



SCHOOL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2016 • VOLUME 5

INSIDE this issue

PAGE 1

This Month

PAGE 2 - 5

The School Learning
Plan

PAGE 6 - 7

School Councils Can Get
Valuable Information from
EQAO Tests

PAGES 8

16 Do's and Don'ts for
Presidents/Chairs

This month our contributing author is Kathleen Garrett of the Ontario EQAO Office. In this article we learn tips for parents and matters that the school council should review when considering the results of their school's testing.

Regulation 612 in Ontario states that the purpose of school council is:

2. (1) The purpose of school councils is, through the active participation of parents, to improve pupil achievement and to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents. O. Reg. 612/00, s. 2 (1).
2. (2) A school council's primary means of achieving its purpose is by making recommendations in accordance with this Regulation to the principal of the school and the board that established the council. O. Reg. 612/00, s. 2 (2).

The school learning plan is one of the tools that a school council can use to help improve pupil achievement and by communication of the plan and their input they will enhance the accountability of the education system of parents. Being involved in the development and implementation of the school learning plan allows the school council to make recommendations to the principal.

This issue covers information on how a plan is developed, communicated and implemented as well as the role of the school council in the process.

In addition, this month's issue includes a quick "Dos and Don'ts for Presidents (Chairs)" which was taken in part from the PTO Today website which feature articles on making parent leaders and great schools.

March's issue will focus on Parent Reaching Out grants (PRO) with information and tips for school councils, parent involvement committees and building school partnerships.

THE SCHOOL LEARNING PLAN

Source: Government of Ontario – School Learning Plans Guide for Principals

“Everyone should remember that the school improvement planning process allows school’s in establishing their priorities and setting their goals”

All schools want their students to succeed. But schools can only make a lasting difference when they focus on specific goals and strategies for change. School improvement planning is a process through which schools set goals for improvement, and make decisions about how and when these goals will be achieved. The ultimate objective of the process is to improve student achievement levels by enhancing the way curriculum is involved in their children’s learning at school and in the home.

WHAT IS A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN?

A school improvement plan is a road map that sets out the changes a school needs to make to improve the level of student achievement, and shows how and when these changes will be made.

School improvement plans are selective: they help principals, teachers and school councils answer the questions “What will we focus on now?” and “What will we leave until later?” They encourage staff and parents to monitor student achievement levels and other factors, such as the school environment and factors that are known to influence students success. With up-to-date and reliable information about how well students are performing, schools are better able to respond to the needs of students, teachers and parents.

A school improvement plan is also a mechanism through which the public can hold schools accountable for student success and through which it can measure improvement. One of the first steps – a crucial one – in developing an improvement plan involves teachers, school councils, parents and other community members working together to gather and analyze information about the school and it’s students, so that they can determine what needs to be improved in their school.

In developing their school’s improvement plan, the principal, staff, school council, parents, and other community members work through a variety of activities focused on three areas of priority: curriculum delivery, school environment and parental involvement. For each of these areas, schools establish the following:

- A goal statement
- Performance targets
- Areas of focus
- Implementation and strategies
- Indicators of success
- Time lines
- Responsibility for implementing strategies
- Checkpoints for status updates
- Opportunities for revisions

Everyone should remember that the school improvement planning process allows schools in establish their priorities and set their goals – to decide what they will do at this time and what they will not do at this time. Principals may respond to suggestions for new initiatives by saying “We will do what we can, but this isn’t part of our current plan. We will put it forward for further consideration as part of our next plan”. If parents had participated in the process and are kept informed about the school’s progress, they are likely to support the principal’s decision.

