



The entrance to Carlyle Elementary School, with the 2025 Exhibition, "Sweet Planet of Mine," portraits on display. Photo courtesy of Dina Vourdousis.

Recovery Learning After the Pandemic in Quebec at Carlyle Elementary School

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Carlyle International Baccalaureate World School Primary Years Program is a fully integrated neuro-diverse and neuro-typical instructional establishment within the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) network. The constructivist, hands-on, critical thinking and community learning approach forms the foundation of the International Baccalaureate (IB) philosophy.

Early learning through play underpins the social and personal development of preschool and primary-aged students. During COVID-19 lockdowns, face-to-face

The International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum is a project-based, student-led program, aligning with the Quebec *Education Act*, igniting inspiration that sparks creative thinking that stagnated during the COVID-19 pandemic. IB accommodates the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) learning initiatives such as early literacy and numeracy, academic and career guidance content – platforms geared towards the development of personal and social competencies.

socialization lacked growth and many students' social-emotional development slowed as opportunities to decode verbal and visual social cues diminished. Live classroom interactions necessary for understanding responsible learning behaviour were limited while participation remained virtual.

By being physically present in the classroom community, students develop patience, critical thinking, reflection, and citizenship competencies through in-person social interaction. These experiences refine the decoding of social cues and provide the scaffolding required to synthesize thoughtful social-emotional responses. Citizenship develops through self-regulation in relation to others in a shared physical space, and after COVID-19, the interpretation of cultural social cues needed to be reintroduced. Developing personal and social competencies fundamentally requires physical spaces such as classrooms, excursions, and performances that provide structured opportunities for interaction within educational settings.

Quebec Education Reform introduced the Culture and Citizenship in Quebec (CCQ) framework and the Academic and Career Guidance Content (ACGC) platform, replacing the Ethics and Religious Cultures program. At the same time, early literacy and numeracy initiatives implemented by the EMSB aligned with the Quebec *Education Act* reforms and the constructivist IB philosophy of learning through doing. By 2023, these platforms coalesced to support the holistic development of personal and social competencies and strengthen post-pandemic pedagogy, social-emotional growth, and intellectual development.

An EMSB initiative aligned with IB and Quebec Education reforms invites parents of preschool-aged students to participate in groups with teachers modeling activities in person throughout the year. This initiative strengthens learning both at home and at school by bridging public and private learning spaces. Engaging in practical, hands-on activities with parents models learning skills that can continue to be developed at home.

The preschool math and literacy program at Carlyle, embedded within the ACGC framework, provides young learners with a strong foundation in numeracy and language skills within a bilingual, inquiry-based, and constructivist environment. Students engage in developmentally

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appropriate, play-based activities that build counting, patterns, problem-solving, phonemic awareness, listening, speaking, emergent reading, and writing skills. These live learning experiences integrated within the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) approach enhance confidence, curiosity, reasoning, communication abilities, and agency in both French and English while students actively learn through social interaction.

In Cycle 1, numeracy and literacy skills are applied to collaborative group projects that foster citizenship and relationship-building skills in preparation for the Grade six IB Exhibition. In Cycle 2, social integration becomes more prominent through self-actualization and learning about oneself in relation to others. Since 2023, students have developed initiatives such as first aid training, media club, and entrepreneurship. Through these in-person activities, students strengthen relationships and refine leadership qualities. Students have hosted podcasts with Quebec public figures and local creators, won entrepreneurship prizes through OSCEntreprendre, and participated in certified first aid training. More than 40 students are selected through an application process for the Leadership program beginning in Cycle 3.

The ACGC framework continues in Grade five through the Self-Knowledge component, complementing the IB Unit of Inquiry on Who We Are in relation to Transitions as students explore physical, psychological, and emotional changes. The Knowledge of the World of School component complements the IB Unit on Sharing

the Planet in relation to the Human Rights unit by helping students understand equal opportunities and children's rights around the world. The Knowledge of the World of Work component complements the IB Unit on Where We Are in Place and Time in relation to Technology where students examine the impact of technology on society and the workforce.

As part of COVID-19 recovery efforts, the two EMSB IB PYP established the IB Exhibition Exchange initiative. Grade five students from Carlyle and Michelangelo International Elementary School visit each other's Exhibitions as part of the complementary ACGC and IB learning experience.

As Quebec law states, students are no longer permitted mobile phones in class. Students have found this liberating, allowing technology to function as a tool rather than commanding their attention. The 2023 Exhibition, "Artificial Intelligence Meets Authentic Ingenuity," reflected students' belief in preserving human creativity in the face of AI expansion. In 2024, "Express Yourself" explored artistic forms including oil painting, black-light painting, and fashion design. In 2025, "Sweet Planet of Mine" showcased artworks created with recycled materials donated by a local university.

In conclusion, learning within the Quebec Education and IB programs is enhanced through meaningful social interaction and learning together within the classroom community. ○

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