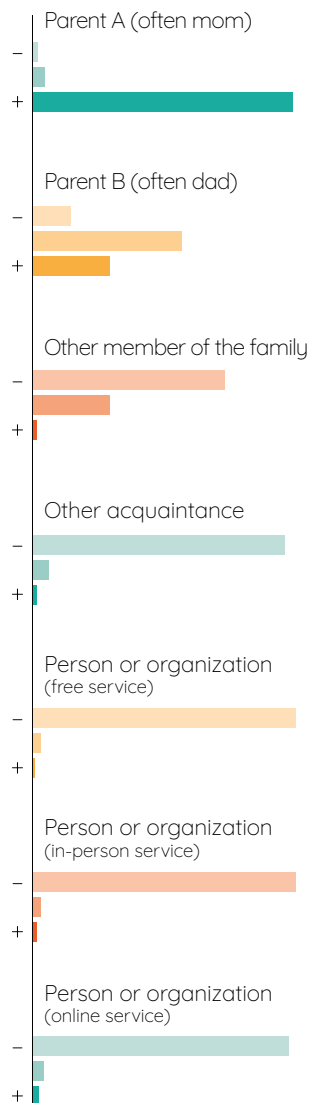
% of respondents reported having at least one child with learning disabilities

(intellectual disability, giftedness, ASD, motor impairments, etc.)

**Moms, dads and other helpers (but mostly moms!)**

Level of involvement in child's homeschooling

- not involved  
+ really involved



**347 providers of various professional services**

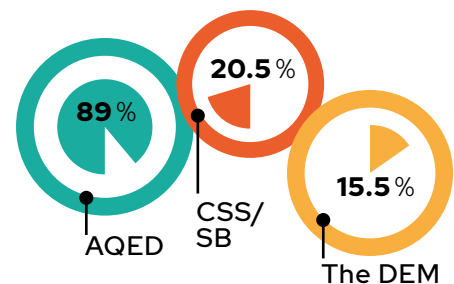
(psychologists, occupational therapists, social workers, psycho educators etc.) support families who need it.

Of these, **only 65 of these** services are provided and paid for by the Quebec School Service Centers/School Boards. All others are hired by the families themselves.



Parents say that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their choice to homeschool.

Percentage of parents who have enriching interactions with :



sources

1. <https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/education/2020-09-11/diplomes-universitaires-lecart-se-creuse-entre-les-hommes-et-les-femmes.php>

Enquête pour préparer une réflexion stratégique à l'AQED, mai 2021

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<https://www.freepik.com/vectors/people-icon>>People icon vector created by muammark

<https://www.freepik.com/vectors/child-icon>>Child icon vector created by freepik



## 25.5 %

of adults aged 25-64 in Quebec hold a university diploma<sup>1</sup>

Among parent-educators who responded, it's...

## 52.6 %

**The portfolio:**  
The Crowd Favorite

The portfolio and evaluation by a holder of a teaching license dominate the choice of end-of-year evaluation. Between them, they account for nearly 17 out of 20 cases.

## 47.8 %

choose to present a portfolio

## 36.4 %

choose evaluation by the holder of a teaching license

# Homeschooling from Generation to Generation

ANAÏS LAUZON-LAURIN



**TESTIMONIAL**

Anaïs Lauzon-Laurin was homeschooled between 1993 and 2000, alternating with school attendance. She then continued her studies to become a medical specialist in microbiology-infectiology. Her family now homeschools their two children at the primary school level. She tells us about her journey.

My parents had thought about the educational approach they hoped to take before they even started their family. They wanted it to be meaningful for their children and based on their children's initiatives and interests. In 1993, they had to accept that the school in their village would not offer this to their two daughters. They therefore began a journey that was still rare at the time: home-education.



My younger sister and I used traditional workbooks, the contents of which were easily finished before the end of the morning. This gave us plenty of free time for other learning. The family farm was full of opportunities for discovery: planning for sowing and harvesting, caring for animals, dealing with suppliers and customers, and more. My father was with us, all while taking care of the business. My mother worked outside of the home and managed the necessary paperwork, all while participating in our education.

The original plan was to complete our primary education at home. I had spent the first four years in school. The remaining two years went by quickly and I worked with my parents to choose a high school. The transition was fairly easy: I made friends, joined committees and participated in school shows. Academic success was in the making. But by the time I entered my second year of high school, I felt like something was missing to really make it happen.



*I felt held back, both in my ability, and in my creative and curious impulses. There was little room for student-driven projects.*

*Most of all, I knew there was a better place for me: **home!***

So I asked my parents to reconsider the project. It was a challenge for them because, at the time, there were no other families around us homeschooling at the high school level. They also wondered how they could support me in the sciences, which were not in their own academic background. But, they decided to take on the challenge again, with both of their daughters. My younger sister never set foot in high school.

I was able to manage my schedule according to my projects and creative endeavors. I adopted a structure of half-day work periods in the same subject, because I felt that it suited me. I also had time, space (mental) and safety (psychological) to define myself as a developing adult. It was during this time that my career choice was solidified. I was fascinated by the interactions between microbes and animals (including humans). I continued to work on this subject in college, university and now, every day, at work.

During my high school years at home, I maintained several activities outside the home: vocal ensemble, theater, sports and various volunteer work. The family business often brought us into contact with a variety of adults. I incorporated the concepts that a friend is not defined by age and that we can learn from all of our interactions, every day, without all of the lessons being planned in advance.

The pursuit of CEGEP was smooth. I had chosen a program that suited me with stimulating academic challen-

ges and varied content. I was also involved in the student newspaper and the Génies en herbe team, as well as providing informal tutoring to classmates.

*Transferring to university for medical school was also easy, academically and socially.*

I joined the theater group and the student union. I can honestly say that I brought a maturity that was sometimes lacking in students older than I was. On the academic side, the approach was very traditional, but allowed for some flexibility in the semester to do internships in research laboratories. There I found my favorite challenge: new projects in a new context.

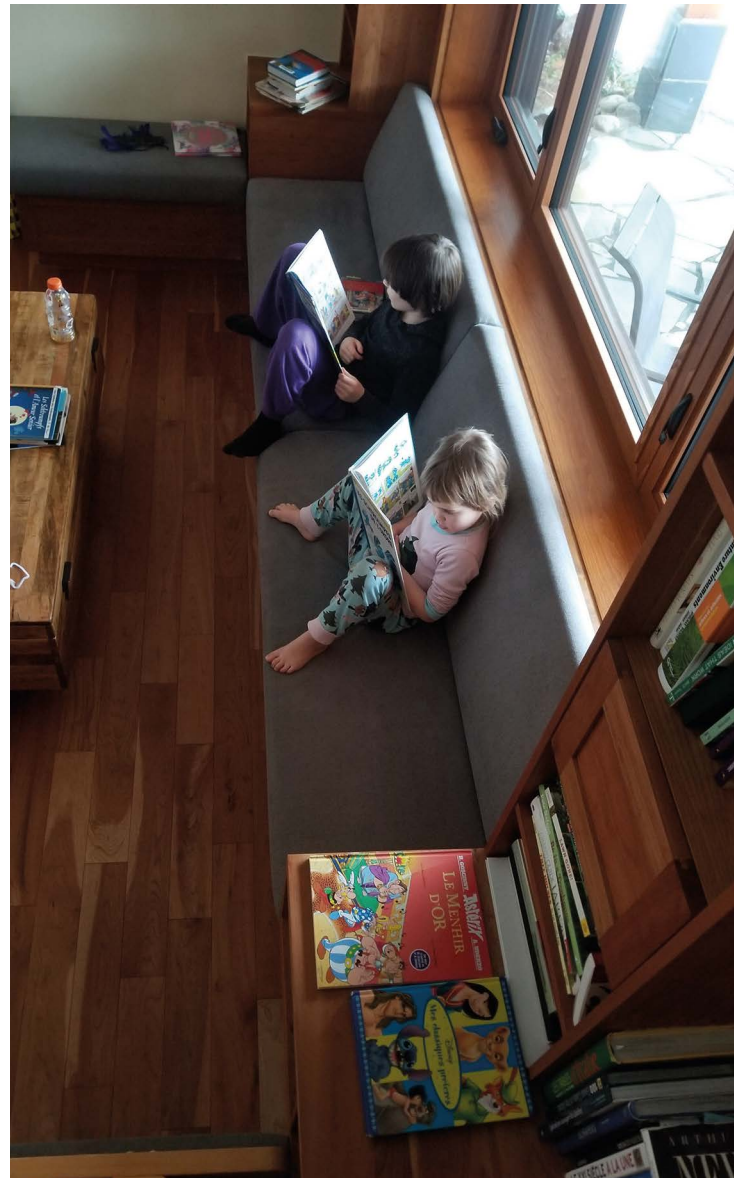
Similarly, my sister experienced the transition to CEGEP (in a technical program) in a seamless way. She got involved in many projects and was able to network, which she still uses in her work.

After 10 years of university studies, I came back to my region to practice my profession. I have been here for 10 years now and I still love it.



I have also taken on new challenges: management roles and project development. I am always looking for new knowledge and skills that I can bring to my work environment.

I am a motivated learner and have developed an interest in continuing education. As a physician, it is essential to always be studying to be up-to-date and to become a better professional. Continuous development is needed on this topic: how to improve skills other than expertise (communication, collaboration, professionalism, etc.) and how to integrate various teaching modalities (simulations, workshops, online courses, mentoring). It is no coincidence that I am interested in knowledge acquisition, as I have been conscious, since high school, of the learning processes that were taking place (or not) within me. I hope to be able to contribute to making skill maintenance effective and enjoyable for my colleagues.



*In fact, I am so pleased with the benefits I have experienced from homeschooling that I convinced my spouse to embark on this adventure with our children in 2018.*





He is the one who is with them at home day-to-day. He accompanies them in acquiring their autonomy to learn and in maintaining their spontaneous motivation. Things are going well! They are both ahead for their age, but above all, always curious! Nowadays, there are teaching resources everywhere, in various media. Our children have even more freedom to explore than those of my generation.

My parents are also involved in my children's learning. It really warms my heart. My in-laws have also gotten on board and are doing their part. We don't have a business like my parents, but we explore life with our own personal style and the opportunities for discovery that we create: hiking, museums, travel, and household management. We can learn anywhere, anytime we want.

That's what educational diversity means to us: being able to choose the right approach for our children at the right time, in the context of our family life.

## *Ginette Lauzon, Anaïs' mother*

This testimony is touching for us, the parents of Anaïs, because the role of parent-educator comes with a great desire to do the best for our children, but also with the doubt of making the right decisions.

Because of my training in education, and because of the educational values shared with Serge Laurin, Anaïs' father, we did indeed think a lot about the educational approach that would have the best chance of developing the pleasure of being a life-long learner. The traditional school system quickly showed us that it would not achieve this objective. Despite our involvement in the school's Governing Board and the organization of a conference on the theme "Happiness at school, it can be developed", we had to face the facts: our daughters' school did not share the vision of an education that was more open, creative, and based on the interests of the children, who are the main architects of their own learning. It was, however, possible, since some alternative schools were much more successful in doing so.

We therefore proposed to our daughters to continue their schooling at home. We took charge of their education by using educational material which was available to us and that met our expectations. We then took the necessary steps with the school board and the Ministry of Education. This journey was not always easy, but with perseverance we have followed this adventure through to completion, and now our daughters are working in the fields of their choice.

It is therefore a great pleasure to read, in Anaïs' testimony, the description of the positive impact that this unusual path has had in shaping her life. There is no doubt that our goal has been achieved. We are proud of her professional and personal commitments. And it continues. These days, we share wonderful learning moments with our homeschooled grandchildren, completely naturally, for the pleasure of it, like a game between us that deepens our bond.

I hope that the Ministry of Education will one day understand the richness of this option, and that it will participate judiciously to support homeschooling based on the needs and wishes of the families who make this choice.



Media often uses the same image in articles about homeschooling: a photo of a put-together mom with calm kids, sitting around the kitchen table, in front of an open workbook.

But homeschooling families know...

**This is what  
homeschooling  
looks like.**





# Homeschooling: Myth or Fact?

## WHAT RESEARCH SAYS

### MYTH 1

**All homeschooling families are part of cult-like organizations or are very religious people.**

**FALSE** | Christine Brabant is associate professor, researcher at Université de Montréal's Faculty of Education and Doctor in Educational Sciences. In 2013, in her book "L'école à la maison au Québec : un projet familial, social et démocratique", she lists 50 different reasons given by homeschooling parents in Quebec. Her conclusion? Religious motivations are much less important for parents across Quebec and Canada than the desire to make a family project out of their child's education and the opportunity to offer a learning environment tailored to each child.

### MYTH 2

**Closer supervision by the state ensures the best academic results for homeschooled children.**

**FALSE** | In her thesis filed as part of the Special consultations and public hearings on Bill 144 in front of the Committee on Culture and Education, Christine Brabant reports that there is no scientific data to support the tight control of homeschooling. To this point, she cites a study carried out in 2003 in all 50 American states. The study concluded that there is no correlation between the regulation of homeschooling by a state and children's results in standardized examinations.

