



# SCHOOL COUNCIL

## NEWSLETTER

MAY 2017 • VOLUME 18

## EQAO

In this month's newsletter we will concentrate on the provincial (Ontario) testing EQAO. There is much discussion in the education community on the value of this type of testing, however, at PEIE we do not take a stand on the need or validity of the testing, we simply want to provide parents the resources to help support their children during the process.

The more that parents understand the process the better prepared they are to support their children.

In addition, this month we include an excellent article on "test stress" to provide ideas on how parents can support their children's mental health when it comes to testing. This article is written by Sara Westbrook, motivational speaker and author, who is well known to school communities in the province.

Beginning in June, we will feature a section titled "Ask Sarah" which will contain common questions which come to Sara through her website or interaction with parents and students. Watch for her column in our June newsletter discussing the importance of play during the summer season.

For school councils this month we are talking about succession planning and preparing for running a successful school council next year.

## INSIDE

▼ *this issue*

**PAGE 1**  
EQAO

**PAGE 2 - 3**  
Tips for Parents EQAO Testing

**PAGE 3**  
Quick Facts About EQAO

**PAGE 5 - 6**  
School Council Succession Planning

**PAGE 7**  
Fresh from the Farm  
A Fresh Take On School Fundraising

**PAGE 8 - 9**  
EQAO Testing Can Cause Stress for Students and Parents

**PAGE 10 - 11**  
Dream Big Event

# TIPS FOR PARENTS

# EQAO

# TESTING

## WHAT IS THE EQAO AND WHY ARE STUDENTS TESTED?

The EQAO is the provincial Education Equality and Accountability Office. It is an independent government body that develops and oversees reading, writing and mathematics tests that Ontario students must take in Grades 3, 6, 9, and 10.

The tests give parents, teachers, principals and school boards information about how well students have learned what the province expects them to learn in reading, writing and mathematics.

## WHAT DO THE RESULTS MEAN?

*The report tells you if your child's skills are at:*

- Level 1 - approximately 50% to 59% or "D"
- Level 2 - 60% to 69% or "C"
- Level 3 - 70% to 79% or "B"
- Level 4 - 80% to 100% or "A"

Students writing the grade 10 literacy test will receive a pass/fail grade.

## DO THE RESULTS COUNT ON STUDENTS' REPORT CARDS?

The grades 3 and 6 tests do not count as part of a student's mark and do not affect their progress or future opportunities in school. The grade 9 math test can count for up to 10% of the student's math mark.

However, students must pass the Grade 10 Literacy Test or Literacy course in order to graduate with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

## HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD PREPARE?

There is no special preparation for the tests. Some teachers provide sample questions to help students understand what the tests will be like. The best way to help your child is to make sure he or she is rested and at school on time.

## DO ESL STUDENTS WRITE THE TESTS?

Yes, although some ESL students may be exempt if they have recently arrived in Canada. Others may have "accommodations" such as more time to write the test, a quiet setting or having someone read instructions and questions. The principal must consult with parents about making accommodations or exempting a student from the test.

## DO STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS WRITE THE TESTS?

All students are encouraged to write the test but some students with special needs may be exempt. These students usually have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that outline "accommodations" or "supports" that help them succeed in school. The "accommodations" also help students write the EQAO tests. They may include more time to write, a quiet setting or having someone read instructions or questions to them.

The principal must consult with parents about making accommodations or exempting a student from the test.

## **DO FRENCH IMMERSION STUDENTS WRITE THE TEST?**

In grade 3, schools may choose to have French Immersion students write only the French version of the mathematics test and receive results only for mathematics, or they may ask that French Immersion students write both the French math test and the English reading and writing tests.

In Grade 6, French Immersion students are expected to write all the tests in English, though they may use a bilingual glossary of mathematical terms.

## **HOW ARE TEST RESULTS USED?**

Teachers and principals get a report that shows how students performed in reading, writing and mathematics. If many students did poorly on a particular skill, then teachers try to find better teaching strategies or resources to help students be more successful. If students in many schools have similar difficulties, then school boards know that all schools need to improve their teaching strategies or find better resources. Parents receive test results in the fall. Results are sent to the school where the students wrote the test, and the school forwards them to any students who have left the school.