Before beginning a new cycle of improvement planning, however, schools should take the time to celebrate their improvements. Recognizing and publicizing the school’s improvements and the hard work that went into these achievements is vital to the continuing success of the school improvement planning process.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Research tells us that parental involvement is one of the most significant factors contributing to a child's success in school. When parents are involved in their children's education, the level of student achievement increases. Students attend school more regularly, complete more homework in a consistent manner, and demonstrate more positive attitudes towards school. They are also more likely to succeed in school and later in life. To ensure parents are informed about and involved in their children's education, schools must foster partnerships with parents. Because parental involvement is one of the most significant factors in a child's success, it is crucial that all schools set a goal in their improvement plans for increasing it.

PRINCIPALS

Principals are the key players in the school improvement process. They plan a wide variety of roles to ensure that the improvement plan and its implementation are successful. One of their most important responsibilities is to ensure that the improvement plans reflect the characteristics of their own school and its community.

In general, principals' roles in school improvement planning fall into three main categories, as follows:

COMMUNICATION

Principals should:

- Clearly explain the improvement planning process to staff, school councils, parents and other community members.
- Help staff, school councils, parents and other community members understand their role in the process and invite them to participate
- Provide the community with a school "profile" detailing the nature and characteristics of the school
- Ensure that everyone involved in the process receives regular communications about the improvement plan and the school's progress.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Principals should:

- Encourage staff to lead the development and implementation of the plan

- Provide leadership and professional development/training opportunities to staff, school council members, parents and other community members involved in the process, and support them in developing and implementing the plan

LEADERSHIP

Principals should:

- Develop and circulate a parent survey to provide parents with an opportunity to describe their feelings about the school and the way in which they would like to be involved in their children's education, and ensure that parents have adequate time to respond to the survey
- Tally the results of the parent survey and provide it to those involved in the planning process to help them determine the goal for enhancing the level of parental involvement
- Regularly collect classroom information on student achievement, use this information in discussions with teachers about adjusting and improving their teaching strategies, and ensure that this information is also used in developing the school improvement plan
- Lead school improvement planning meetings of staff, school councils, parents and other community members
- Regularly assess staff's implementation of the school improvement plan
- Provide support and ongoing professional development for staff members as they pursue the strategies set out in the plan
- Ensure that the school budget reflects and supports the plan's goals and implementation strategies
- Continually gather information on students achievement and communicate it to the school's community as part of the plan's monitoring and evaluation process

Last but not least, principals should lead their school and its community in celebrating successes achieved in the pursuit of the school's improvement goals.

SCHOOL COUNCILS, PARENTS AND OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS

In June 2000, the Ministry of Education signaled its intention to ensure that parents' voices are heard in matters related to their children's education. Through regulation 612 the Ministry requires that district school boards, and principals seek the advice of school councils in a number of areas – including the development of school learning improvement plans and report back to the councils on how their advice has been taken into account.

The Ministry believes that school councils, a majority of whose members are parents, must be actively involved in the school improvement planning process to ensure that the priorities of the whole school community are reflected in the school's plan. Parents and community members who are not members of school councils may also wish to participate and should be encouraged to do so.

In partnership with the school's principal and teaching staff, school councils should:

- Participate in establishing priorities and setting goals and strategies for school improvement
- Regularly encourage parents and other community members (for example, through school council newsletters or at parent meetings) to participate in the improvement planning process
- Review the school's progress in implementing the plan with the principal
- Discuss the plan's goals and provide updates on the school's progress at council meetings and in the council's communications with the community.
- Work in consultation with the school's principal to build partnerships with social services agencies, recreation departments and facilities, community groups, businesses and industries to help implement the plan

Before the planning team begins developing a school improvement plan, all members of the team, including parents, must be aware of and understand certain key pieces of information that school boards communicate to staff and the public:

- The board's vision statement
- The board's response, as set out in its board-wide improvement plan, to the EQAO test results
- The board's strategic plan, which sets out its short and long term goals for the district

In addition, everyone on the planning team should become familiar with the nature and characteristics of the school and the community. Many schools create a school 'profile' that describes these characteristics in a way that is easy to understand. Reviewing the school profile and discussing each area helps everyone involved in the plan understand the school, and it sets a context for the improvement plan.