### MYTH 3

**Pursuing post-secondary studies after homeschooling is impossible**

**FALSE** | On the contrary, it's completely feasible! It's even possible to get a high school diploma even after getting secondary education through homeschooling, provided the teen passes the mandatory ministerial exams and follows a credit recognition process. The University of Ottawa even dedicates an entire section of its website to welcoming young homeschoolers looking to join their institution! You will also find several living examples of this possibility in this magazine. The less traveled path is still a valid road when it comes to finding your own way to the diploma you covet!

Researchers in many fields are deeply interested in the many facets of pedagogy and education. Some have focused more specifically on the issue of homeschooling. Their conclusions are relevant when it comes to debunking some of those stubborn old myths. Here is some evidence to present when encountering skeptics and other people who need to be reassured about the educational choice you made for your family.

## MYTH 4

**Young people who learn in a context of home education score lower on standardized tests.**

**FALSE** | In his 2001 study, "Homeschooling in Canada", Dr Brian D. Ray, teacher and president of the National Home Education Research Institute, reports that the average standardized test score of the 2,594 homeschooled in his study ranged from the 74th and 84th percentile; the national average is in the 50th percentile. Similar numbers were reported by the Canadian Center for Home Education in their 2003 Canada-wide study.

## MYTH 5

**Homeschooling is on the rise.**

**TRUE** | In the last 20 years, the number of homeschooled children in Quebec has gone from 388 to... more than 8,300! The province even saw a peak at nearly 12,000 children registered with the Direction de l'Enseignement à la Maison in 2020, due to well-known circumstances. This is good news for several reasons, but particularly because increased numbers allow for better quality studies and data on the realities of homeschooling in Quebec!!

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# Homeschooling with Confidence

JENNIFER DEWOLFE

## ARTICLE

Whether you have long dreamed of homeschooling, or are thrust into it unexpectedly, taking on the educational responsibility of your child is a daunting task.

One that can feel both exhilarating and terrifying all at the same time. Sadly, there is no magic book or all-in-one curriculum that is going to make this easy. Homeschooling is hard, but after 10+ years of doing this, here are few things I can share to help you find your footing in this wild ride.

The first thing is to breathe. Simple right? Not really. Panic and fear set in pretty quickly after the decision to homeschool is made, even for those of us who knew early on this was the path we wanted. The first year we “made it official”, as in, my oldest was 6 and didn’t get on the school bus. I woke up with a start at 7am. I heard the bus rattling down our rural road. My heart started racing and panic set in. What was I doing? Surely, I was going to ruin

him! As I stood there on my deck listening to the bus stop, pause, then continue on its way, I took a breath. My son came out to join me, smiling at the sunny day and the birds singing, completely unaware of the step we had just taken. So I took another breath and went in to start the morning. To this day, I still get up to hear the bus on the first day of school and I still remind myself to breathe.

After you take a breath, resist the urge to set up a “school room” and order all of the textbooks used in school or that you read about online or that your neighbour’s friend’s sister uses.

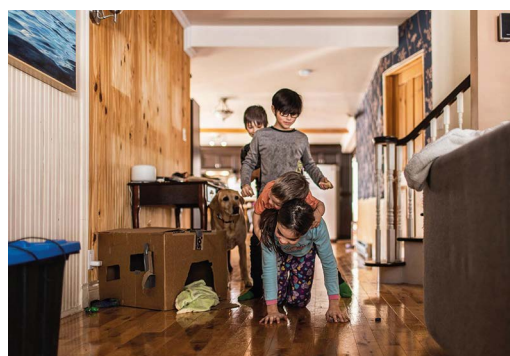
While this sounds counterintuitive (I mean you have to start teaching right??) In the long run, it adds to the pressure and often prevents you from settling into a homeschool routine that suits your family. The beauty of homeschooling is you get to customise the educational experience. Yes, here in Quebec we have perimeters, but ultimately how you teach is up to you. Your home is your school, and you live there. It is cosy and loving and safe. Use this when settling into your homeschooling. Some might end up getting the textbooks and setting up the room, but don’t jump into something before you know what you will need. For most, they find they slowly start creeping out of the dedicated space and the books get left for more hands-on learning.

We school everywhere. The living room, deck, trampoline, on the floor, wherever inspiration takes hold. We also school outside the home. There is something freeing about reading aloud at a cafe in the middle of the morning, or taking math lessons to the beach or lake. Park time science lesson? Why not! Experimenting like this helps you learn how your child learns best. How do they engage with the world around them? Are they movers? Do they need to manipulate everything? Do they become enraptured when listening to books and stories? Do they need a visual to retain things? These clues are like the master key for both of you. You can then plan projects, books, and learning based on how to best engage them. They also learn how they learn best, ensuring that long after they leave and find their way in the world, they understand how to grasp new information. This can help determine if you need that textbook and room or maybe just a museum membership and a library card.

And then of course there is the question that everyone who homeschools in Quebec focuses on :

*“How do you school in comfort and still meet the regulations?”*

Well, I’ll tell you a secret. **It isn’t as scary or hard as you are making it out to be.** We are bound to the competencies put forth by the Quebec Education Plan. These competencies essentially make sure that there is progress in the overall knowledge of the subject and how those subjects are used in everyday life. You need to produce a child who can function in society. What does this mean? It means things like can they explain a science experiment using the correct vocabulary instead of “the thingy goes into that thingy and then it mixes and goes boom”. I joke, but really that is what it is and despite what society tells you, these competencies are happening all the time, you just have to learn how to translate them as you see them.



Here is an example of what learning looks like in our house: we use resources that match each child's learning style and that engage them fully.

A year ago, my then grade 6 child and I read a book. It was loosely based on the first female silent picture stunt person. The book was set in the 1920s and so along with our literature study (we use Bravewriter literature guides), we also studied the history of silent films (thanks Crash Course History of Films!). We learned how special effects were done at that time. We watched a Buster Keaton film and wrote a review. We rewrote scenes from the book from another character's perspective and imagined how we would film it. We learned about ostrich farms in California, about how the first movie camera worked, Thomas Edison, patents, why California became the place to make movies, and then,

we tied the era into our Quebec history, learning about the first movie theatre in Montreal. We looked at advertising in French and English from the time period, everything from fashion, sports, literature, to music and restaurants, and then compared it to what we were reading in the book. Over the course of a few weeks, we covered almost every single competency and had work samples and projects to not only show, but passionately talk about in our meeting. Yes, we still did our math in our books (we use Mammoth Math here and have always loved it) and we still practised our French grammar and took our French class, but the majority of our learning that month took place while lying on the living room floor laughing and exploring. My job was to take all of that amazing learning and translate it to something that the DEM could recognize. This is a learned skill, tricky but certainly not impossible. Using the DEM language, I use each piece of learning to show competency. (There is so much to be said about this, it deserves its own article). This became our "first trace". I had 3 more like this during the year in order to make sure we've covered enough to show, but of course there is always way more than that! Moreover, our rep that year loved how engaged he was with it all, how he could speak about it all so clearly, even months later. How interconnected the learning was. That is active and engaged learning. That is the goal of education. That is what they want to see.



## PRO TIP

**I will caution you not to turn every experience into a learning experience**

Homeschoolers tend to do this. Sometimes, it is ok to learn something and just enjoy the process, without turning it into a "school thing". I speak from experience here!



*At the end of the day, only you will be able to find the “perfect fit” for your child.*

Homeschooling is something that takes time to master, be patient with yourself. It will take lots of trial and error, but when you find it, it feels easy and comfortable. Learning becomes a natural part of the day. It is ok to abandon what isn't working, leave a book half read if you aren't enjoying it, and skip pages in the math book if the concepts are mastered. No one is keeping score. It is ok that your homeschool looks different than your friend's. Ultimately, you answer to your child, even above the DEM. If it is working for them, nothing else really matters. It is their education, their future. Keep them in the forefront of your mind. You can do this. Together you and your child can grow and learn and explore, you've been teaching them since birth, you are more than capable.

Just remember to enjoy the process, ask for help when you need it, **and always remember to breathe.**



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TESTIMONIAL

# *A Dad's Point of View*

VINCENT CHANDLER

## *The world of homeschooling is decidedly a feminine environment.*



Fathers are more or less absent from the AQED Facebook group and they rarely participate in activities organized by support groups. This lack of representation reflects the fact that couples often fall involuntarily in a traditional mold: the father works and the mother takes care of the kids. Not too surprisingly, fathers don't seem to feel concerned when we talk about homeschooling.

Even though many fathers are not able to actively get involved in homeschooling due to their job, they have a role to play right from the beginning. Indeed, they are usually the first person with whom the mother shares her worries concerning the child and the schooling environment. Based on comments on social media, many fathers seem to react negatively by calling their partners a helicopter-mom. According to these fathers, one of the purposes of schooling is to toughen up their sons. Others will worry that their partner won't be able to properly educate their child. Such an attitude can easily shake the confidence of a hesitant mother.

When my wife first mentioned homeschooling, I also had some doubts. Instead of arguing against this idea, I forced myself to reflect on my own schooling experience. I remembered Ghislain who compensated for his loneliness by talking to himself loudly. As soon as someone noticed, all the kids would start bullying him. Did schooling toughen up Ghislain? Quite the opposite. I also thought about Catherine who always had 100% and would often fall asleep on her desk, because she was bored out of her mind. Did the school do a good job to support her? Quite the opposite.

When I look at my children, I recognize a bit of Ghislain and a bit of Catherine. Since I am lucky to spend a lot of time with them, I see their strengths and weaknesses. Many fathers don't have this

opportunity, because they work outside the home. Even though many mothers also work, they often bear the mental load related to the children. Not surprisingly, they will be the first to identify a problem at daycare or school and to try to find a solution.

What is the father's role at this moment? Listening to his partner and taking her seriously, because she knows what she's talking about. It's quite simple, but when one is about to embark on a mysterious adventure like homeschooling and is filled with doubts, a few words can make a world of difference. Since homeschooling couples will need to deal with skeptical friends and family members, this undertaking will be impossible if the partner is also latently against the idea.

After starting to homeschool, the job of listener continues. The homeschooling path is filled with questions: which educational approach should we favor? Which textbook should we use? To which activities should we register? How should we react to the DEM requirements? Fathers don't always have answers to these questions, but they can take part in the conversation.

Obviously, fathers can also play a more active role even if they work full time, because homeschooling is not a 9 to 5 activity. We can do more formal activities like math after supper or do some read-alouds before going to bed. We can also let children take part in our day-to-day lives to share our passions and skills.

All in all, when one talks about homeschooling, fathers often play a secondary role. They are not used to it, because in our society, males usually play dominant positions. As fathers, we must get used to playing this new role and make every effort to become more active. Homeschooling is not only about children learning!



## INTERVIEW

# Creating Balance

WITH ELISA TROTTIER

Elisa Trottier is a born leader. In addition to being a homeschooling mother of seven young girls aged 3 to 19, she shares the reins of the family business, is a financial security advisor and is the head of a community for busy moms.

*Elisa, tell me, has homeschooling always been part of your plan?*

No, not at all! In fact, for me it was clear that my children would go to school. It was what I had known and it was part of my values. Fifteen years ago, when we made this choice, answers [to my questions about homeschooling] weren't as readily available. I remember researching for at least a year before I started.

*So what inspired you to homeschool?*

When my oldest daughters were very small, we worked for a window and door company. One day we met a family who was homeschooling their children. The kids and the mom told me about a giant ear project they had built with blankets and they [the kids] were representing the sound. They talked about it for a whole hour and with so much passion! I thought it was beautiful, but I told myself it wasn't for me because I wanted a big family. Finally, a few years later, I contacted the mom to ask her to tell me more about it, and then I joined the homeschooling communities in my area (in the Eastern Townships).

*But right now, you're not just a parent-educator... Can you tell us about your career path?*

I had been a stay at home mom until 2015. I'm still a stay at home mom, but I also work from my (expensive, cold) office in my basement. We opened our window and door (and now also remodeling) business. I had fun starting this business. When I did that, it felt so good to have something to do.

*Your eldest is 19, so you already had a young teenager and other younger children that you were homeschooling... didn't you have enough to do already?*

I was pregnant with my 5th, I think, and I had already been homeschooling for about 10 years. It was pretty much part of our routine, we knew what we had to do and we did it. It wasn't really a challenge anymore. And I need to be challenged! It was fun, I liked having my own project, and it made me think about what I needed to do to grow. Slowly, it led me to do what I do today.

*How do you juggle it all?  
What are your days like?*

My schedule is very simple. A few days a week, my youngest children go to a daycare that I know well and which fits with our values. To simplify life, we are following an educational program this year. To solidify what my teens are learning, we have hired tutors for certain subjects. In the morning, we focus on homeschool, and then in the afternoon I work.

*And, tell me, what are you doing today?*

I don't really have a title. I'm not a coach, not a helper, not a social worker, but I am me and I like to say I'm a facilitator of stuff. Basically, I guide and empower moms to choose themselves and define their own vision of the ideal family life, inspire them to embody that vision in their daily lives and get back on track with their lives.

