

Subject: EMSB Educational Project Survey Process Concerns

January 16, 2024

Pela Nickoletopoulos
Assistant Director General, Education
(514) 483-7200 Ext. 7228

Dear Pela,

I hope you are well. I am writing on behalf of the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) Parents Committee (PC) to express serious concerns about the recent survey process used to collect education project data from our schools. These concerns were raised at the PC meeting held on December 7th, 2023, and Ms. Nathalie Lacroix-Maillette recommended we relay our concerns to you.

Our attention has been drawn to significant disparities in the implementation of these surveys across the EMSB schools. The following issues were reported during the December meeting:

1. **Inconsistent Survey Canvassing:** At some schools, the entire parent body was canvassed, at others a handful of families were engaged in the process, and still other parents notified us that no surveys had been conducted yet at their schools. Variations in survey distribution across schools resulted in inconsistency in data collection, failing to represent diverse perspectives within each school community. If a PPO exists at the school, it must be consulted and given access to the resources promised in the Education Act.
2. **Diverse Approaches:** Different schools adopted varying approaches in conducting the surveys. For instance, some parents/guardians were asked to log into the survey using their child's account. This could pose a barrier due to passwords not being readily available to parents. Other parents were provided with a link to a form with no login required while other schools asked their parents to use QR codes to access the survey. Various survey methods raise concerns around accessibility, anonymity, and data reliability.
3. **Technical Difficulties:** Instances of technical glitches during survey administration (i.e. login barriers, broken links, etc.) could harm data quality, raising concerns about the reliability of the information gathered.
4. **Timeline Disputes:** Some parents were given 24-48 hours to complete the survey while others were given more time, still others, were given less than 24 hours. Inconsistent survey completion timelines may result in an incomplete understanding of community perspectives and affect the reliability of the collected data.
5. **Communication Gaps:** Failures to communicate survey context and results have hampered the parent community's shared understanding of the project's goals.
6. **Inadequate Benchmark Data:** The lack of historical benchmark data has hampered the evaluation process and the ability to make informed decisions about educational projects.

Please find recommendations below that aim to ensure transparency, fairness, and overall success of the data collection and assessment activities associated with the educational project survey process across EMSB schools:

1. **Establishing a Standardized, Accessible Process:** Creating a standardized and accessible survey approach with clear parameters will ensure fairness and consistency across all schools.
2. **Creating and Communicating Procedures and Expectations:** It will be easier to adhere to best practices and understanding of the rationale behind conducting these surveys if procedures and expectations for survey administration are made clear to all parties involved.
3. **Enhancing Clarity on the Roles and Responsibilities of School Administrators and Governing Boards in the Development and Implementation of the Educational Plan:** The PC strongly recommends that senior administrators from the EMSB deliver presentations during our upcoming PC Meeting and to school administrators. These presentations will serve to elucidate the intricate processes and distinct roles involved in line with the stipulations laid out in the Education Act, specifically focusing on sections 37.1, 74, 96.2, 96.6, and 96.13.

We are confident that by implementing the PC's recommendations and resolving the issues outlined in this letter, the survey procedure will be vastly enhanced, leading to improved outcomes for educational initiatives supported by our diverse school communities. In the end, parents do want to be consulted in matters of this importance.

Thank you for your commitment to creating a fair and transparent educational environment within the English Montreal School Board.

Sincerely,

Katherine Korakakis
Chair, Parents Committee
English Montreal School Board