A school profile could include information about the following:

- Student demographics
- Enrollment trends
- Languages spoken in the home
- The school's mission statement
- The school's program priorities
- Programs and services offered by the school (for example, guidance and library services)
- School facilities
- Class sizes
- The rate of student turnover or transfer
- Other relevant information

After gaining an understanding of both the board's goals and the school's characteristics, the planning team is ready to begin setting priorities for a school improvement plan.

School councils continue to play a valuable role in the learning plan. If the plan is working, parents will begin to see some of the results in the improved achievement of their children. By sharing the data that documents improvement and by keeping parents informed about the next steps in the plan, school councils, working with the principal, can send parents a clear message that the school has a vision and is serious about improving student achievement.

If one of the goals of the learning improvement plan is increasing parental involvement in their child's education and school, on the next page are examples of how a school council can help:

GOAL	STRATEGY	ACTION
Parenting	Help parents establish homes that support students	<p><i>Offer suggestions that will support learning, such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your child what happened in school each day • Encourage your child to read nightly by providing him/her with books • If possible, have a quiet area in the house • Try to have your child complete homework at a regular time each day
		<p><i>Offer parents opportunities to learn more about parenting by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information about parenting courses in the community • Hold workshops in the evening and have videos/articles for parents to borrow on parenting and child development
		<p><i>Offer family support programs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with community partners so that parents can receive important information about children's health issues e.g. Nutrition
		<p><i>Get to know the parents in the school's community and encourage them to get to know the school by;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosting a "get together" night for parents to meet socially • Send out invitations to parents to attend school council meetings
Volunteering	Encourage parents to volunteer in the school, and make them feel welcome	<p><i>Ways that parents might volunteer:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents can help teachers, students, administrators, and other parents • Provide parents with training specific to the role they can play at the school • Have a parent committee organize the volunteers If possible, provide a "volunteer room" or other place where volunteers can gather • Conduct an annual survey to collect information about the talents and interests of parents in the school community • Establish a phone tree to encourage parent volunteers • Show parent volunteers that you appreciate their help with a celebration at year's end
Increase parent involvement at home	Provide ideas and information to parents about how to help students with homework and other curriculum-related activities, plans and decisions	<p><i>A school council can assist in this area by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing information to parents on what students will learn in each subject area in consultation with the principal. • Hold curriculum evenings for parents • Provide calendars of school/curriculum activities for parents • Encourage parents to work with their children to set goals (perhaps host an evening on how to set goals that are appropriate at each grade level)
Increase parents participation in decision making about their children's education	Include parents in the school's decision-making process	<p><i>School Councils can assist in this goal by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging all members of the council to focus on student achievement and student activities • Ask parent's to participate in a meeting to discuss the school's homework policies • Ask parent's to participate in the development and implementation of school code of conduct

SCHOOL COUNCILS CAN GET VALUABLE INFORMATION FROM EQAO TESTS

Article provided by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)

Later this spring, Ontario students in Grades 3, 6, 9 and 10 will write province-wide tests of their reading, writing and math skills. These assessments are developed, administered, scored and reported on by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), an arm's-length agency of the Government of Ontario. EQAO's role is to assess the effectiveness of Ontario's publicly funded education system. EQAO provides information that's useful for

improving student achievement. Its assessments yield the only objective measurements of student achievement that are publicly available and comparable for all students in the province, since they assess student work against a common provincial standard. School councils, and all parents, should understand what writing the assessments involves, [how the provincial assessments are created](#), what they assess and what information the results provide about student learning and achievement.

TOP 5 THINGS PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EQAO ASSESSMENTS

1. THEY ARE DEVELOPED BY ONTARIO TEACHERS AND TESTING EXPERTS.

All EQAO assessments are created by qualified Ontario teachers, EQAO psychometricians and national and international testing experts. The tests are subject to strict [quality assurance measures](#), including field testing and reviews for sensitivity and bias. They have been [independently confirmed](#) as reliable assessments of student reading, writing and math skills.