*How do you do that?*

I have a thousand and one ideas, but I try to fit it all in because I don't have a lot of time with homeschooling and our renovation business. I offer two programs to my community. The first is called "La communauté simplifiée" (Community Made Easy); it's a program of coaches, speakers, workshop leaders and experts of all kinds that runs from October to the end of April. In order to access this programming, you must register with the cohort. The goal is to connect moms who join the community with mompreneurs who have tools to offer them and to help them discover what is available to lighten their daily lives. Our meetings are held on Zoom and our members also receive the recordings. Even if we are all tired of our screens after 2 years of the pandemic, I find that it is still the best way to reach moms for whom it can be difficult to free up time or to travel. The second part is a free Facebook community called "Mamans comblées, Femmes assumées" (Happy Moms, Assertive Women) where we have discussions, I throw out questions and the group responds. Sometimes, I send out an invitation to access a "Community Made Easy" conference for free so that moms who are not part of the cohort can see what they can access if they join.

*Do you have any examples of guests you've had and topics you've covered in Community Made Easy?*

Christine Marcotte, speaker and author, spoke to us about the importance of choosing and taking care of oneself. Laurie Boisvert, with whom we spoke about caring parenting. Mylène Houle, professional organizer (Heureux Rangement sur Casa), with whom we saw how to organize ourselves according to our personality type. We also did another workshop in which she gave us lots of tools to help us organize our children's learning traces for homeschool. Claudine Gaudet was our face saver with a "Cosmetic 911" workshop in which she helped us create a basic face care kit. Annick Lemieux, stylist, showed us the ten basic pieces to have in our wardrobe. The topics are so varied: couple communication and sexuality, intuitive nutrition, meal prepping, art therapy, cake design, fitness, budget, etc. And, once a month, we have a mom chat.

*And what led you to create this concept?*

I needed a new challenge, I had caught the entrepreneurial bug, but above all I needed to take care of myself. It feels good to share these resources, which I was researching for myself, with other moms who can benefit from them. I had to break through many mental barriers (such as feeling selfish for wanting to lighten my load) but I realized through my own coach that it would allow me to make a positive impact in the lives of other women by enabling them to pursue their passions. The mental burden is THE biggest burden in the lives of moms, and though I certainly can't reach all moms, I can reach those who recognize themselves in my journey.

*Finally, what would be your top 5 tips for moms who feel like they are sinking into parenthood?*

1

Learn to recognize the signs of parental burnout

2

Take care of yourself

3

Review your priorities

4

Divide tasks fairly

5

Take vacations (one day a month to yourself)

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# Different Pedagogical Approaches

## PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

As part of our homeschooling, we use project-based learning with our 12 and 8 year old daughters to meet the requirements of the Quebec Education Program (QEP).

As such, we start different projects during the year, always according to the interest of our children. At the moment, the «Minecraft» and «Gacha Life» applications are very popular. Other projects we have also done: space, electricity, soil and rocks, insects, the 4 elements (earth, water, air and fire), etc.

We then observe their learning. Most of the time, they naturally encounter the concepts covered in their year of learning, for most subjects. When certain concepts seem to us to be less supported, we suggest complementary activities and/or workbooks to deepen their knowledge.

For us, project-based learning was self-evident: it allows the child maximum autonomy (we see ourselves more as coaches than as teachers), it respects the child's rhythm of learning and it is easily integrated into daily life. Since it is focused on the child's interest, loss of motivation is rare. When it does happen, it's time to change the project!



*Julie Turbide*

Many different pedagogical approaches are used in the public school system, in private or alternative schools, but also in homeschooling. On AQED's website, you can find a list of the most frequently used pedagogies, with information about each approach and additional resources. Here are some testimonials about the most popular approaches used by our members.

## TESTIMONIALS

### WALDORF EDUCATION

I am not sure that we can completely apply the Waldorf method in its entirety, in a very purist way, by doing home education in Quebec with the current government requirements. Personally, I am very inspired by it, and I integrate it into our eclectic education.

Since I worked in a Waldorf childcare center, I find the main principles of this way of doing things too important to put aside. I want these values to permeate my family's upbringing: a reverence for nature, a respect and general harmony sought after, a great respect for life, a sense of the sacred and a concern for beauty. "To wonder at beauty, stand guard over truth, look up to the noble, resolve on the good." - Rudolf Steiner. For me, this is more a state of mind than a way of doing things.

We are aware of the role of the adult, who sets the example of how to live and whom the child will naturally seek to imitate. Concretely, we live it by placing great importance on spirituality, by surrounding ourselves with raw and natural materials, by experiencing seasons to the fullest, by slowing down our rhythm of life, by making and repairing objects ourselves as much as possible, and by rediscovering the simplicity and the "traditional" in stories and the ways of doing things. A lot of free play, exploration, imagination, conventional manual work, developing artistic sensitivity.

The child is considered as a whole: body, heart and mind; we try to give him a rich and meaningful life.



*Eve Denis*

# PLAY-CENTERED LEARNING

In our family, learning through play is the foundation of everything. Since early childhood, our children have been exploring and discovering the world through play. It was therefore logical for us to continue with games for so-called "educational" learning.

First of all, it is important to note that for us, learning through games goes far beyond academic learning. It is a great way to spend time with your family and to learn how to be both a good loser and a good winner, to wait your turn and to create many beautiful memories.

In my opinion, the most important thing about game-based learning is having fun! Don't be afraid to change the rules so that everyone has fun, and don't dwell on a game that brings no pleasure, even if it's a popular game.

I recommend starting small. Don't aim for a library full of games like you see on some online groups. Get a game here, another one there, and slowly your collection will grow.

In our current situation in Quebec, we cannot talk about school-related learning without talking about the Direction de l'enseignement à la maison (DEM), and the traces to be provided. If we take the time to reflect, all games develop a variety of skills. Still, as mentioned above, the primary goal should be fun. Learning will follow naturally!

Young and old alike can learn a lot. Give it a try, I'm sure games will become an essential part of your educational material.

Go play and have fun!

**Here are some of our children's favorites:**

» **10 years old :**

Harry Potter - deck building  
Timeline  
Space Base  
Exploding kittens

» **6 years old :**

Via Magica,  
Perlin Pinpin,  
Dragomino,  
Uno flip

» **3 years old :**

Dragon's breath  
First Orchard by HABA  
Pictolino Junior  
Outfoxed

» **For the whole family :**

Une patate à vélo (in French but can easily be played in English)  
Taco, Cat, Goat, Cheese, Pizza  
Sugar Factory



*Tanya Gagné*

# ECLECTIC SCHOOLING

First, I would like to introduce ourselves, as our background reflects our educational approach to homeschooling. We are a family of four, with two beautiful daughters aged 10 and 7, two dogs and six chickens. I did not choose to homeschool. It became necessary after a brief, one month experience in school, when my five year old daughter was in kindergarten.

Initially, doing what any good family would do, I tried to reproduce what I knew, which, at the time, was "school at home": daily schedule and routine with recess, the use of workbooks, periods divided according to subjects, etc. In short, it was a nightmare for us, which I had created, all while my daughter continued to languish. I had to learn to unschool myself, and that was the hardest part, but oh so rewarding! I decided to become a co-learner with my children and that changed everything. Every day, I learn as much as they do; I search, I inquire, I inform myself. After several readings on educational methods like Montessori, Waldorf, Charlotte Mason, and so on, I tried to gradually integrate different activities. Some of them worked and others not at all. Hence, after several months of trial and error, our eclectic learning began.

With my children, what works is to "go with the flow". Every day, every week is a surprise. We can start on a project that we feel strongly about for several weeks, or for just a few hours. We can use textbooks to learn the basics, but then use children's literature to deepen our knowledge. We can use English curricula and learn Latin, and the etymology of words. We can browse Pinterest to find art projects or science experiments that will lead us to dig deeper. We play board games to further our learning, but what works one day may not work the next. That's where our eclectic approach makes our family learning rich, diverse, and so challenging. We are not in a rigid framework, and we quickly discover that learning in a playful and interesting way is worth its weight in gold.



*Marie-Pier Morier*



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# NATURE-BASED EDUCATION

When we hear "homeschooling" we immediately imagine a child sitting at a table, writing in a notebook, in a house. What if, in order to learn, we didn't need a house or to write in a notebook at all? What if we learned under the open sky? What if nature provided us with everything we needed to get through ministry expectations and more? This is what we propose to do when we use education in and through nature.

Before laying the groundwork for this pedagogical approach, we need to define what nature is. Some will say that it is everything that has not been touched by humans, others will say that nature is everything that is alive. Aren't inanimate stones and stars both "nature" though not living? And while "everything that has not been touched by humans" excludes us from nature, in an ecocentric vision, it is preferable to consider humans as one species among many others.

What if we were nature too? Nature is the living and the non-living, it is the human and what surrounds them. Nature is everything, nature is us. Education through nature means going to encounter it; going to encounter both humans and their history as well as the biodiversity of our ecosystems.

In an approach of education in and through nature, we want to start slowly by simply opening our door and going outside to do the activities we usually do inside. Taking advantage of the fresh air and the sun's rays, even if it's in our backyard or on our balcony, will already be of great benefit for health and learning. The evidence is clear: nature is essential for both physical and mental health.

The more we get outside, the more comfortable we will become. We can start by transposing what we would have done inside on paper to the outside in our environment. We will soon realize that it is easy to do math, French or science with elements of nature: branches will become tens while rocks will be the units; a Cartesian plane drawn in the sand or dirt will be used to find one's way around on a map; the monarchs and the bees that gather our flowers will inspire the texts to be written; the analysis of the water of the nearby pond will be on the menu for science.

But is education through nature reserved for those who live in the country or near a large green space, a woodland or a forest? Absolutely not! If we are nature, the river behind our house is as much nature as the neighborhood shopkeeper, right? Do we live in an urban environment? So be it! Let's go for a walk in our neighborhood to discover the pedestrian traffic issues that will become the subject of our next argumentative text; let's take an interest in the names of streets, parks, old buildings, which will teach us about the history of our environment; let's go hunting for geometric shapes by observing traffic signs; let's look for solids through urban furniture, or let's think about the environmental issues related to the construction of new condos near a wetland.

Nature-based education is an approach rooted in its environment, whether urban or rural. An approach that connects young people with what is real, and what is real are the trees, the plants, the insects, the animals, yes, but also Yolande, the lady at the public market who sells us her vegetables, Jeannot, the man who has been reading his newspaper on the same park bench for 40 years, Martin, the family man who repairs our streets. Education through nature is to go and encounter the living, whatever it is.

In short, the possibilities are as endless in the city as they are in the wild! It's about putting on our nature glasses and opening our eyes to discover the infinite possibilities of learning in and through nature!

*Amélie Monette*





# UNSCHOOLING

## A Letter to My Children

Because time with you, my children, is so precious...  
Because it is a privilege to be responsible for other human beings, until you are autonomous;  
I choose to offer you MORE, rather than limiting you;

I choose to offer you more time to explore, discover and learn;  
I choose to offer you more time to be wrong, to experiment, to be bored;

I choose to offer you more time to have fun, to laugh, to dream;  
I choose to offer you more attentiveness, patience, compassion;  
I choose to offer you more yes than no, more freedom than constraints;  
I choose to accompany you joyfully, rather than to control you;

I choose to let you run ahead, following you with my eyes, marveling at your discoveries and your laughter, rather than impatiently pulling you by the hand;

I choose for you abundance, space and time.  
I offer you all the campfires possible, the starry skies, the adventures and blanket forts; I offer you my reassuring presence, my listening ear, my comforting shoulder and my loving arms.  
I choose unschooling and kindness!



*Stephanie Meloche*

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# MONTESSORI LEARNING

We had never considered homeschooling. So over 7 years ago when we made this choice, I was far from prepared. In fact, I didn't know anything, pedagogically speaking, other than my personal experience of education and it was far from being very creative! I replicated it at home, but as time went on, I realized that a transfer of knowledge was not happening with my children. They needed more. More hands-on learning to grasp abstract concepts, more concrete experiences feeding their personal interests and drive to discover the world, and more respect for their rhythm of learning. In fact, they needed to regain their rightful place at the heart of their own lives!

As it often happens, everything we need comes to us at the moment we are receptive to consider it, and so I met (and yes, I say met!) the Montessori method. First, I was attracted by the beautiful materials! I then proceeded to research the journey of this woman, Maria Montessori, creator of this method and its tenets, which offered me a tangible, accessible and concrete solution to the learning experience I wanted to offer my children. It was exactly what I was looking for. At that point, my passion for this method only grew. I had a compulsive need to learn more, to understand where to start in order to implement it as soon as possible in my home.

It took me several trials and errors, and a lot of appropriation and adaptation to implement the Montessori method at home: first, because Montessori is a method that is typically used in a classroom with furniture placed in a particular way; and secondly, because a large part of this philosophy is based on the child's observation of peers for the appropriation of certain concepts. I often doubted myself, until I realized that the deepest foundations of this philosophy were actually the child himself and the incredible force he can be when he can explore the world, use his five senses to discover and be seen as an important part of that which surrounds him; that education is actually a natural process for him through the exploration of his environment. That's when I realized that the method was already part of our vision of learning and that we were already using it more than we thought. So I trusted myself and adapted Montessori to us, especially in terms of the arrangement of materials in our environment, the rhythm, the guidance and the individual and collective needs of my children regarding certain guidelines, for example, for the schedules and structure of our days. It was also at this time that I noticed the impact that this method had on my children in terms of self-esteem, knowledge and learning.