*People for Education is an independent parents' group working to support public education in Ontario's English, French and Catholic schools.*

*Copies are available in several languages at [www.peopleforeducation.com](http://www.peopleforeducation.com).*

# QUICK FACTS ABOUT EQAO

- Tests are given at key stages: Grade 3, 6, 9 and 10
- Based on Ontario Curriculum
- Tests don't require special preparation as they are based on cumulative knowledge and skills which students develop in math, reading and writing through regular classroom work.
- Tests are developed and reviewed by Ontario educators
- Field tested with Ontario students
- Tests are scored by Ontario teachers
- Testing occurs in late May and early June
- Schools determine the exact date for testing
- Parents will receive their child's results in September/October when the EQAO student report is sent home
- Achievement is scored according to the province's four achievement levels. Level 3 is considered the provincial standard

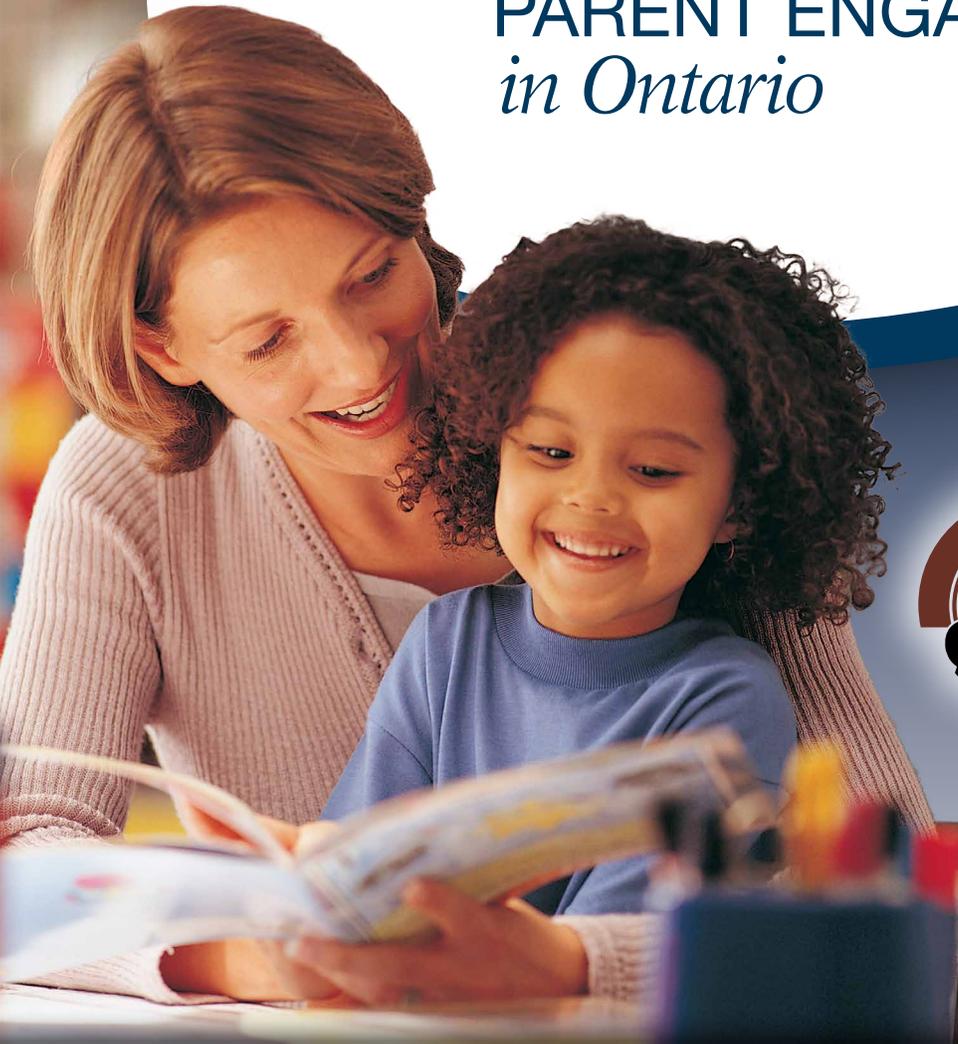
## **REMEMBER:**

EQAO testing is an indicator of your child's achievement when tested, but, is only one indicator of their academic progress. For this reason, it is vital to keep a positive ongoing dialogue with your child's teacher to get an overall picture of their academic status.