2. THEY ARE 100% CURRICULUM BASED AND SHOULD NOT REQUIRE ANY SPECIAL PREPARATION.

Every question on every EQAO test is based on The Ontario Curriculum, which is what students are learning in classrooms every day. As a result, EQAO tests should not require any special preparation. You can use the sample assessment materials at www.eqao.com to become familiar with the format of the provincial assessments and the types of questions that will be asked.

3. ALL STUDENTS HAVE TO WRITE THEM.

All students who attend publicly funded schools and who follow The Ontario Curriculum are required

by [The Education Quality and Accountability Office Act](#) to write the province-wide tests. In certain circumstances, some students can receive accommodations, special provisions or, for the elementary school assessments, exemptions. Talk to your child's principal for more information.

4. THEY ARE NOT "HIGH-STAKES" TESTS.

The results of EQAO's assessments in elementary school don't count toward report card marks. The Grade 9 math assessment can count for a portion of a student's final grade, and the Grade 10 assessment is one of two ways to satisfy the literacy requirement for graduation. EQAO assessment results provide additional information to help evaluate student learning and determine where additional support or resources may be needed.

5. THE RESULTS PROVIDE VALUABLE INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL COUNCILS, AND ALL PARENTS.

[Ontario Regulation 612/00](#) gives school councils a mandate to improve student achievement and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents. EQAO results are a unique source of information that school councils can use to help deliver on their mandate.

HOW SCHOOL COUNCILS CAN USE EQAO TESTS RESULTS

EQAO provides school-level results for the province-wide assessment. Those results tell you the percentage of students in your school who are meeting the provincial reading, writing and math standards and how those percentages compare to those for your school board and for all students in the province. They also tell you what the trends in results are over time and for specific groups and cohorts of students in your school.

What many parents don't know is that EQAO also collects questionnaire data from students to gather contextual information about students' attitudes toward reading, writing and math, what strategies they use when completing their school work, their out-of-school activities and parental engagement.

EQAO'S STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT

How much students like reading, writing and math

Confidence levels in reading, writing and math

Use of cognitive strategies in class work

Time spent on homework

Extracurricular activities and screen time

How often students discuss their school work with parents

Together, EQAO's achievement and student questionnaire data – combined with other evidence about the learning environment collected at the school or board level – can help to paint a fuller picture of the learning that is taking place in your school and of how best to strengthen and support school programs.

TOP 5 QUESTIONS SCHOOL COUNCILS SHOULD ASK WHEN LOOKING AT EQAO RESULTS

1. WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

What percentage of the students in our school have met the provincial standard in reading, writing and math – this year and over the past five years?

2. HOW DO THE RESULTS COMPARE?

How do the current results and five-year trends at our school compare to those for our school board and the province?

3. WHAT FACTORS NEED TO BE CONSIDERED THAT MIGHT HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE RESULTS?

How might our school's demographics, circumstances or other contextual factors be affecting the results?

4. HOW WILL AREAS REQUIRING IMPROVEMENT BE ADDRESSED?

What does a review of EQAO results and evidence from other sources suggest are areas of focus for the school's student achievement and accountability objectives?

5. HOW CAN THE SCHOOL COUNCIL HELP?

How can the school council support the achievement of those objectives?

Once the school council has this information, its members can share it with the broader parent community and work to engage all parents in contributing to student achievement objectives.

EQAO is a passionate advocate for excellence and continuous improvement in the publicly funded education system. The agency supports the vital role that school councils play. For more information about EQAO and for other valuable information it provides for school councils – and all parents – visit www.eqao.com.

DID YOU KNOW? During a school council meeting in the fall, EQAO results should be shared, and the ways in which these results are informing the school's improvement plan should be discussed.