There is so much gentleness, empathy and love in this method. How can one not feel competent when, thanks to the respect of one's rhythm, the hands-on work, the modeling, the consideration, and the kind accompaniment, we understand and we develop our autonomy? In this method, we consider the child as a whole being who has everything within themselves to succeed and to blossom when stimulated and encouraged to explore. Since that moment, we let ourselves be carried by the Montessorian wind on a daily basis.



*Marie-Eve Blanchet*

# From "Should'ing" to "Shining"

STEPHANIE SEWELL

## ARTICLE

When my kids were both still pre-school age, I met a neighbour whose kids were homeschooled. I asked her, "How does homeschooling work?" "Well," she responded, "instead of sending them to school, we just kept on doing what we've always done - things that made sense according to their age and interests."

That sounded great, but I didn't, at first, understand the full extent of the wisdom of her statement. Her words stayed with me, though, as we made the decision to homeschool our eldest for his kindergarten year, and a lovely year ensued.

However, those same words receded in my mind somewhat as we embarked on grade 1 at home - the "should's" started to make their appearance!

*Which curriculum **should** we use?*

*What **should** our daily,  
weekly and yearly  
schedule be?*

We started into that school year with a Waldorf homeschool curriculum. I enthusiastically learned songs for the fall season, and planned the circle with which we would begin each day. As a former elementary school teacher, I was super keen, uber-prepared, and raring to get started on what I was sure would be homeschool perfection!

Well ... the first thing I realised is that a triangle is not a circle. When the three of us - 6 year old Oliver, 3 year old Julia and I - sat down together, try as I might, I simply could not get our morning "circle" to work.

This was my first hint at the need for - and beauty of - what I now call Wellbeing-Based Education. My active, budding engineer of a son was not interested in the songs. My 3 year old daughter was, well, 3 years old. My carefully planned and practised grade one-oriented circle was simply not appropriate for her and asking her to sit still for it was unfair.

I am eternally grateful that my wise neighbour's words were still tucked away in a corner of my mind: "...we just kept on doing what we've always done - things that made sense according to their age and interests."

*Long story short,  
I let go of the  
"should's".*

We carried on with a Waldorf 'flavour' for a few years, enjoying the stories, drawings and math activities that my son and daughter each enjoyed.

I also came to understand that a little goes a long way when you are learning outside of school. Julia would spend a day with grandparents, and that would be the day that Oliver and I would be the most "schooly". We did some "schooly" things on our "Mummy, Oliver and Julia days" too,

but far less, and only when it flowed. In spite of this decidedly shorter-than-school schedule, Oliver was learning academic (and non-academic!) things, and was clearly "making progress."

As a family, we gradually shifted into a new understanding of living and learning. It's interesting how different this looked for each of our kids.

## *The remaining school-age years, saw Oliver...*

- » spending loads of time outdoors in nature programs;
- » doing academic work that was meaningful to him alone, in a group, with me, or other adults;
- » trying a year of school in grade 7;
- » choosing to return to a home-based self-directed learning approach - including apprenticing, lots of mountain biking, a day a week at a SDL Centre, rich time with peers
- » deciding university was in the cards (this was around age 15), and setting a self-directed learning course that would get him there - while still putting a huge priority on his passion - mountain biking and trail building, and associated work opportunities
- » attending grade 12 in Ontario
- » taking a gap year
- » entering university

## *During the school-age years of her childhood, Julia...*

- » spent several days a week in a small homeschool group
- » made the choice to go to school in grade 4
- » began school in French, a language that she didn't yet speak
- » prioritized horseback riding - her passion - whenever it was reasonable to do so
- » valued the part time work opportunities that she loved
- » is headed to cegep

For me, one of the most unexpected aspects of this journey through childhood with my two kids, was the number of ways that my own ideals and assumptions were challenged.

When Julia started to talk about going to school in grade 4, the voice in my head screamed "no!" My ideal was that they would each be home until at least highschool. I wanted my kids' education to be one that saw them thrive, and I was convinced then that none of this would be possible in the school system.

But ultimately, we listened to her, and agreed for her to give it a try. She was happy with her decision, and she has thrived.

As a former school teacher, I assumed that homeschooling would be a series of amazing teaching moments - my lucky kids would get the full benefit of my creative and dedicated teaching expertise!!! What could be better?!

I remember the day I decided to teach Oliver about addition with regrouping.

I had one of those uber-enthusiastic and keen moments as I thought long and hard about the BEST way to teach this skill to my child. I was so happy that he was going to get to learn it in this perfect environment - 1:1, creative approach, etc, etc!

We sat down to do it. But, Oliver, who had always loved playing with numbers in his head, was not interested in this approach. Within minutes, I could see the light going out of his eyes.

Fortunately, something prompted me to stop, to just let it go. And the light came back.

No matter how perfect my lesson plan had been, it was not right for him at that time.

*That was when I learned  
that consent  
is essential  
to teaching.*

In my current work with families, both home/unschooling and "schooling", I see the themes that emerged from my own family's experience show up over and over again.

#### THEMES LIKE...


- » no two children follow the same path when they get to choose it;
- » much of parenting / homeschooling is about letting go and being open to change;
- » our children own their lives, and when we enthusiastically and positively embrace that, when we deeply trust them, they can become their unique and wonderful selves.

And finally ... some of the most beautiful moments are around letting go of "should's". When we take those out, we leave room for self-direction, for consent, for **shining**.



**Stephanie Sewell** is an Alternative Education Consultant and Speaker. She works both individually and in groups, with families around the world, identifying and navigating educational pathways that allow the whole family to thrive.

Stephanie's background as a retired homeschooling parent, former teacher, and education researcher combines with her heart-based, well-being focused approach to working with her clients.

A man with dark hair, wearing a black t-shirt and black pants, is captured in a dynamic backbend pose against a light grey wall. He is leaning backwards, with his head tilted up and his arms extended forward, holding his right leg. His left leg is bent and tucked under his right leg. The lighting is soft, highlighting the contours of his body.

12 years ago,  
I made the decision  
to take my son **OUT**  
of the **public**  
school system...

## TESTIMONIAL

### *Finding One's Passion: A Story About Perseverance*

GINA PICONE

**From the very beginning,** I could see that my son had anxiety about starting school. Part of me was heartbroken everyday seeing him dragged into a building he was unfamiliar with and into a place where he didn't feel comfortable. About a month into his kindergarten year, I noticed both motor and vocal tics that were never present before. This was the cause for uncomfortable discourse between myself and his teachers. I was constantly met with complaints about his behaviour in class. They would say he was too loud, too hyperactive, and a disturbance to his classmates.

Then, by the first grade, he was diagnosed with Tourette's Plus. Along with his diagnosis, we were told by the school that he would need to have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and an integration aide to assist him, in order to do well at school. Despite the efforts made with these interventions, the classroom setting was not working for him. The structure, the schedule, the misunderstandings of his needs, and the kids picking on him made it difficult for him to feel secure in his learning space. I felt like my son could do much better in a different environment and knew that it was up to me to make that happen. I had heard about homeschooling, but I didn't really know anything about it. However, in my heart I knew it was the right thing to do, so as soon as he completed the fourth grade, I took his education into my own hands.

Homeschooling was still an unfamiliar word when I started and one that was misunderstood by many. To be honest, the beginning of our journey was quite tough. Not the actual schooling, but the people around us that offered more resistance than

support. We got calls from the school board, the Child Protective Services (CPS), and even had our pediatrician constantly interrogating us. This was not because there was anything questionable going on, it was simply because we chose to homeschool. I was exhausted just trying to defend myself and my decision to do what I thought was best for my child. The only thing that kept me from throwing in the towel was knowing that this is what my son needed.

After a couple of years of trying to please those around me, by replicating school at home, I decided we were going to choose a child led learning approach. This meant that I was going to let him lead the way, even if it didn't look anything like school. I immediately saw the weight lifted off his shoulders. I could see how much happier and healthier he was learning in this way. He was able to be himself in a loving and nurturing environment, while being able to follow his interests. Furthermore, the tics that he was experiencing in school seemed to go away.

This new lifestyle gave him the time to train more seriously in his sports, practicing competitive gymnastics, soccer, weight lifting, and dance. Being able to pursue these activities helped him to build confidence, while finding his strengths and working through his weaknesses. This led him to discover his passion for dance.

He began training and performing on stage with L'École de Ballet Ouest de Montréal at age 10. By the age of 17, he auditioned and got accepted to l'École Supérieure de Ballet du Québec, where he completed a 3 year college program in classical dance. By 19, he graduated.

Now, he is working as a professional dancer here in Montreal. He has had the opportunity to work with many choreographers over the years including, Hélène Blackburn with Cas Public and Sylvain Émard.

Mateo Picone was able to achieve his objectives without going through the regular channels. He succeeded thanks to the people that believed in him, his hard work, his perseverance, and his focus on the end goal. Now, when he's not dancing, he's DJing, playing poker, or cooking up a new recipe: skills he learned by doing his own research. Mateo's story demonstrates that you can have success as a child-led learner; this approach equips you with tools to continue learning for life.

**Taking a different path does not give you less chance to reach your goals, on the contrary, it gives you more opportunity to seek them out.**



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# Homeschooling in High School

JULIE BELISLE

## About the author

Julie is the mother of three children between the ages of 10 and 15, and has been homeschooling for 11 years. She is very interested in high school, specifically in the certification of studies for homeschoolers because her oldest is in Secondary 4 this year and is paving the way for the other children in the family.



While most parents decide to homeschool when their children are in elementary school, some make the decision later in the process, for a variety of reasons:

- » poor academic performance;
- » bullying or discrimination;
- » stress, anxiety or depression;
- » medical conditions that cause them to miss many days of school;
- » having more flexibility to pursue a career in the arts or sports;
- » to encourage a young person who is gifted.

These families may not realize, though, that there are many options available to them. Graduating from high school after 5 years of study and a series of exams is not the only valid choice. There are many ways for your children to achieve their goals. The first thing to ask yourself is whether earning a high school diploma (HSD) is even important to your teen. This is why I will begin by explaining why a diploma may not be necessary.

## STEP 1 : DETERMINE IF A DIPLOMA IS NECESSARY

Your child may, of course, decide to pursue a HSD even if it is not necessary for his or her career. However, there may be a difference, both psychologically (stress and anxiety) and in terms of planning (the possibility of changing plans), between choosing to and needing to get a diploma.

Whether the goal is to pursue post-secondary education or to go directly into the workforce, we believe, often mistakenly, that a HSD is a necessary step in pursuing higher education, getting a job, or achieving career goals. This is not always the case:

Many CEGEPs and universities have admission processes for applicants who do not have a diploma, or who are homeschooled. Before assuming that the diploma is mandatory, check with the institution where your teenager wants to be admitted. You can then prepare his or her admission file according to the school's criteria. In English: (<https://universityadmissions.ca>)

Some fields do not necessarily require a degree.

At a certain level of expertise, a self-taught **programmer** will probably have no problem

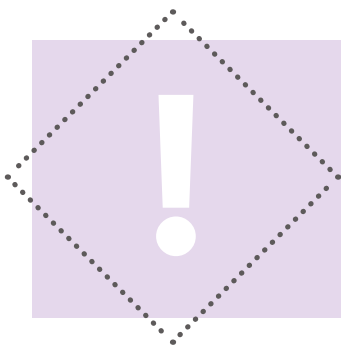
finding a job, even if he/she has no degree: not only because programmers are in high demand, but also because many employers in this field look more at actual knowledge and skills, (presented in a portfolio or with a test at the hiring stage) than at a diploma.

In the **business** world, you often have to go through a business school: ask about the school's admission requirements. Some may require a HSD, but others may only require certain high school courses as prerequisites (for example, to prove English proficiency) but not the entire diploma. Others require an admission test and an interview.

For some **trades**, an apprenticeship can be a gateway into the profession. ([www.emploiquebec.gouv.qc.ca/entreprises/investir-en-formation/programmes-de-formation-de-la-main-doeuv-re/apprentissage-en-milieu-de-travail](http://www.emploiquebec.gouv.qc.ca/entreprises/investir-en-formation/programmes-de-formation-de-la-main-doeuv-re/apprentissage-en-milieu-de-travail))

**Entrepreneurs** must follow a set of rules related to the chosen business or industry, but a high school diploma is not a prerequisite.

Another aspect to consider is that your teen may not want to enter the workforce right away.



*Does my chosen pathway actually require a high school diploma?*

## STEP 2 : DETERMINE PRIORITIES

Even if a HSD is a necessary step in achieving your teen's goal, is it necessary to achieve it within a specific time frame? Sometimes we can slow down when we need to focus our energy on our child's mental health, wait until a certain level of maturity is reached, or address any other environmental or personal factors that affect our teen's life.

### Current needs and well-being

Some families begin homeschooling in late elementary or high school because their teen is suffering from a problem caused by a situation at school or amplified by the school system:

- » bullying;
- » stress;
- » depression;
- » anxiety;
- » low self-esteem;
- » or a combination of these factors.

