

November 27, 2017
Press Release



English Montreal School Board's Before and After School Enriched Daycare program Wins National *Play It Fair!* Award 2017 for exceptional work with children and youth

Montreal, November 27, 2017 — Equitas – International Centre for Human Rights Education is pleased to announce that the English Montreal School Board's (EMSB) Before and After School Enriched (B.A.S.E.) Daycare program is the winner of the Equitas *Play It Fair!* Award 2017.

Each year around National Child Day (November 20th), Equitas acknowledges the great contribution of a Canadian organization, school or municipality by presenting them with the *Play it Fair!* Award. This year, Equitas is proud to award EMSB B.A.S.E. Daycare program, for its exceptional contributions to promote children participation and children's rights through **Supporting Children as Leaders Through *Play it Fair!*** initiative.

"It is time to celebrate the hard work and successes of a very deserving and worthy team," said Equitas' Executive Director **Ian Hamilton**. *"Jennifer De Freitas, Project Development Officer for the B.A.S.E. Daycare Program at EMSB and Rocco Speranza, EMSB Spiritual Care, Guidance and Community Involvement Animator, have shown dedication in engaging more children and youth in becoming human rights changemakers. By offering Play it Fair! in 14 EMSB daycare centres and engaging over 160 high school students to lead activities and projects, they have contributed in making schools and communities more inclusive and respectful for all"*.

Last year, over 200 EMSB students came up with ideas on how to make their schools more inclusive and welcoming places to be, with the support of high school students trained in the *Play it Fair!* approach as part of their community service hours.

Samples of projects included: videos and movie trailers on what safe and respectful places look like; a photo exhibit on children's rights; murals in schools to tell all children that they are welcome; a story book on a clean environment; and games to counter bullying.

"The EMSB B.A.S.E. Program puts a lot of emphasis on nurturing and expanding existing partnerships in order to benefit the children to their greatest potential", said Jennifer De Freitas. "A project like Supporting Children as Leaders through Play it Fair! gave everyone involved the time, opportunity to develop a tailor-made project for B.A.S.E. that merged the Play it Fair! curriculum on values, with the B.A.S.E.'s goal of providing children with enriching and educational experiences, which meets Vincent Massey Collegiate's community service requirements. This program has been so successful because Equitas provided top-notch support to the B.A.S.E. Program. They worked hand-in-hand with B.A.S.E. to create an educational program that is fun and innovative!"

"Working as a Spiritual Care and Community Animator allows me to promote human right values", added Rocco Speranza. "I work to develop the values of cooperation, unity, inclusion, leadership, respect for diversity, acceptance, kindness and peaceful conflict resolution, among the students I work with. Being able to further work with both high school and elementary students at EMSB daycares using Play it Fair! further encouraged the development of these values which is the inner quest of high school students within the context of community service at the Vincent Massey Collegiate. This is putting spirituality into action; becoming the best person we can be. I am very pleased to have these students take part in leading Play it Fair! activities within our schools and daycares."

"By teaching human rights values to more than 800,000 children across Canada, TD — through Equitas and its partners — is pleased to have contributed towards building more inclusive communities based on respect for diversity, equality and the full participation of all its members. We are proud to empower Canadian children to stand-up and take leadership in promoting values of inclusion, non-discrimination and peaceful conflict resolution." – Valérie Picher, Associate Vice President Community Relations, TD Bank Group

The TD Bank Group has been a longtime supporter of Equitas and *Play it Fair!* which has allowed over 800,000 children in Canada to play activities with a purpose, say no to bullying and embrace diversity.

Since 2004, *Play it Fair!* has been supported by the City of Montreal to teach children about their rights and responsibilities in 18 communities across Montreal and create a sustainable community impact to help children grow great and healthy.

Last year's *Play it Fair!* Award winner was the City of Surrey in British Columbia.