16 DO'S AND DON'TS FOR PRESIDENTS/CHAIRS.

*Get off to a fast start and keep the momentum going all year with a list of essential dos and don'ts for leaders.

- 1. DO** learn people's names, and use them often.
DON'T assume everyone knows who you are. Introduce yourself.
- 2. DO** respect the principal's role as the "CEO" of the school.
DON'T surrender your authority to the principal. Work together as partners.
- 3. DO** get to know the school secretaries, custodians, and other support staff.
DON'T treat them like the council's hired help. The work for the school and your kids, they are not there to do your council grunt work. Treat them with respect, and they can help the council in many ways.
- 4. DO** set a good example by following school policies.
DON'T park illegally just because you know you'll be in and out of the school quickly. Always sign in and wear the proper visitor badge even if everyone knows who you are. Follow protocols when you use office equipment such as the photocopier.
- 5. DO** learn from the past. Share the old project binders. Talk to previous council chairs. Talk to teachers who have been on staff for a while.
DON'T reinvent the wheel.
- 6. DON'T** disregard the knowledge of the past president/chair.
DO approach her as your mentor. Better than anyone, she knows the challenges you face. Listen to what she says. Ask for advice.
- 7. DO** train your committee chairs and lay out expectations for each committee.
DON'T micromanage the committees or your fellow officers. Let them apply their time and talents, even if it means they don't do it exactly the way you would have done it yourself.
- 8. DON'T** put all the emphasis on fundraising.
DO focus on parent involvement first. A community that feels connected to the school will step up to support the fundraisers when asked.
- 9. DO** repeat longstanding, successful events.
DON'T ignore the value of tradition; it gives your council an identity in the community.
- 10. DO** run efficient meetings.
DON'T treat people's time carelessly. Use an agenda, prepare minutes, start and end on time. Clean up after yourself. Listen to the members.
- 11. DO** familiarize yourself with Robert's Rules of Order.
DON'T get bogged down in layers and layers of parliamentary procedure. Use it to keep your meetings running efficiently, not to overwhelm your members.
- 12. DO** read your council bylaws.
DON'T give up if there are no bylaws-creating them can be one of the most important things you do for your council.
- 13. DO** seek out information. Reach out to council leaders at nearby schools to share experiences. Attend parent group events and resource fairs. Visit websites of parent organizations for resources and information to share with members.
DON'T assume you know it all. There are loads of councils with great ideas and experiences you can use for your group.
- 14. DON'T** be afraid to make tough decisions.
DO accept responsibility for unpopular but wise decisions made by the council.
- 15. DO** say thanks.
DON'T lump every "thank you" into one blanket statement at year's end. Work hard throughout the year to thank individuals by name for their contributions to the council.
- 16. DON'T** let the stress level get too high. It's OK to scale back to avoid burnout, and it's OK to hold purely social events to boost morale and teamwork.
DO have fun. Being a council leader can be a very rewarding experience. Even small steps to create a supportive community really make a difference for schools.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO



SETTING THE STANDARD FOR GREAT TEACHING

Subscribe now to *The Standard*, the College's free quarterly e-newsletter for parents.

→ oct.ca/thestandard

FIXER LA NORME POUR UN ENSEIGNEMENT DE QUALITÉ

Abonnez-vous dès maintenant à *La Norme*, le cyberbulletin trimestriel gratuit de l'Ordre à l'intention des parents.

→ oeeo.ca/lanorme



Ontario
College of
Teachers

Ordre des
enseignantes et
des enseignants
de l'Ontario

the Lunch Lady.ca

Healthy Meals. Made Simple. Delivered Fresh.

In 2050, the first spoken language in the WORLD will be FRENCH

Can you help your child with French homework?

WE CAN. FOR FREE.

