

**“LE BALUCHON”
“THE BUNDLE”:
EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM.**

After their normal class hours, and without being attributable to teaching method or capability of the teachers, certain students — more or less numerous according to the schools — need help in assimilating the subject matter, in studying their lessons, doing their home assignments, or finding a place to study which is not available in their own family home.

These needs seem particularly important for the medium of instruction is not the mother tongue of these students who have immigrated into the country.

This is the situation in this section of Montreal populated by people of the middle class with a large proportion of immigrants. Fortunately, some people had enough imagination to respond to the needs of these students by setting up an “Educational Assistance Service”, which will be outlined in this brief presentation.

“Le Baluchon”

“The Educational Assistance Program” was the serious name given to this center at its inception. It was born in October 1982, at the time of the canonization of Saint Margaret Bourgeoys; the legendary clothes bundle of the saint inspired the team running the E.A. P. For the children, the new name became even more simple. Do you not see a similarity between the pupils’ little knapsack for books and the tiny bundle of clothes of Margaret Bourgeoys? Both of them, poor and small, contain only the bare essentials.

The Objectives of the Center

The name already reflects the mode of the services to be offered! Close to the Metro, very close to several schools, this non-profit service, received its first pupils in January 1983. This new project, planted among ordinary and underprivileged people, wishes to help the students on the elementary and secondary levels, give them some attentive and loving help and backing up which will provide them with confidence and sustain them in their human and pedagogical apprenticeship.

This service, therefore, has the following objectives:

- to allow youth who need some individual pedagogical follow-up to progressively get control of their own situation,
- to back up the parents in their difficult task as educators,
- to do some social work of a preventive nature for youths having difficulties and to keep from delinquency.

The Baluchon activities:

- Help to primary pupils and high school students having trouble in class work;
- assistance to students who wish to do their homework assignments and to study their lessons outside of school time;
- a sure quiet corner for boys and girls who want to study at leisure.
- Educational, religious, and cultural activities offered to children according to their needs and events and within the possibilities of the volunteer workers.
- Giving the children of immigrants who are still without legal or official status, the chance to learn the rudiments of the language.

The Willing Workers

The free volunteers working at *Baluchon* are nearly all professional and religious teachers. They devote their free time to explaining, directing, encouraging, and supporting the students in their early educational efforts. The majority of these teachers already have full-time work. Yet, they are asked:

— to be responsible for some children on the same grade level, especially primary pupils, for the children need to identify with an adult who loves them;

— to help to organize their assignments;

— to determine what their scholastic weaknesses are, and should the occasion arise, provide some extra help in this regard;

— to exercise patience, to listen, and to adapt themselves to the young. Many of them belong to broken homes, one parent families, and to families suffering from unemployment, sickness, and all kinds of other difficulties.

— to try to understand their instability, their aggressiveness, and their emotions;

— to put time aside for the monthly meeting of the volunteers;

— to pay attention to directives received: reading the minutes of meetings, announcements, etc.

— the willingness to cooperate with the other volunteers and with the full time workers at the Service in order to assure a better pedagogical and personal follow-up for the students;

— to believe in their personal possibilities.

Organization of the Center

The Educational Assistance Service is endowed with an Administrative Council, composed of eight members of various religious congregations. The Council provides

the financing for the Service and looks after the orientations it has given or which it preserves. Every year it launches a campaign for funds as well as for people who will commit themselves to work at the Center.

The entire project, which covers three neighboring parishes, could not have been born and progressed without the financial support of the religious congregations and the diocese of Montreal. The future of the Center equally depends upon these same congregations at least until some humanitarian organization takes it over partially or totally.

Concretely, *le Baluchon* is open:

— from Monday to Thursday:

for primary pupils from 15 to 16,30 hours

for high school students from 18 to 20 hours;

— on Fridays for cultural activities from 15 to 16,45 for the children of the last three elementary grades and the first two secondary grades.

Le Baluchon voluntarily opens its doors to visitors who wish to see how and under what material circumstances it functions. It is always appealing for the cooperation of new volunteers for a number of young people are still waiting to be helped.

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