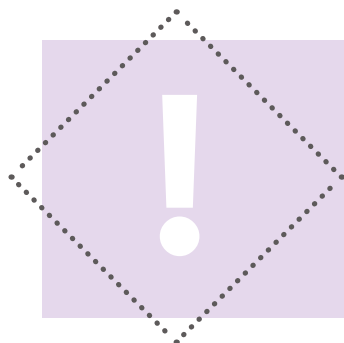
Even when obtaining a diploma is necessary, it is important to take into account all of our adolescent's mental health needs and perhaps make the decision to seek a diploma at a later time or in a longer time frame.

### Life Goals

Another reason to rethink the conventional timeline is that our teen may not have chosen a path yet, and may need a little more time to explore.

In addition, the teenager is not only preparing for the workforce, he or she is also preparing for life as an independent adult. From a practical standpoint, an adult needs to know how to cook, budget, pay bills, file taxes, register to vote, etc. Ideally, a newly independent adult should also have some degree of social autonomy and emotional maturity – knowing how to solve problems, negotiate agreements, resolve conflicts, have healthy relationships, etc.

So, even if you have determined that a HSD should be part of your plan, the goal of a teen's education must be more than just getting a degree. Degrees are no substitute for ingenuity, resilience, and know-how.



*What are  
my needs and  
my priorities?*

*What are  
my goals?*

### The Big Picture

The purpose of identifying priorities (step 2) is to help plan what needs to be done (step 3) to achieve a goal. Before taking any concrete steps in your teen's educational journey, take the time to look at the person as a whole, where they are now and where they want to go, as well as the concept of education itself.

The organization of learning by dividing knowledge and skills into subjects and levels, and progressing at a specific pace through a specific curriculum, is rooted in the standardization of traditional education and based on the logistics of mass education. It is not based on what is best for a given individual, nor is it the essence of true education and learning.

Question any assumptions you may have about education and what it is supposed to be about. Rethink the relationship between education and learning. Determine with your teen what you think the purpose and role of education is, and what the short and long-term personal goals should be that should be met through education.

*Why is it important for me to get my diploma?*

## STEP 3 : DETERMINE AN ACTION PLAN

Depending on your short-and long-term goals, it can be helpful to have an action plan that outlines the goals and steps to get there. Having a plan of action helps to avoid making mistakes along the way and having to backtrack or make up for them in other ways.

Decisions and actions will depend on the preferred path:

*For more information on the post-secondary pathway, visit AQED's website.*

# From Homeschool to High School

WITH CORALIE PILOTE

Coralie is 13 years old. She was home-schooled from kindergarten until she entered private high school in secondary 2. She shares her experience and transition with us.

**You were homeschooled for eight years before attending school. How did you like your experience?**

It was really cool. It was a little more free. There weren't as many rules. I know it sounds isolated as a way of life, but I was doing lots of activities, and it allowed me to see my homeschool friends.

**Do you ever get bored with certain things?**

I miss my homeschool friends the most. I don't see them as much now that our schedules are so different.

**What were your days like [when you were homeschooling]?**

It was really different than it is now. I used to get up a little later, so I could sleep more. After lunch, I would look at what subjects I wanted to work on that day with my mom. We would set a time for each subject, and then when I had questions, I could ask her as we went along. We also did activities. Now, in school, there's really a set schedule. You come to class, you wait for the teacher and you have to be quiet.



## INTERVIEW

**How are you feeling about the difference of being in school?**

I like my teachers a lot, obviously some more than others. I'm not as used to certain ways of doing things and certain assignments as my peers. So sometimes it's a little easier for them to stick to an assignment, but I get used to it quickly. I also had to get used to the exams, because I had never done one in the past. The first one was really stressful, but now it's going well. I have found strategies to help me. My days are so full that I find that they go by really fast.

**Do you feel like you were at a disadvantage coming into high school after having been homeschooled?**

Actually, no. Because you learn the same things, just not in the same way.

**What motivated you to enroll in school?**

Honestly, I wanted a change. I needed to be independent. To not always be with my parents. I love them, but it felt good to be away from them for a while. I wanted to try something new and I thought that if I didn't like it, I could go back to homeschooling.

**Do you find that there are other benefits to going to school rather than homeschooling?**

Actually, there is one thing. I've always had more difficulty with writing. When I was in sixth grade, I should have taken my first ministerial exam, but they were eventually canceled because of COVID. At school, I have an intervention plan in place and it allows me to have a computer for my tests. It helps me with my writing. If I were still homeschooling I wouldn't have the same tools, I think. It's more respected, because the teachers dictate the needs instead of the parents.

**How did your integration into school go?**

I made friends quickly. In our class, there are only seven girls, so they all hang out a lot. We were two new girls and they invited us to join them at lunch, and we bonded quickly.

**Do your teachers and friends know that you were homeschooled before?**

The first question is always "what school are you from?" because everyone just thinks you've changed schools. So I mentioned it when asked, but I didn't shout it from the rooftops either.

**What do you foresee for your future?**

I would love to work with animals. Maybe as a zoologist. Otherwise, I also really like children. Maybe I'd like to be a kindergarten teacher or something like that.

**It's still really far away, but do you think if you ever had kids, you'd be tempted to homeschool them?**

I don't know. I think I'd rather keep working and not put everything aside for that..

**Is there anything we haven't talked about that you'd like to share?**

In the school I attend, there are different programs. I went into STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. In that stream, we have projects like making a robot or building a car out of wood. We also made a Bluetooth speaker. My dad is an engineer, so I was already very interested in that. I liked carving wood at home, and I am really rediscovering this passion in my school projects.

## *Notes from Natasha, Coralie's mother*

A few weeks after starting school, Coralie was voted by the students in her group as the "open-minded" student of the month for September. This is the best recognition we have ever received, especially considering the misconception that home schooling is a closing-off to the world. She also received a merit award in May for her perseverance. We are really happy that her transition went so well.

## TESTIMONIAL

# Higher Education After Unschooling

DOMINIQUE NADEAU



We are a family with six children, ranging in age from 28 to 16 years old, all of whom have unschooled. As a family, that's over 20 consecutive years of homeschooling. The four oldest have gone on to higher education, each by a very different path. The two youngest have not yet reached that stage.

Laws and regulations have changed since the older ones first went on to higher learning, but things have also changed between each of them. Admissions criteria, operating procedures, etc., have evolved between each child, always forcing us to find new ways to reach our goal. We never stopped at that new rule or that new criterion that we couldn't meet; we found new ways, bypassing, asking for exemptions, knocking on doors to get help in order to meet all the necessary criteria. These are the stories of our children's journeys.

*Daisy*

Daisy is the eldest child in the family. She began her journey in public school for kindergarten and in alternative school for first grade. It wasn't long before teachers noticed that Daisy had greater learning challenges than the others, including dyslexia, dysorthographia and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). Because of her dyslexia, Daisy could not learn to read. Some teachers told us that she would probably never be able to read and write properly, and her grade 1 teacher suggested that I homeschool her.

At the time, the term unschooling didn't really exist, or at least I had never heard of it, and there were very few groups and resources available for homeschooling parents. This didn't stop us from doing it. Not having many resources or examples, I had to go with my instincts and a few years later, I discovered that the closest thing to what I was doing instinctively was called unschooling. By going at her own pace of learning and focusing on her strengths, rather than her weaknesses, Daisy learned to read and write by the age of 12.

# Mathieu

At 15, she asked us to go back to school. Due to a lack of confidence in myself and my child, as she was the first to enter school after unschooling, I had Daisy put in secondary 2 instead of secondary 3. I thought this would allow her to adapt better.

She enrolled in the regular program at our local high school, and I did not tell the teachers about Daisy's learning challenges. At the first parents' meeting, I was told that Daisy did not belong in the regular stream, that she had great abilities that could not be developed under those conditions.

I was asked for permission to admit her to the international school at the polyvalente, for the best performing students. She was in this program until the end of secondary 5 and always got very good grades despite her challenges (we are talking about an overall average of over 85%). For ministry exams, especially in history, Daisy needed to use a dictionary and we had to discuss her dyslexia with her teachers. They made accommodations for her to compensate and it went very well.

After high school, she entered Cégep in natural sciences for 1 year, then entered a technical program in physical rehabilitation. Upon completion, she entered the job market as a Physical Rehabilitation Technician. She followed many related training sessions over the years and specialized in sports rehabilitation. Part-time, she also pursued her studies in a massage therapy program, and is currently studying Osteopathy.

Mathieu, the second child, was unschooled for his entire education. Mathieu had a passion for nature, natural sciences and the study of the environment; his goal was to become a biologist. At the age of 17, he decided to get his diploma in order to achieve his goal, and so he entered an adult education program at-a-distance, the fastest way to get it at that time. The placement exams placed him in secondary 4. The teachers were rarely available to evaluate the assignments and give the exams, which slowed down the whole process and ended up discouraging him after he finished high school.

He decided to go another way entirely and enter university as a mature student at 21 years old. He went to get the experience he needed by taking a vocational studies program (DEP) in plant production at Mirabel, which allowed him to do an internship in an agricultural research center. Thanks to his academic commitment and his excellent grades, he received an Excellence Scholarship at the end of his DEP. He then entered UQAM to get a certificate in Ecology.

At the end of his certificate, he entered the Bachelor of Biology program at UQAM. Mathieu pursued the biology program for two years, but then realized that the opportunities in the program were only in the lab and not really in the field, which was the part he liked. He then decided to leave biology aside and study as a wildlife technician, a DEP, which, combined with his certificate in ecology and his studies in biology, allowed him to work in his field, in forests for nature reserves. He now works at the Rouge-Matawin Wildlife Reserve.

# Rosalie

Rosalie, the third child, unschooled for her entire education as well. In 2014, at the age of 17, rather than deciding to graduate, she started her own herbal products business while studying herbalism (self-taught).

In 2019, she closed that business to start a new project, as a team with me, a farm business producing artisanal herbal teas from wild and garden-grown plants in an environmentally responsible manner. On our farm, we also have an orchard and a small, ethical livestock operation. This turn towards agriculture made her decide to pursue higher education in the field.

She first took continuing education courses in the field of agriculture through distance learning. Two of these courses led to certifications, a course in sheep production at Laval University and a course in permaculture at Cégep Beauce-Appalaches. She then decided to join a university distance learning program in January 2021.

Not having a diploma, she contacted the directors of several programs, including a Microprogram in Organic Agriculture at Laval University, a certificate in Animal Production at the same university and an Attestation of Collegial Studies in Organic Vegetable Production at Cégep de Victoriaville. She presented them with her file, with her experience related to her business and the numerous continuing education courses she had taken, a letter of motivation and asked the directors of the programs if she could register on this basis.

At Laval University, the organic agriculture program told her that the university's policy was that students had to have a degree to enter, while the

director of the animal production program told her that with her record, she could enter without any problem. The director of the program at the Cégep de Victoriaville also replied that her file allowed her to be admitted without any problem.

She finally decided to take the organic vegetable production program in an intensive one-year program instead of a two-year program. Upon completion of her internship (in October of 2022), she will graduate with a 94% grade point average and an R rating above 31. In May of 2022, she received a Merit Excellence Scholarship from the College.



# Justine

Justine is the fourth in the family and did all of her primary and secondary education unschooling at home. Like Mathieu, she decided to go through adult education to graduate at 17. The adult education system had changed in the interim and they no longer graded students in the same way.


The difference between Justine and Mathieu was that students were now graded by subject and not globally. The placement exams ranked Justine as at the end of Sec 5 in some subjects and as at the end of Sec 3 in others. She therefore had to do the workbooks and exams only related to the subjects in which she hadn't performed as well. Because of this, she graduated from high school in a year and a half.

Justine was hesitating between several programs of study, so she entered Cégep in Humanities, a general program to help her decide where she wanted to go. She discovered an affinity for social work and immigration.

After her studies in humanities, she entered university by distance learning (due to the pandemic) in 2020 in a certificate in immigration and interethnic relations. After this program, she pondered whether to continue her studies to become a social worker or to study political science. She finally decided in the fall of 2021 to study at Laval University in Quebec City in political science, but didn't like the subject and, in the end, returned to the Laurentians. She is currently working in the pastry shop of an IGA while waiting to find her path.

I could write long stories about each of their journeys and the challenges they faced, the solutions we found, the ones that worked and the ones that didn't, but I think the most important thing to remember is that it's possible for unschoolers to go to college, no matter what field they are in.

*You just have to be  
imaginative, creative,  
and not hesitate to knock  
on every door that will help you,  
and bypass the  
usual methods.*



*What I want  
parents to know  
is that if your child  
isn't singing  
in his daily life,  
something is wrong.*

## *Gifted and Thriving*

WITH NOEMI BERLUS

**INTERVIEW**

Noemi Berlus was president of AQED's Board of Directors for several years and then held the position of Executive Director of the association. She is the mother of two teenagers, soon to be 12 and 16 years old. She is a management consultant and also the owner of Facile à lire, a publishing company that produces children's books. She and her spouse have been homeschooling since 2013.



*Noemi, you and your partner have been homeschooling for a while now. What brought you on this journey?*

My son, at age seven, started bringing home piles of drawings every day. At first, I was happy because he was working on his fine motor skills and it was one of his challenges. But we soon realized that he was drawing in class to pass the time until the other kids finished their work. At first, we tried to follow the homework and lessons given by his teacher, but he got everything right the first time. He would then spend the week seeing the same material at school and we felt it was a waste of his time. It was hard for us to congratulate him on his good grades, because we wanted to praise the effort, not the grade, and we knew that there was no real work behind his good grades. The first two years, he concentrated on learning English because he went to an English school and we spoke French at home. But by the second year, I realized that his thirst for learning could not be satisfied by the material he was seeing in class.