-30-

For more information:

Claudia Sighomnou, Program Officer, Canada

Contact: csighomnou@equitas.org, 514-954-0382 , ext. 288

Key Notes:

- EMSB is a champion in promoting children's participation and applying a rights-based approach into their work with children
- Over 250 high school student were trained in *Play it Fair!* over last three years, and ongoing
- EMSB B.A.S.E. program Supporting Children as Leaders Through *Play it Fair!* has integrated *Play it Fair!* activities to reach over 320 children from Kindergarten to Grade 6

Children benefit from *Play it Fair!* at EMSB:

- Children participated weekly in *Play it Fair!* activities and group discussions and were provided an opportunity to take leadership in their community
- Through the Supporting Children as Leaders Through *Play it Fair!* program, children using *Play it Fair!* Developed a series of community action projects.
- Samples of projects: movie trailers on what safe and respectful places look like; a photo exhibit in the school on children's rights; decorated murals to tell all children that they are welcome; a story book created by children on the right to a clean environment; a set of games created by children to counter bullying.
- These projects encouraged children to address issues that were important to them, like access to healthy nutrition, children's participation, healthy environment, and peer support, and helped them gain knowledge about children's rights and raise awareness on the importance of positive values amongst their peers and in their community.
- The program also enabled teamwork, active listening, problem solving, critical thinking, planning, public speaking, the development of children's social, communication and leadership skills, and enhanced physical health through active play.

A future for rights education and the promotion of positive values:

- Through participation in activities, EMSB has strengthened its capacity to provide programming with an intentional focus on promoting inclusion, participation and leadership which supports children's healthy development and sense of belonging in their communities.
- *Play it Fair!* has become a mandatory component the Social, Emotional and Moral Development training module of the Attestation d'études professionnelles (AEP) for BASE Daycare Educators. During the project period, Equitas supported the project partner in delivering this training for future BASE educators.
- The *Play it Fair!* mentorship program for youth has become a central part of how the Spiritual and Community Animation Service (SCA) at VMC promotes values such as inclusion, cooperation and respect for diversity among their high school youth
- EMSB educators, students and parents have been reinforced with the same tools, skills and language to work together to identify children and youth's needs and support children's capacity to make positive change in their communities.



Thanks to the TD Bank Group, who have long supported Equitas and Play it Fair! every year, over 100,000 children in Canada learn to play with a purpose, say no to bullying and embrace diversity with TD Bank Group's help.

The Equitas Play it Fair! program was launched in Montreal 2005, with the support of the City of Montreal and the Quebec Ministry of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion.

About Supporting Children as Leaders through *Play it Fair!*

The English Montreal School Board's Before and After School Enriched (B.A.S.E.) Daycare Program and Spiritual Care and Community Involvement Services came together with Equitas—the International Centre for Human Rights Education—to create the Supporting Children as Leaders Through Play it Fair! program. Secondary IV students from Vincent Massey Collegiate (VMC) in Rosemount have participated in the two-part program since 2015. In the first part (October—January), the VMC students take on a leadership role as they lead weekly *Play it Fair!* activities. The second part of the program (February—April) continues to build the self-confidence, sense of belonging, and concrete leadership skills within B.A.S.E. daycares and among VMC students so they can all actively participate in their community. Each participating B.A.S.E. daycares complete a child-led Community Action Projects (CAP). This CAP is a concrete opportunity for children to put their knowledge and skills into practice and lead a project that has a positive impact on their school.

About EMSB B.A.S.E. Daycare program:

The English Montreal School Board's B.A.S.E. (Before and After School Enriched) Daycare Program is a Quebec government subsidized supervision service offered outside regular class hours for preschool and elementary school children. The B.A.S.E. Daycare Program's objective is to enhance the lives of children aged four to 12 years old by providing them with enriching educational activities set in a relaxed, safe and nurturing environment.

The B.A.S.E. Daycare Program is a bridge between the classroom and the home, a wonderful transition for both students and parents alike. It thrives at providing students with opportunities to grow and develop through project-based learning. Through the variety of programs offered, students learn life skills they may not have the chance to learn in class or even at home.

About National Child Day – November 20th

National Child Day is celebrated on November 20th each year. National Child Day has been celebrated across Canada since 1993 to commemorate the United Nations' adoption of two documents centred on children's rights: the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child on November 20, 1959, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on November 20, 1989. Every year 10,000 children participate in Equitas' National Child Day *Postcard to Parliament* activity and share their ideas with the Canadian Prime Minister.

About Equitas – International Centre for Human Rights Education

Equitas is a non-profit organization founded to advance equality, social justice and respect for human rights in communities across Canada and around the world since 1967. In partnership with 500+ organizations, camps, schools, and municipalities to offer training and coaching, Equitas works to build the capacity and provide opportunities that build the leadership skills of children and youth in Canada. The award-winning *Play It Fair!* program turned 10 last years. An innovative initiative for children aged 6-12, it reinforces understanding of human rights, and equips children with knowledge and skills to address bullying, exclusion and discrimination. For more information: www.equitas.org