THE REVOLUTIONARY CHESS 'N MATH PROGRAM

Improves intelligence, EQAO results, etc. All school grades, all levels, step-by-step. Lunch or after-school: 8-12 week programs Super-fun qualified, professional instructors Tournaments - prizes, awards, certificates 30 years Canada-wide; fun, structured course Now in over 150 Toronto schools & daycares; Tel. 416-486-3395; 416-488-5506; 647-232-6014; email: toronto@chess-math.org; www.chess-math.org

We promote and create opportunities for students to learn and use French!

Join today and receive resources for parents and teachers, information on French 2nd language education, CPF Magazine and so much more!

CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH ONTARIO

on.cpf.ca

A FRESH Take on School Fundraising

Students sell Ontario fruit and vegetables. 28 school boards are eligible September 2015

- ✓ Great profit for school- 40% of sales
- ✓ Supports Ontario farmers
- ✓ Agri-food learning opportunities

www.FreshFromFarm.ca Email: contact @freshfromfarm.ca

/// FREESTYLE SOCCER.CA ///

INVITE THE WORLD'S TOP FREESTYLE SOCCER ATHLETES TO YOUR SCHOOL

Freestyle Soccer is a highly interactive, fun and exciting program that provides a unique and exciting opportunity for students and teachers.

BOOK THE FREESTYLE SOCCER ATHLETES.

T: (416) 388-2077 www.freestyle-soccer.ca

Our "Freeze Out Bullying" program is an energetic, high impact, interactive presentation which captivates and engages students of all ages. We focus on positive self-esteem, personal accountability, and deliver the message that we all play a role in eliminating bullying.

VISIT US ONLINE: [/// FREESTYLE SOCCER.CA ///](http://www.FREESTYLE SOCCER.CA)

ONTARIO'S CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Keeping faith in mind

For more information please contact your local Catholic school board or visit: faithinourfuture.ca/support

Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association

CONESTOGA
College of Arts and Learning

WHAT YOU DO HERE...COUNTS OUT THERE

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO



ONTARIO'S WATCHDOG
CHIEN DE GARDE DE L'ONTARIO

Have a problem
with your
school board?
We could help.

Contact us: 1-800-263-1830 | www.ombudsman.on.ca



-Fundraising dreams? In the BAG!
-Kernels Popcorn puts the FUN in FUNdraising
-To find out if this Fundraiser is available in your area, please visit our website or give us a call!

www.kernelspopcorn.com/fundraising 1-888-267-6262 ext. 226



SVS Marketing is a full service promotional agency. We have the expertise and the people to develop your promotion from concept to fulfillment and measure your return.

MAY RHYNOLD Account Executive
DIRECT: 416 240 4493 • TOLL FREE: 800 383 4938 EXT 4493 • CELL: 416 508 8372
www.svsmarketing.com



School Councils: Get reliable and useful information about student achievement in your school as well as resources for parents at www.eqao.com

Conseils d'école: Pour obtenir des informations fiables et utiles sur le rendement des élèves dans votre école ainsi que des ressources pour les parents, visitez www.oqre.on.ca



EQAO
OQRE



EQAOntario
OQREntario

Popular Book Company (Canada) Ltd.

Parent involvement is the key to your child's success.

- a Math combo set (a children's workbook + a Parents' Guide) to help your child succeed in Math

This workbook set can be part of your school fundraising program. For more information, please contact (905) 731-9827 or visit www.popularbook.ca.

exclusively through your school



Available in
October 2015

Combo Set
\$18.95



Parents
ENGAGED IN EDUCATION

ParentEngagementConsultantsGroup.com
parentengagementgroup@gmail.com
647-408-2091

Parents Engaged in Education is a not-for-profit organization formed by experienced school council members to provide resources and skill building opportunities for parent leaders across the province.

Our mission is to provide resources and skill-building opportunities to school councils throughout Ontario to assist with:

- Better Student Experience
- Stronger Communities
- Increased Opportunities

Follow us on twitter @parentengagcons