## **HELPFUL LINKS:**

General information about testing.  
[www.eqao.com/en/assessments/Pages/parents.aspx](http://www.eqao.com/en/assessments/Pages/parents.aspx)

[www.eqao.com/en/assessments/communication-docs/what-parents-need-to-know](http://www.eqao.com/en/assessments/communication-docs/what-parents-need-to-know)



# SCHOOL BOARDS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT *in Ontario*



Waterloo Catholic  
District School Board

Wellington  
Catholic  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



IF YOU WOULD LIKE YOUR SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTED ON THIS PAGE,  
PLEASE CONTACT [PARENTENGAGEMENTGROUP@GMAIL.COM](mailto:PARENTENGAGEMENTGROUP@GMAIL.COM)

# SCHOOL COUNCIL SUCCESSION PLANNING

The school year seems to go very quickly as your team works to achieve all that you set out to do for the school community this year. The month of May is the time to start planning for the next council year, if you have not begun the process already.

This month's agenda might include time for members to discuss their plans regarding participating in the council next year. Often there will be grade 8 or 12 parents whose children will be graduating and moving or leaving schools.

In addition, this is the time to establish the Elections Committee who will oversee the next school year council elections. It is beneficial to do this in May as many councils do not have June meetings or there may be key people missing from the meeting where this important topic is discussed.

## **THE ELECTION COMMITTEE WORKING WITH THE PRINCIPAL SHOULD:**

- Establish the date of the school council elections (Annual General Meeting), this must be held within 30 days of the beginning of the new school year.
- Draft communication letter to be sent home at the start of the school year encouraging parents to join the council.

- Consider putting up flyers/posters in the school at this time inviting parents to come to an information night about the work and opportunity to join the council as a voting member in the fall.
- Establish the voting procedure you will use and prepare ballot style so you simply have to insert parents names when they are nominated.  
*\* Keep in mind that to avoid any conflict the person on the committee who will be in charge of counting the ballots should not be running for election to the council.*

It is also a great time to think about making the Annual General Meeting in the fall more valuable to parents by engaging a speaker on a topic relevant to your school community. To save some money, consider inviting the public health nurse, the local librarian, the community police etc. to discuss their services and topics such as; how to prepare great school lunches and so on. This is also a great service to the new families at your school who may not have been aware of the local resources. Putting on a meeting that attracts new families is a great way to increase membership in the council, as parents with children entering kindergarten are often eager to get involved, however, if they are unaware of the value and role of the school council they will not join.

In our September issue we will concentrate on the Annual General Meeting and Inaugural School Council meeting.

## COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

As you near the end of the school year it is time to think about next year's school council and who might be possible candidates to run for executive roles in the new year.

To attract parents to these roles, the following tips may help your council succession plan to keep the council going strong year after year.

- Prepare an "executive responsibilities" manual which can be updated each year and will be an excellent resource for the incoming executives and should contain Reg. 612, board council policies, additional information regarding the individual responsibilities of the chair, vice-chair (or co-chair), treasurer and secretary. Encourage interested parents to review the manual before they commit to a position.
- Have parents who may wish to run for a specific executive position in the upcoming year to "shadow" the existing executives so they get a real understanding of what is required to fulfill that position. For instance, if a member is interested in being a chair, include them in the planning meeting with the Principal to set the draft agenda, the communication plan for the meeting, follow up following the meeting on action items etc.
- To encourage other parents to take on executive roles in the council it is important that the Principal make them feel they will be supported and will be valuable partners in the educational experience of the children in the school. It is also important that the existing executive speak positively about their experience.
- It may be easier to attract people to the top position by having co-chairs instead of just a chair. This spreads out the work and encourages more parents to feel empowered to take on this important role.

In our September issue we will be breaking down the various positions with the roles, responsibilities and tips for those in the executive to make the year a productive and successful one for the whole school.



