



# SCHOOL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2019 • VOLUME 36

# APRIL

With the warmer weather coming, many of us are already thinking about the end of the school year. School Council members often have a busy couple of months as they move towards the month of June.

The month of April is often the beginning of the process of developing the School Learning Improvement Plan (SLIP) for schools. The School Council can provide valuable input to the plan as well as use it as a guide to what the council's plans for the next school year. For

*continued next page*

## INSIDE ▼ *this issue*

**PAGE 1 - 2**

April

**PAGE 3 - 5**

Engaging Effectively in  
your Child's Education

**PAGE 6 - 7**

Understanding School  
Learning Improvement Plans

**PAGE 8 - 9**

Adopt a School



instance, if math is a concern at the school and there is a plan to improve scores, it may be beneficial for the school council to plan a parent/family evening centred around math and this could be included as one of the strategies in the SLIP for addressing this goal for the school.

Watch our facebook pages for some family activities that support learning in the better weather!!

Next month we will be looking at succession planning and wrapping up the year for school councils as well as some tips on Parent-Teacher Partnerships.

*Theresa Pastores*

Executive Director,  
Parents Engaged in Education

**EXPLORE** WITHOUT LIMITS

Spend 5 weeks learning French and discovering another part of Canada.

**Most expenses are covered!**

Apply by February 15 [www.myexplore.ca](http://www.myexplore.ca) 1.877.866.4242

# ENGAGING EFFECTIVELY IN YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

When I speak to parents about how to engage with their children's education, I tell them that engagement will grow and evolve as the child moves through the system from grades Kindergarten through Grade 12. There is no one case fits all suggestion that will work for every parent, but there are some strategies that may help shape your desire to be involved in your child's education, which are outlined below:

## 1. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING A ROLE MODEL FOR LEARNING.

Parents are their child's first and most consistent educator. We begin the learning journey by introducing them to nature, reading, counting, colours and social norms. When a child begins school we, as parents, should encourage them with

positive messages about education, their school and how their work will help them succeed in school and in life.

Setting up a location in your home that is conducive to do homework, providing guidance or strategies, helping them organize time and encouragement to expand their learning through everyday tasks will demonstrate to your child that you place learning as a very high priority.

## 2. WHAT DOES YOUR CHILD LOVE TO DO?

One of the most important things you can do as a parent is connect with what your child likes to do and how they like to learn. If you understand what your child likes most, you can help them explore new ways to learn by involving their interests.

**LUNCH BOX ORDERS**



healthy meals



fundraising opportunities



convenient ordering program

Healthy school lunches are one click away!

- A Paperless & cashless online lunch program
- Full service solution
- In partnership with local vendors

*Join us now!*

1 (877) 426-6860

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

[info@lunchboxorders.com](mailto:info@lunchboxorders.com)

For instance, if your child loves to go to the zoo, encourage them to read books and write stories about animals after a visit to your local zoo.

When we listen to or observe our children's interests, they will show us what they want to learn and how they want to learn it.

### 3. HOW DOES YOUR CHILD LEARN?

More and more we are coming to understand that every child learns differently. They have different strengths that help them learn most effectively. Some are very visual learners, which lead them to learn best through pictures and the written word. Most tactile learners, do better with hands on tasks like building blocks, working with clay or designing and building with LEGO. Many children are auditory learners, meaning they do best when they are given the opportunity to hear instructions or use audiobooks etc.

By paying attention to how your child learns best, parents can explore ways to support this type of learning style when helping your child with school work and when dealing with tasks at home.

### 4. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS AT SCHOOL.

While a parent is not the "teacher" in the usual sense of the word when it comes to school, they can support their children by practicing some of the strategies they are using to learn in school. This doesn't mean drilling them over and over, but it does mean going over what they have learned in school like basic counting, addition, subtraction, spelling etc. will make a great difference in building on the basics in early grades.

### 5. READ TOGETHER EVERY DAY.

It is important to read aloud together every day, especially in the early grades when children are establishing their love of literacy and improving their language skills. If you read with your child, they will be exposed to the structure and vocabulary

of literature and get them more interested in reading independently as he/she move through school.

When a parent reads the first chapter or two of a book out loud, it piques the child's interest in the story and they will be encouraged to read the next couple of chapters. Alternating this process throughout a book will not only help support and improve your child's reading skills, but it is a great opportunity to have some one on one time with your child.