So we decided to enroll him in a private school, specifically in an enriched program. The first three weeks he found it difficult. It was so new for him to have to make an effort that he would throw fits. It immediately made me think of my brother and his difficult school career and I wanted to find a way to support my son.

*What happened with your brother?*

We come from a family of gifted people. Everyone who took standardized tests was diagnosed with giftedness. My brother had a very difficult time in school. It was okay in elementary and early high school. But after that, it was hard because he never learned how to work. He wasn't equipped to learn how to use his full potential, and he had a more rock and roll life after that.



### *Seeing the landscape taking shape, what did you decide to do?*

My husband is a Cégep teacher and education is very important to both of us. It's not about grades, it's about learning. After three weeks of having to work hard in private school, it became easy for my son again. His grades would fluctuate. Sometimes he would get 100% and other times 60%. I realized that it depended on how much he was interested in the subject. We went to a psychologist so that the school could better support him, and then his diagnosis of giftedness was confirmed. I did some research to better understand how gifted children function.

I learned that, according to one researcher, about 40% of gifted students in the United States are homeschooled at some point in their journey. I researched to see if this was possible in Canada and Quebec, and it was. As a management consultant at the time, I thought it didn't make sense to spend my days helping people with their problems, but not do it for my own child. I thought maybe I was making a mistake by taking my son out of school, but I wanted to try a different route than my brother had taken. The psychologist, who had come to the conclusion that Leo needed more stimulation, agreed with this choice.

### *How did the transition go?*

When I told my son in November that we were thinking of homeschooling, I had it in mind to let him finish his semester and pull him out during winter break. It didn't work out that way. The minute I told him about homeschooling, he was surprised to hear it was a possibility and wanted to start immediately. He barely finished his week, and then we transitioned. The first two years, it was really homeschooling. He was doing the accelerated program, plus programming classes, Italian, etc. We were really into performance, because I wanted to challenge him as much as possible. The first few weeks he was happy to have more freedom in his schedule, but he hated having to sit down to work. It was a lot of negotiating to move forward. It was really hard. I wasn't happy and neither was Leo. I was completely discouraged. After a year, I asked my partner to try. I thought maybe \*I\* was the problem. Since he's a teacher, I thought it would be better for him. After a year, it wasn't working with him either. For two years, we had been working with family educators at the Communidée center. We saw many children who were blossoming in their learning and we wanted to go there too. We re-evaluated our way of doing things. Instead of being ultra strict and structured, I thought that maybe I should lighten up our approach, like those other families. I did a lot of reading and research and learned more about unschooling. It was very insecure for me, the girl who was performing at school, to step outside the box. The book that convinced me was *Free To Learn* by Peter Gray, because I'm very analytical and I need to be convinced before I jump in. That book had a lot of studies and evidence to back it up. I had my partner read it and thought he would be against the idea, but he was willing to give it a try.

*You were a management consultant at the time, how did you combine work and home education?*

When we decided to take my son out of school, I was between contracts. For the first nine months, I was very present. After the first year, I went back to work and Christian took a year off. Then I hired tutors: whenever I was not available, there was a tutor who took over according to the plan I had made. My mother, a former philosophy teacher, would watch him one day a week and go over his morals and religion classes with him, and also French, I think. My husband sometimes had half days at the Cégep, so he could accompany him the other half of the day. One day a week, he would be babysat and he would do his work independently. Then one or two days a week he would go to a community center. Sometimes I had to be creative with our schedule, but we managed.

*Finally, you did it with the help of a whole village...  
Yes, it was exactly that!*

*You've mentioned Centre Communidée a few times now. Do you want to tell me more about it?*

When I first went to Communidée, it struck me how mature the children were. I was talking to a little girl who was four or five years old and I quickly realized the infantilization in my tone when she answered me with such maturity and confidence in her opinion. They say you can't let kids make decisions because they aren't mature enough, but maturity comes from making decisions and living with the consequences. I feel like we keep pushing back the age of maturity because we're letting our kids make fewer and fewer decisions. I also think that not always being with 30 kids of the same age, but rather being in regular contact with people of all ages, promotes maturity in homeschooled youth. My kids were able to make decisions about their lives at a much younger age, and that makes the decisions they make now better.

*What effect did this have on your son?*

Instead of his relationship with school deteriorating, it allowed him to make the choice, himself, to want to graduate from high school. He still hates working with notebooks, but he does it now because he has set a goal to complete his units. He studies at his own pace. Sometimes he gives it a shot and works hard. Then he takes it easier. I'm sure he'll succeed. I don't think he'll fail to get his diploma. When I compared him to me in high school, I worked so much harder, and I was proud of my 93% average because that's what was valued, but I wonder if it was really worth it. My boy has had a less stressful, more fun-filled lifestyle. When I got out of high school, I had the pressure of having to be perfect for my higher-learning studies and then in my career. I look at myself today and I live with an anxiety disorder: I am functional, but I am lucky enough to have my own business. Leo, in addition to not having that outside pressure there, has learned so much about how to better understand himself and his needs. Just by eating when he's hungry, or going to the bathroom when he needs to without waiting for the appointed time or for someone's permission, for example.

*Finally, is there a message you would like to pass on to the parents who will be reading this?*

I will always remember the first day after we made the decision to unschool. I was reading a book in the living room, then I heard someone whistling outside. I realized it was my son. I had never heard my son whistle in happiness. It was such a caricature. Since kindergarten, he had been unhappy. The psychologist had talked about anxiety and depressive tendencies, and we just had the impression our child was just a moody person; that that was just who he was! But that day I realized that he had been depressed for four years. What I want parents to know is that if your child isn't singing in his daily life, something is wrong. You have to take the time to find the right solution for him.

## TESTIMONIAL



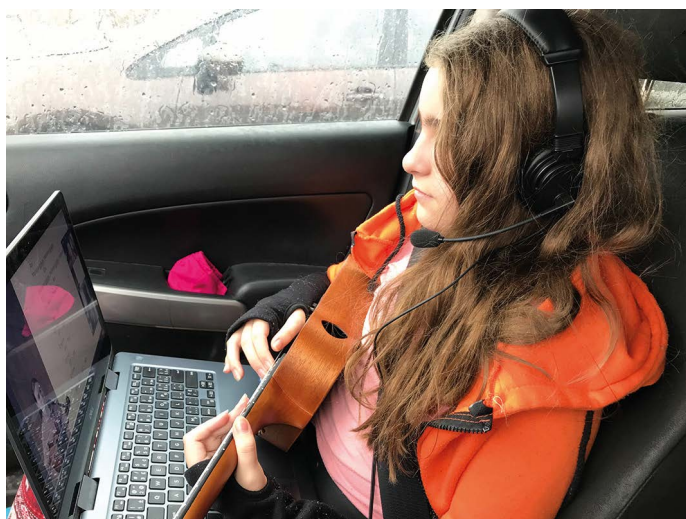
*Best of Bath  
Worlds*

ELAINE PAQUETTE

A long time ago, a little rebel flame was awakening in my heart. It wanted to do things differently: move against the current, but in small doses. We made tiny shifts, imperceptible for some, already untameable for others. Then came, as in all stories, a great upheaval; one that transforms, metamorphoses and transcends everything else. The one by which the characters of the story discover themselves, assert themselves and lift mountains. Mine was the announcement of a diagnosis of our youngest, the fairy of our story, the one through whom the adventure suddenly takes a completely different path. I became fed up with systems, none of which matched my expectations or our needs.

### A BRIEF GUIDE TO SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

- » Observation is your first tool, an essential tool.
- » Finding materials yourself is faster than asking a public service.
- » The most relevant materials are not the ones you think: «Think outside the box!»
- » Confidence in yourself is an incredible ally: «You are the first expert.»



So with this little guide in my bag, we've traveled the trails, climbed the mountains and challenged the oceans. Our adventure has now moved beyond the primary foundation. We have entered a secondary era with confidence and determination. So this is a story to follow...

You may have guessed that we have chosen to home school, to learn together according to our needs. Well beyond values, methods and approaches, this decision allows Ofélie to live at her own pace. For example, she has never known "being late for a class because of an appointment," nor the learning difficulties linked to fatigue. It is a great advantage to be able to study and learn at times that are more convenient for us, as well as to be able to get up at a time that meets our sleep needs. Our educational adventure can then move forward as the journey, discoveries and opportunities arise. We have the chance to choose our tools.

**Our reality** - Ofélie has a diagnosis of Spinal Muscular Atrophy, a degenerative neuromuscular disease. There is no cognitive impact or learning disability associated with this condition. The public system offers two options: regular school or special school. The regular school option had the following obstacles for us: the wheelchair accessible school was not the neighborhood school, and changing locations would not have been possible. She would have accumulated academic delays for each medical appointment (in September 2021, we were on the road to appointments or in appointments more days than there were "school" days). The specialized school option, on the other hand, had the following obstacles: the school was even further away, as the school day involves rehabilitation and some appointments with specialists, the hours allocated to learning are fewer (for example, one school in Montreal allows the child to be seen by an occupational therapist, a physiotherapist and an orthotist during school hours). In both cases: the wake-up time didn't make sense in Ofélie's reality and the long hours of travel by school transport were unacceptable. She was only 23 months old when she was diagnosed. Only a few months later, our definitive and unchangeable decision regarding homeschooling was already established. She will be 12 years old in July and will start secondary 2 in August.

**Our daily routine** - Our daily life is therefore strewn with everything we believe is optimal at each stage, at each moment.

I can vary her positioning as often as necessary or desired. Ofélie has the privilege of a flexible classroom: standing, sitting on different supports, lying down. All the while having to be helped, supervised or supported each time. Standing: standing apparatus, special orthoses (KAFO) allowing her to stand. Sitting: in a chair, on a ball, on a special cushion, with or without orthosis, with or without support, with or without stretching. Lying down: with or without support, with or without stretching. We try to vary her positioning every hour. This avoids muscle fatigue and reduces the risks associated with poor posture.

I can plan learning around medical appointments and her sleep needs. This allows her to move naturally through her learning from one study time to the next. I can use times that don't fit into the traditional school calendar or schedule (evenings, weekends, summer, days off, etc.) and carve out those times based on our needs, her interests, her actual fatigue and opportunities. When her sleep is respected, not only is she more available for learning, but her motor function is also optimized. There is no doubt in our minds that homeschooling is the best choice for Ofélie to flourish in all areas of her life.

.....

*The major advantages of homeschooling, according to Ofélie, are: choosing her workbooks, choosing the time dedicated to learning, avoiding the time wasted in transportation (as well as the fatigue linked to it), and sleeping at ease (most teenagers would find this to be the biggest perk!).*

*The other advantages of home-based education belong to the category of advantages similar for all families that undertake this adventure: choosing the material, respecting the rhythm and the interests of their child, respecting needs (and non-needs) of deepening and reinvesting, taking advantage of the unforeseen or of opportunities. Doing it differently.*

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Learning at the Heart of the Family:

# The 4 Essential Pillars

CATHERINE DUPUIS & ÉRIC CHAGNON,  
FOUNDERS OF AMÉLIO ÉDUCATION



## Children are magnificent, that's for sure!

They are curious, have big hearts and always want to play. They are full of hope and at the same time, they face significant challenges that they are not always sure they can overcome, such as:

- » Dealing with stress and discovering all kinds of emotions.
- » Concentrating and paying attention when they are used to being hyper-stimulated by TV and video games.
- » Finding the motivation to do their best.

They must also adapt to a world that is changing more and more rapidly. Their reality is not the one we have known, with the exception of school, where it is often very similar to that of our ancestors. There, young people develop mainly intellectual qualities; the emphasis is generally put on French and mathematics. These are important, it's true, but there is so much more to explore!

When homeschooling, you have the opportunity to give your children all sorts of advantages. Indeed, this was one of our reasons for homeschooling our son, Gaïa, from grade 6 until he graduated from high school and entered science at Cégep a year early.

## Our experience homeschooling 2 children

For us, it was essential that Gaïa develop his creativity and his critical thinking, and for him to have a broad general knowledge and high level of emotional intelligence.

It was very difficult for him to pay attention in class (sometimes almost impossible, given the ADHD he lives with) when he was asked to sit at his desk and listen without talking or moving. The classical approach used by his teachers was not at all suited to his needs. In fact, he was really not happy in this environment; he had lost all motivation and it showed in his grades.

We have learned over time that Gaïa is at his best when he is doing projects that allow him to apply what he is learning. He needs to understand why he needs to learn what he is being taught. He needs regular feedback. In fact, we have studied just about every book published on education and neuroscience, and have come to realize that his needs are quite normal!

Numerous research projects have demonstrated which approaches are most effective in promoting learning. Collectively, we now know more than ever about how the brain, memory and learning work.

We have combined these discoveries and best practices into the simplest possible framework.

## The 4 pillars of neuroscience

Here are the 4 pillars that we learned to put in place gradually with Gaïa and that we now use every day with his younger brother, Tao, and his 3 friends who homeschool with him at Amélio.