## A FRESH TAKE ON SCHOOL FUNDRAISING!

**Students sell Ontario-grown fruit  
Empire apples (8 lb for \$15) and  
Root vegetables (14 lb for \$13)**

**Ontario schools enrol May 2 - Oct 2  
for November delivery**

- ✓ Great profit for school - 40% of sales
- ✓ Supports Ontario farmers
- ✓ Agri-food learning opportunities
- ✓ Aligns with School Food and Beverage Policy

**VISIT**

**[www.freshfromfarm.ca](http://www.freshfromfarm.ca)**

**EMAIL**

**[contact@freshfromfarm.ca](mailto:contact@freshfromfarm.ca)**



Healthy Fundraising  
for Ontario Schools



# FRESH FROM THE FARM A FRESH TAKE ON SCHOOL FUNDRAISING

Building on the success of the four year pilot project, over 5000 schools representing 73 Ontario school boards, First Nations Schools and a sampling of private sector schools are eligible to participate in the September 2017 Fresh from the Farm school fundraiser. Since 2013, 665 schools have collectively distributed over 1.6 million pounds of fresh, Ontario produce, representing over \$1 million in Ontario root vegetables and \$600,000 in Ontario apples. Over \$910,000 has been paid to Ontario farmers for product and delivery.

Students raise funds by selling bundles of fresh, Ontario-grown potatoes, onions, carrots, sweet potatoes and apples. This September students will raise funds by selling a 14 lb root vegetable bundle (potatoes, carrots, onions, sweet potatoes) selling for \$13, and/or, an 8 lb gift-box of Empire apples, selling for \$15. “Schools return to participate in Fresh from the Farm year-after year, achieving significant profit (schools keep 40% of total sales) while helping to create a more supportive nutrition environment,” reports Cathy O’Connor, Project Coordinator with Dietitians of Canada, one of the program’s partners.

The program was designed to provide schools and students a healthy fundraising alternative. Fresh from the Farm supports and integrates several Ontario government priorities, including Ontario’s Food and Nutrition Strategy, 2017, The School Food and Beverage Policy and the Local Food Act, 2013.

Students fundraise September 5 through to October 11 with deliveries scheduled throughout November. Parent volunteers bundle produce the same day the Ontario grower delivers the product to the school. Fresh from the Farm provides an ideal opportunity for schools to introduce the topic of agri-food and healthy eating into the classroom. Interested parents, educators and students can contact their school principal to enrol at [www.freshfromfarm.ca/Enrol.aspx](http://www.freshfromfarm.ca/Enrol.aspx)

Fresh from the Farm is a collaborative initiative between Dietitians of Canada, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association, the Ontario Ministry of Education, and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. To find out more visit [www.freshfromfarm.ca](http://www.freshfromfarm.ca)





# EQAO TESTING

can cause stress for students and parents.

[sarawestbrook.com](http://sarawestbrook.com)

As the end of May approaches parents and their children may become stressed as they anticipate the mandatory standardized testing called EQAO for all students in Ontario public funded schools. When we think of tests we think 'study'. The EQAO is not that kind of 'test'.

It's based on what the students have learned throughout their school year. It's a way for the Ministry of Education to look at where improvements need to be made in our schools.

Some students may experience overwhelming stress and anxiety as they believe they must do well, not only to please their parents

and teachers, but also to prove to themselves that they do have the knowledge and learning to successfully pass the 'test' – that they are indeed 'smart'.

As parents, we can easily transfer our anxious feelings, negative thoughts and unrealistic expectations about 'tests' to our child without realizing it. It's natural to want to protect our child from the possibility of not doing well. We may believe we are being encouraging, supportive and protecting them if they don't do well, when we say things like, 'I wasn't good at math or grammar so you won't be or need to be either.' Those words can actually

discourage your child from making an effort and also hinder their ability to bounce back from mistakes.

For our children, 'test anxiety' can show up as their stomach feeling full of butterflies, a heart that feels like it's about to beat out of their chest, sweating palms or difficulty catching their breath - all normal symptoms of anxiety. I believe it's important to teach our children ways to let go of stress and move through anxiety so that they can face their 'testing day' with a calm mind, mental alertness and clarity, allowing them to have excellent recall of what they have learned in the past year,

## HERE ARE 3 OF MY FAVOURITES:

### 1. MINDFUL BREATH

When a child's brain is taken over by frustration, anger and nervousness and their bodies are experiencing symptoms of anxiety, they are more likely to start making choices from their emotions, which blocks their ability to think with a calm, clear mind. When my 4 year old son is overwhelmed in emotion, I bend down so I am at his eye level and I say, 'Kai, breathe. Take a deep breath in and out.' I breathe with him. We repeat 'the breath' 3 times or whatever amount he needs in order to calm. Here is a great article I found on mindful breathing. In this article you will find different ways to teach your child to breathe in order to restore calm.

### 2. CREATE A LIST OF HEALTHY WAYS TO RELEASE EMOTIONS

Knowing how to positively release emotions in advance helps the emotionally charged child to better cope with the challenges and stressors of a test. Since everyone is different, each child will need their own list of what calms them down and brings them back to feeling more balanced. Moving through their emotions in a healthy way will allow them to return to a calmer state and to get into the 'test zone' quicker.

### EXAMPLES OF HEALTHY WAYS TO RELEASE BEFORE THE TEST

1. Go to bed early so they are well rested in the morning.
2. Listen to motivating music.
3. Talk to someone.
4. Picture feeling and looking confident while writing the test.
5. Repeat positive, encouraging words.

### EXAMPLES OF HEALTHY WAYS TO RELEASE EMOTIONS DURING THE TEST

1. Gently pull on their ears.
2. Make a tight fist with their hands, let go, repeat as many times as needed.
3. Wiggle their toes.
4. Keep taking slow deep breaths.
5. Repeat positive, encouraging words.

### 3. JOURNALING

Writing down feelings and thoughts helps to clear the clutter that sometimes takes over their minds. It also helps:

- Strengthen the immune system, lower stress and reduce depression and anxiety.
- Clarify and achieve goals. A study showed that people who write down their goals are more likely to achieve them and feel less stressed.
- Create empathy and understanding by allowing them to see their emotions and recognize that everyone faces challenges.

- Allow them to get to know themselves thereby increasing self confidence.

It's easy to let stress and anxiety take over. When I notice this happening, I sing the lyrics to a song I wrote called 'Use To'. It reminds me that even in stressful, anxious times I can slow down, relax and have fun.

'If life's a game I'm willing to play. Here's what I have to say. Stop taking it so seriously. Relax, enjoy, let yourself breathe. If life's a game here's what I've gotta do so I can make it through - Focus on me, Let myself be free, Take time, Reduce the speed.'

It's important to remember that no matter what the test results are, they are not a reflection of your parenting skills. The 'test' is a marker for what your child has learned from the curriculum, not your child's character and the wonderful person they are.

Until next time,

Sara

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Sara Westbrook is a Motivational Speaker/Singer/Author specializing in Resilience, Confidence & Mental Well-Being. She has performed her UPower presentations to over 250,000 students, parents and educators. She is the author of the UPower Journal, a book for youth to not only express their thoughts and emotions, but also to build their confidence, resilience and mental well-being through the personal stories, exercises and quotes found inside. Please visit her at [www.sarawestbrook.com](http://www.sarawestbrook.com)

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PARENTS LEARNING NEW STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

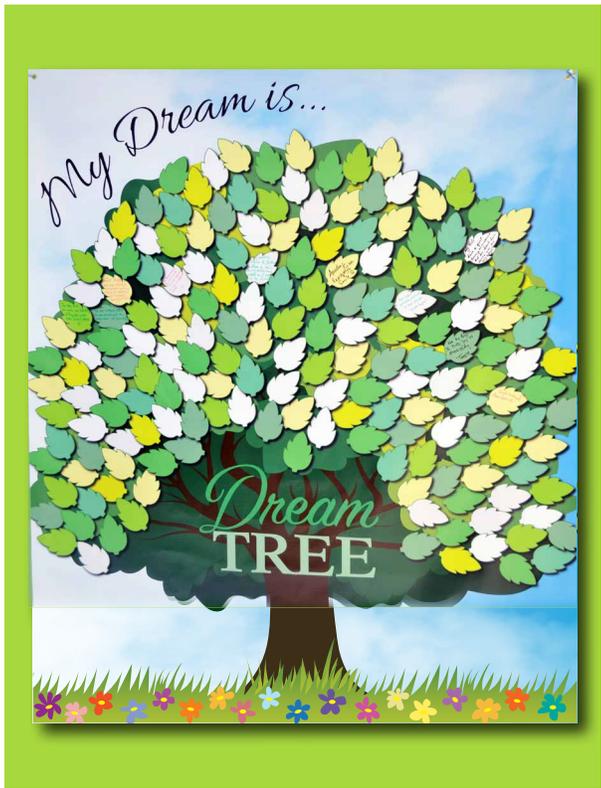
# DREAM BIG EVENT

ON APRIL 22ND





MEETING VENDORS THAT SUPPORT OUR SCHOOLS



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## Parents

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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.



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