### Attention

It's being present (not zoned-out), and also concentrated. The best way to develop this executive function is to clean or cook on a daily basis. These tasks also develop independence, accountability, confidence and self-esteem.

### Engagement

To learn, you have to be active, in motion, to activate your senses and emotions. You must not be passive, sitting down, collecting information or listening to the teacher talk. You must also activate the desire to memorize. For example, to learn how to spell a word, the child can say the letters aloud by tapping their thigh with their hand, with eyes closed, visualizing each letter.

### Feedback

The child tests his or her knowledge in a game situation, in everyday life or by creating a mind map, for example. The child then makes a prediction to assess how well he or she did. A parent or teacher then describes the strengths and weaknesses they observe and provides suggestions for improvement. Finally, the child makes adjustments and optimizes until he or she is ready to increase the degree of difficulty.

### Consolidation

The child learns to apply his or her knowledge in various contexts. Project-based learning is particularly effective for this, which is often one of the great strengths of homeschooling.

Note : You will find a printable mind map that summarizes the key elements of these 4 pillars on our website ([amelio.tv/4-piliers/](http://amelio.tv/4-piliers/))

## A method for building on the 4 pillars

Over the years, we have developed a method to build on these 4 pillars. Here are a few key points.

1. **An introduction that whets the appetite for learning.** What are we going to learn? Why is it important? What is the purpose? What inspiring goal can we set for ourselves?
2. **A trigger (a provocation) that piques curiosity.** It can be a question that piques curiosity, a surprising experience, a photo or a sound that intrigues. This activates the motivation to learn.
3. **Use Explicit Teaching.** This is a simple, effective and really fun way to teach new knowledge! The basic idea is to demonstrate by explaining out loud how you do it and what strategies you use. You can find a short guide that outlines this on our website. ([amelio.tv/enseignement-explicite](http://amelio.tv/enseignement-explicite))
4. **A variety of games that are tailored to what you want to teach.** Games are an extremely effective way to capture attention, promote engagement, provide feedback and consolidate learning. It's THE best way in our opinion, and kids love it. Of course, we use the Amélio games we've created to teach reading, writing, exploring anatomy, discovering the great influencers of our world and more. You can find them in bookstores, game stores and on our website. ([amelio.tv/boutique](http://amelio.tv/boutique))
5. **A talking circle to integrate new knowledge.** This is such a powerful way to foster communication. We recommend you try it at least once. To try it is to adopt it! You can find a video describing how to conduct a talking circle on our website. ([amelio.tv/mj\\_019](http://amelio.tv/mj_019))

## A program where you will see our class of 4 children homeschooling

Gaïa is now in CEGEP in a science program, and he teaches math to his brother and his brother's friends. We also continue to teach daily.

Starting in September, we will be sharing regular videos (for free) where you can see how we teach children. We will have many activities (in science, history, math, writing, grammar, etc.) that are based on play. There will also be vignettes in which we explain the strategies we use and how we approach the challenges we encounter on a daily basis. If you want to go deeper to discover and put into action the method we use, we will also offer a number of courses.

Learning how to learn, memorize, focus, etc. is essential for a child to succeed. With homeschooling, you can invest time in teaching these executive skills, which are fundamental to a child's success, but are not usually part of the curriculum.

Teaching is an art. We hope this can inspire you and give you ideas that will benefit your family.

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**If you are interested, sign up for our newsletter to learn where to find these videos and when they will be posted. ([amelio.tv/infolettre](mailto:amelio.tv/infolettre))**

**NOUVEAU PARC D'AVENTURES IMMERSIVES A ST-JÉRÔME**

**VIENS FAIRE UN SAUT DANS NOTRE UNIVERS!**

**WOW!**

**+ DE 400 JEUX ET DÉFIS**

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ARCHIPEL

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# *There are as many reasons to homeschool as there are homeschooling families*

I've dreamt about it since I had my eldest. It was not as well known as it is today (my only reference being Guillaume Lemay-Thivierge and his brother Vincent). The ups and downs of life never allowed me to accomplish this dream until I decided to withdraw my daughter from school last year.

To better respond to the interests of our children, to make them masters of their learning and to have a more flexible life (travel at home and abroad).

The difficulty of the school environment to respond to her needs due to her severe vocal and motor tics. The numerous medical appointments that caused her to miss many days of school

It was just a no-brainer. We have been stay-at-home parents with subsidized family child care since 2009. When it comes to our children, we have never delegated to anyone. We are always together. We were there when they walked, talked, potty trained, shared; we had to be there for them when learning to write, read, discover the world, etc.

In addition, we find that kindergarten and the first years of elementary school often force children to change their personality and fit into a mold or put aside certain passions or activities. We wanted to preserve as much as possible their authenticity, their rhythm, their favorite activities and the closeness with their siblings.

At first it was to cultivate strong sibling relationships. Then I saw how homeschooling could protect my children's love of learning. Now I do it because it has become a way of life. I can't tell what is school and what is family life. It all forms an organic and stimulating whole where one feeds off the other.

# What About Socialization?

"Do your children have friends?"

"How do they socialize?"

"Do they see children their own age?"

The concern of socializing homeschooled children is on everyone's minds. It is often the first comment we hear when we announce our lifestyle. In fact, it is a major concern for many parents. However, homeschooling does not mean staying at home alone and reproducing what is done in school!

In almost all regions of Quebec, there are gatherings of families who homeschool, commonly called «support groups», which allow families to meet and exchange.

These groups, which are now facilitated by social media networks, provide opportunities for a variety of encounters, such as valuable informal picnics in parks where children can play freely while parents chat and bond. Some parents organize and advertise group outings, taking advantage of group rates at museums, zoos, amusement centers, theaters, etc. Others band together to rent space, hire private coaches, or organize sports or music classes at local community centers. There is even the creation of co-ops and learning centers.

Some support groups are very active and organized, while others are more informal. Groups take on the color of their participants and can play a major role in the lives of families. They provide a way to break the isolation, not feel alone, make meaningful connections and create bonds that can last for years, throughout our child's "educational journey".

This is as important for parents as it is for children! Parents find support, people who know and understand their reality to share their experiences with, more experienced families who can advise them, new families to welcome, etc.

To help you find and join a support group in your area, AQED keeps a list on its website:  
<https://www.aqed.qc.ca/en/support/community>

The various AQED Facebook groups are also good places to start. Feel free to participate, ask questions, suggest opportunities to meet, and go find what your family needs. Like all support groups and family groups, these hubs are rich with input from everyone.

- » AQED General Francophone Group  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/139622289432844>
- » AQED English General Group  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1437225796352100>
- » Group reserved for AQED members  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/477963919505462>

## REGIONAL NETWORKS

AQED also has a network of representatives in each region, who can help you integrate existing groups or offer support in setting up certain initiatives.

Whether you are just starting out with homeschooling or an experienced family, the regional representatives (RR) are there for you!

## WHAT IS AN AQED REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE?

First and foremost, an RR is a parent volunteer who has chosen to give his or her time and energy to help AQED reach out to more families, wherever they are in Quebec.

Each representative adjusts his or her role according to the reality of his or her region. He or she helps disseminate AQED's information to families, can offer support for the different steps to follow or in meeting the legal obligations with the DEM, and can accompany you if needed.

He or she will direct you to the appropriate resources and to the support groups that will help you integrate them. He or she can serve as a spokesperson to help you advocate for your rights, or raise awareness and inform the public about home education. He or she also helps AQED to keep an eye



on the situation in each region and to be aware of what is going on in the different areas, in order to better represent the interests of all families, no matter where they are. It is also possible, through your regional representative, to borrow certain sets of educational materials held by the Association.

Your regional representative can answer your questions or help you find the answers. This is a great way to find out what local resources are available to you.

You will find a list of representatives on AQED's website : [www.aqed.qc.ca/en/support/regional-representatives](http://www.aqed.qc.ca/en/support/regional-representatives)

## Testimonial

BY ÈVE DENIS

*"The first year I started being part of my local support group (before the pandemic), I was surprised to realize that there were so many activities offered that I would not be able to participate in all of them. The park meetings are consistent, the annual end-of-year outdoor project fairs, the ballet classes, the ninja course activities, the mountain hikes, the small workshops, the group field trips, the bus rentals for large outings... As long as there is an interested parent to take the lead, find the information, and organize registration, the possibilities are endless! It's obviously been more difficult in the last couple of years, but with all the new families choosing to homeschool now, our group is larger than ever and continues to be active. Our weekly gym class with the local gym club has 48 children this year. This activity has gone through several mom-organizers, but has been ongoing since 2016.*

*I remember organizing a "school" event in our local library and looking at the small, multi-age group of children who participated and thinking, "Wow, this is the class my daughter will be in for the next few years!" Since then, this group has probably tripled in number, new friendships have been made, others have lasted.*

*Some friends are closer; we visit them at home or invite them to our house. When we go on outings or to workshops now, my daughter knows the names of several children, she recognizes them and greets them. Every week she meets children her own age, older, younger, teenagers, parents, families with whom we are slowly building trust. It's organic and it's beautiful to watch her journey through the different experiences. I am very grateful that we have been able to be so well surrounded. I really feel that my daughter and my family are not isolated at all."*

# ..... Writing Contest .....

AQED's regional representatives organized a writing contest called *Une Image, Mille Mots* (*One Picture, a Thousand Words*) for homeschoolers. Participants were invited to submit a piece of writing in the literary style of their choice. They could choose to write in either French or English. The only requirement was that the text be inspired by a specific photo. Participants were divided into 3 categories: primary beginner writer, primary and secondary experienced writer. Participation prizes were randomly drawn in each category. Here are the 3 winning entries.

## IN THE PRIMARY BEGINNER WRITER CATEGORY

### La petite maison hantée rose par Charline Salesse Bergeron

Cette année Charlotte a fait beaucoup d'argent avec sa maison hantée. Elle a décidé qu'elle soit rose comme une jolie maison mais en fait c'est une vraie terreur ! Charlotte contait l'argent que les gens lui avaient donné pour faire un tour dans sa maison hantée. « 72 \$, 74 \$, 75 \$, 78 \$, 80 \$. » Ce fut une bonne journée ! Puis, Charlotte éteint toutes les lumières qui sont allumées. Elle vérifie aussi si les monstres télécommandés sont branchés. Charlotte allait fermer les fenêtres dans chaque pièce. Elle monta à l'étage et visita la salle des araignées et des insectes. Elle était si contente d'avoir cette pièce dans sa maison hantée. C'est tellement facile de faire peur aux gens avec des insectes. Tout le monde ou presque est arachnophobe ! Elle ne comprenait pas pourquoi les gens avaient peur de petits êtres plus petits qu'eux. Les insectes sont pourtant inoffensifs. D'accord, il existe quelques espèces dangereuses, comme la célèbre veuve noire, mais on n'en retrouve pas au Canada. Charlotte, pour sa part, avait toujours aimé les insectes. Plus jeune, elle les collectionnait avec son frère. Ils passaient des journées entières à chercher les insectes les plus colorés. Ils les conservaient dans des petits bocaux. Sa mère préférerait qu'ils les conservent à l'extérieur de la maison. Aujourd'hui, elle avait une pièce dédiée aux insectes. Elle aimait vraiment beaucoup cette pièce parce qu'elle faisait peur à tout le monde. Quand elle avait six ans, sa mère et elle avaient fait le tour de toutes les maisons hantées de sa région, aucune d'entre elles n'avait fait peur à Charlotte. Dès 9 ans, son rêve était de créer la maison hantée la plus terrifiante de son quartier. Et maintenant, elle avait réalisé son rêve le plus fou. Elle était tellement fière de sa maison hantée. Charlotte regarda autour d'elle et se dit : « Bon, j'ai assez fait tripper les jeunes pour aujourd'hui, je rentre à la maison. »

Charlotte se rend à la porte pour l'ouvrir mais celle-ci ne bouge pas. Charlotte se questionne, elle vérifie si la porte est verrouillée. Bizarre, elle l'est. Pourtant elle ne l'avait pas verrouillée et les clés qui se trouvaient dans sa poche arrière n'y sont plus. Charlotte s'inquiète. Tout à coup, les lumières s'éteignent. Charlotte ne sait vraiment pas pourquoi. Elle n'a même pas touché à l'interrupteur. Elle essaye de rallumer les lumières, ça ne fonctionne pas. C'est comme s'il y avait une panne d'électricité. Elle ne comprend pas ce qui se passe. À sa surprise, un monstre télécommandé descend les escaliers du deuxième étage, puis plusieurs autres descendirent. La jeune fille attrapa la manette pour contrôler les monstres, elle appuya sur le bouton arrêt, mais les monstres ne répondirent pas au signal. Sans réfléchir elle arracha le masque d'une créature terrifiante et découvrit que c'était son amie. Charlotte était verte de rage.

- MAIS À QUOI AS-TU PENSÉ POUR FAIRE UNE CONNERIE PAREILLE ?

- Hé du calme Charlotte, c'est bien toi qui fait peur toute l'année avec ta maison hantée, c'est bien ton tour.

- Non, je n'ai jamais dit que je voulais que tu me fasses peur !!! répondit Charlotte.

- Je voulais juste te faire une petite blague, réplique son amie.

- Je rentre chez moi. Où sont les clés de la porte ?

- Les voici. Mais attends Charlotte je veux te dire quelque chose avant que tu partes. Je suis désolée d'avoir fait cette « blague ». Je te promets que je ne la ferai plus jamais, est-ce que tu me pardonnes ?

- Ok, mais tiens parole.

Puis les deux amies rentrèrent ensemble.

## IN THE PRIMARY EXPERIENCED WRITER CATEGORY

### Super bataille par Dominic Paquet

J'attends depuis 10 minutes devant la porte de la maison n.28. Et personne n'ouvre ! Ça, c'est vraiment plate que personne n'ouvre ! Je suis trempé jusqu'aux os ! Il fait chaud, tellement chaud que je suis mouillé comme s'il pleuvait. Au moins, je suis patient. Ha ! J'avais oublié que vous m'écoutez ! Bonjour, je m'appelle Félix et j'ai 11 ans. Je suis petit, j'ai les cheveux brun noisette et j'ai les yeux bleu pâle. Je suis peureux, faible mais travaillant, aidant, souvent content et j'ai beaucoup de manies. Je déteste la crème glacée et j'habite à New York, proche du quartier Chinois. En ce moment, je suis dans le quartier Chinois. La rue où je suis n'est pas très belle sauf cette maison-là, la n.28. Il est 3h pile et il fait encore une de ces chaleurs épouvantables.

Je décide donc d'entrer dans la maison. Personne. Dans le salon ? Personne. Dans la cuisine ? Personne. Dans la cour ? Personne. Dans la chambre ? Personne. Dans la salle de bain ? Personne. Au sous-sol ? Personne... Hein ! C'est quoi ça ? Un immense portail trône à côté d'une vieille pile de journaux. Son contour est en or et l'intérieur de celui-ci ressemble à un ciel étoilé et mauve. Je touche l'intérieur du portail avec mon index. Mon doigt passe au travers ! Au tour de ma main, mes mains, mes bras et puis tout mon corps.

J'apparais dans un bus. Bizarre ! Je ne vois pas le sol en regardant par la fenêtre. Je ne vois que de la fumée blanche qui ressemble à un nuage. Hé ! Mais c'est un nuage ! Le bus vole ! J'ai le goût de crier mais rien ne sort de ma bouche. Je cours vers la première personne que je vois pour lui demander ce qui se passe. Je n'ai pas le temps de lui demander, car on me lance dans le vide. Pareil que tantôt. Je veux crier mais rien ne sort de ma bouche. Rien ! Je ferme mes yeux. Après une minute, je sens que je vole. Cela ne change rien à propos que je veux garder mes yeux fermés.

Une minute plus tard, j'atterris sans aucune égratignure ! Waouh ! J'ouvre les yeux. Je vois que je suis sur le toit d'une maison, dans une petite ville. Je décide d'entrer par une fenêtre de la maison, espérant trouver quelqu'un. Personne. Encore ! Ahee... (je baille). Bon, je vais aller me cacher sous un lit. J'entends des tirs de fusil. Bizarre ! Je touche quelque chose qui est sous le lit, comme moi. Je sors de ma cachette pour voir c'est quoi. Un lance-roquette ! Cool ! J'ai à peine

le temps de le regarder que je suis emporté par un gigantesque nuage de fumée toxique. Je prends le lance-roquette, sors de la maison et cours vers une zone où je peux respirer.

En chemin, je croise quelqu'un qui essaie de me tirer dessus avec un fusil. Je décide de tirer à mon tour sur lui ! Yeah ! Je l'ai battu ! Je ramasse son arme qui est en or. Je sors du nuage toxique. Je crois que la zone respirable est maintenant une sorte de rond. Devant moi, il y a une maison luxuriante. À gauche, une forêt remplie d'armes en or et à droite, une cabane qui ressemble à un cabanon en bois. C'est alors qu'une bataille éclate à côté de la forêt. Ils sont 2. Je tire vers eux avec mon lance-roquette. « Super victoire ! » dit une voix.

Je me retrouve alors dans ma chambre, dans ma maison ! Je regarde mon cadran. Il est 21 :00. Il faut que je me couche, mais j'ai faim. Pas grave, je mangerai demain. C'est alors que je vois quelque chose sur mon lit. Un livre ! Sur la page couverture, il est écrit : Le guide ultime de « Super bataille » !



La photo ayant servi de point de départ au texte de nos trois gagnants !

## IN THE SECONDARY CATEGORY

### Locked from the Outside by Chloe White

"I gave roses to a man; they were his favorite."

"I always felt like I was missing something, like a key, one that could unlock the door to my freedom. I felt like I had always been barricaded from reality, as if nothing was real, or just a twisted and endless game." Explained the girl in her black and red suit. The girl had a look of sorrow in her eyes, she looked like she wanted to scream, yet nothing came out, but quiet words tainted with sorrow, it was as if she was trapped within herself; unable to move, unable to feel, unable to think.

"I had a couple of friends who would visit me from time to time, and they were all I really cared about for a while, but it was as if they were blind. I would listen to how great their life was going, and how they managed to find the love of their lives, meanwhile, my only thought was; "Why can't I have that? Why can't I find someone who makes me as happy as they are?"

Her tone shifted from soft and calm, to something that seemed more joyful. "While I was sitting on my doorstep, I met someone; a young man who stood out from everyone else, he walked up to me and asked if I was okay, like it was normal to just talk to a stranger." Sighed the brunette, now dawning a small smirk. "He was different from others, he was...happy, he was colorful compared to everyone else, he wore pants that were covered in colorful patches from other clothes, along with a blue shirt with a sun on it. He never told me his name, so I started to call him 'Sunny', in return; he started calling me 'smoky', probably because of how my makeup looks." She explained with a faint smile.

"I started to wait for him to pass by my house, I sat at my doorstep, glaring at everyone who passed, disappointed that he wasn't there yet." "I was getting tired of waiting but I didn't want to leave if he did decide to show up, so I just rested my eyes for a bit."

"Hey Smoky! Sorry I'm late, I had to do something," shouted a familiar voice. I opened my eyes to see him bending down to come sit with me, still smiling. "Where have you been? It's pretty late for you to show up," I questioned, now looking up to see that the sky was changing from a crisp blue to a fiery orange. The warm sunlight hit my skin, making it look like a warm cinnamon color, and his, a nice mocha. His curly, blond

hair looked almost ginger in the sunlight, his smile was still just as bright as it was before. I had zoned out slightly, once I zoned back in; I realized I was staring at him now, instead of the sunset, my cheeks turned red when he looked back at me, so much so, that I hid my head in my hoodie, hoping he hadn't noticed me staring at him. I heard a small chuckle, he was also trying to cover his cheeks that were now a hot pink. We ended up both falling asleep on that step, when I woke up though, he was gone, and I was on my couch instead of on the step. I assumed I left my door unlocked, and he just brought me inside.

We got along really well, and surprisingly, we had a lot in common; we both loved roses, watching sunsets, and doing watercolor. He liked roses, because in his eyes they looked regal and were full of beauty. When I looked at them, I saw that they were a blood red, with thorns so sharp, but people still picked them, it's like when you love a person who is bad for you - you love them and choose them from the bunch, but they harm you, they make you bleed, yet you still choose them.

The next day, we went to a coffee shop. Sunny gestured to the small café, I let him lead the way. As we walked through a huge crowd of people, he grabbed my hand, my cheeks were red again, but I shook away this foreign feeling of butterflies infesting my stomach, it made me feel sick, but somehow, it was in a good way... if there is a good way.

We started to frequent coffee shops in the area, but we also spent time together in parks, malls, and other places. One time, we went to a small library to study for school. I had to write about thoughts I had for English, and he had to do research on an old museum, for history. I remembered a speech I heard somewhere, so I decided to write it down with some modifications.

"I'm almost done with this paragraph, how's your work coming along?" he whispered, while trying to look over at my paper, "I finished it a couple minutes ago, want to hear it?" "Sure!" I cleared my throat and began to read it.

"There are many types of monsters in this world; monsters who will not show themselves and cause trouble, monsters who hurt children, monsters

who corrupt dreams, monsters who suck blood, and monsters who always tell lies. Lying monsters are a real problem, they're much more cunning than other monsters. They pose as humans even though they have no understanding of the human heart, they eat even though they never experienced hunger, they study even though they have no interest in knowledge, they seek companions even though they are incapable of love. If I were to ever encounter such a monster, I would likely be killed by it because in truth... I was that monster."

"Wow...that was so..." I felt my stomach sink, I held my breath, waiting for the criticism. "Amazing! I loved it!" he gasped, his bright smile growing bigger by the second. "I'm glad you like it; I never would've expected you to like a dark poem like this." I was at a loss for words, I never really cared about what others thought of my work, yet there I was, caring about what someone thought. He asked for a copy of it to keep with him, he said it inspired him.

Sunny had always shown up at my house by 4:30 pm, but for the past week, I haven't seen or heard from him. I tried looking for him, but he never showed me where he stayed. I walked up and down neighborhoods, but I couldn't find the smiling man.

I had given up by the end of week two, I still sat at my doorstep, hoping he'd come back. I never even said goodbye.

I felt my phone vibrate in my pocket, I took a quick glance at the screen, and saw a missed call, from Sunny's phone. I tried to call him back, but no one picked up. He had his location on, and for the first time in 2 weeks, his phone was moving. He was going in the direction of the park near my house, so I got my jacket and went outside to find him.

When I got to the park, I thought that my tinnitus was acting up, but then I heard the sirens clearly, the ear-piercing mechanical screams. My throat went bone dry when I saw the police officers and their cars. "The hell is going on here? Why are there police officers here?" was the only question in my head, the thought of Sunny vanished almost instantly. I saw a bloodied

hand under a white blanket, it was not only covered in blood, but it was a pale mocha, it had a small, beaded bracelet on too. My own blood went cold at the gruesome sight, my hands were shaking. When I realized who was under the sheet, I tried my best to hold in the scream, but failed, and I let out a blood-curdling wail, I had tears flooding my eyes, I couldn't believe he was gone.

Today was the last time I would see him. I wore a black suit, with a red shirt under, since it was his favorite color. I put some red and white roses in the casket with him, I knew he would've liked them.

"I gave roses to a man; they were his favorite."





25 years

# The AQED Conference

## EXPERIENCE

Since 2002, AQED has held an annual not-back-to-school conference. Some years, we are also fortunate to hold smaller conferences in other regions of Quebec. These events are great opportunities for parent-educators to connect with other like-minded parents and to finally meet face-to-face with those who are part of their online community.

## Testimonial

My first conference, I remember it to this day; it was a real eye opener. I had attended Marilyn Rowe's presentation, and she told us that her son had only played during his entire primary school years. I couldn't believe it! I gradually deconstructed several myths, and a whole new universe opened up to me. I saw that I could offer my child something different, and that there was a real alternative to traditional school. After that, I went every year. Each time, I came out recharged, inspired and full of energy!

- Émilie Salesse-Gauthier





# CONTENT FOR EVERYONE

## For the Newcomers

There is so much to learn at the conference. It gives you a sense of security and confidence. It's also an opportunity to see that homeschooling is not as complicated as it sounds.

## For the Veterans

This is an event rich in opportunities for discovery. You will learn more about different methods and approaches to teaching, you will come away with new ideas, and you can even exchange materials. Veterans come with experience and that allows them to get even more out of it. The bonds are even stronger and it's fun to see your community, and to have a sense of belonging

## For the kids

The conference is not just an experience for adults. It is also a special opportunity for youth of all ages to meet other youth who share a similar daily life. They can safely socialize and bond while participating in challenging and fun activities.

## For the Volunteers

Being involved in the organization, and the implementation of the conference gives you an even stronger sense of belonging. In addition to developing team spirit and a sense of pride in being part of the organization, it is also a great opportunity to develop new skills. This is an asset to any resume, but even more so for a parent who has put their career on hold for a few years. Volunteering is always well regarded and employers are impressed with the skills developed. As if all that wasn't enough, volunteers also get free access to the conference in exchange for their involvement.



“ I LOVE THE COMMUNITY SPIRIT (MUTUAL AID, KINDNESS, COLLABORATION) AND SHARING SIMILAR VALUES WITH AQED MEMBERS. ”

– Laurence B.

“ THE TRAININGS OFFERED TO MEMBERS HAVE BEEN VERY USEFUL TO ME. ”

– Pascal H.

“ KNOWING THAT WHEN WE NEED TO MAKE OURSELVES HEARD, OUR INDIVIDUAL VOICES CAN BE HEARD LOUDER, TOGETHER. ”

– Ève D.

“ AQED’S MEMBER FACEBOOK GROUP IS FULL OF GREAT RESOURCES. ”

– Catherine T.

“ WHEN IT’S TIME TO FILL OUT DOCUMENTS, I LIKE TO CHECK OUT THE EXAMPLES AND TEMPLATES ON AQED’S WEBSITE. ”

– Geneviève D.

“ TO BE PART OF A COMMUNITY THAT IS DEDICATED TO THE WELL-BEING OF OUR CHILDREN. ”

– Annie M.

“ THE MATERIAL AQED LOANS OUT IS REALLY PRACTICAL, AND HELPS US DISCOVER NEW AND USEFUL TOOLS. ”

– Émilie S.

Why  
I love  
being an  
**AQED**  
member?