**We learn every day  
and our children  
learn through life  
experiences and by  
asking questions.**

Letting your child pick the book you are going to read together will make them more interested in reading. You might also consider when picking books, that a book series may engage your child in wanting to read more and look forward to the next book in the series because they become engaged with the characters.

### 6. CONNECT WHAT YOUR CHILD LEARNS IN SCHOOL TO EVERYDAY LIFE.

We learn every day and our children learn through life experiences and by asking questions. When you cook, invite your child into the kitchen, get them to read the recipe and measure ingredients. This uses their literacy and math skills.

When you go on a road trip, explain to your child how many kilometers your vehicle gets to a litre. Then give them the length of the trip and the price of gas per litre. Before leaving on the trip, work with your child to calculate the cost of the gas for the trip.

Involving your child in learning rooted in everyday activities and working alongside them, instead of just reciting information to them, will inspire their love of learning at home and at school.

## 7. CONNECTING WITH YOUR OLDER CHILD'S LEARNING.

Simple strategies that we use with our younger children, will not engage our older kids to learn or talk about school at home.

Engagement with older students works best when we involve them in conversation. Reading articles or books on topics that are affecting your community or the world and then discussing ideas about how change might improve the situation identified results in:

- Improvement in reading skills
- Opportunity to explore the situations that affect the community or world they live in and to gain a better understanding of how your child sees the issues affecting their world.
- Supports your child to be a caring community member and learner.

## 8. EMPOWER YOUR CHILD TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN LEARNING.

By encouraging your child to be responsible for their own learning parents will give them the opportunity to feel personal satisfaction about meeting deadlines and completing tasks.

## 9. DON'T OVER-SCHEDULE YOUR CHILD.

Your child may like swimming, football, ballet, or other fun activities, but if they are racing from one thing to another, it is difficult for them to find time to do homework or explore other learning

opportunities at home. Sometimes this also leads to them to not really having the time to fully invest in one activity and get the maximum enjoyment from it.

Overscheduling may also result in children who come to class too tired to get the most from learning at school.

## 10. KEEP ACCESS TO TELEVISION AND TECHNOLOGY TO A REASONABLE LEVEL.

While our children enjoy television and screen time, it is equally important that they have unstructured time with books, toys, crafts and friends to learn how to be in charge of their time and learn through experience.

## 11. LEARN SOMETHING NEW YOURSELF AND DEMONSTRATE YOUR ENTHUSIASM FOR LEARNING WITH YOUR CHILD.

Taking up a new interest or craft and sharing your enjoyment about learning something new, is a great example to your child that learning is a life long experience that can only benefit them in their future.

## 12. SHARING PICTURES AND STORIES ABOUT YOUR OWN EDUCATION CAN INSPIRE YOUR CHILD TO CONNECT TO SCHOOL AT A DEEPER LEVEL.

Discussing your own experience in school and sharing what you liked most and how you handled the challenges you might have faced, may be a great way for you to both connect over school as well as a way for your child to connect with their school.

I hope that you find these tips helpful to your child as they progress through their educational journey.

*Theresa Pastore,  
Executive Director,  
Parents Engaged in Education*

# UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL LEARNING IMPROVEMENT PLANS

## WHAT IS

### A SCHOOL LEARNING IMPROVEMENT PLAN?

A school learning improvement plan (S.L.I.P.) is the guide in which the school sets out the changes the school needs to make to improve the level of student achievement, and shows when these changes will be made.

School improvement plans basically 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, that are known to influence students success.

## WHAT FACTORS

### ARE CONSIDERED IN FORMULATING THE S.L.I.P.?

**In developing their school’s S.L.I.P., the principal, staff, school councils and parents should consider the following:**

- Performance targets
- Areas of focus
- Implementation strategies
- Indicators of success
- Time line
- Responsibility for implementing strategies
- Checkpoints of status updates
- Role of the school council in achieving the goals of the S.L.I.P.



## INCLUDING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE S.L.I.P.

School councils can play an important role in providing advice in this area of the S.L.I.P.

### **Identify ways that parents can develop homes that support students such as:**

- Ask them questions about their school day
- Encourage their child to read nightly
- Have a quiet area for homeworks

Offer events for parents to increase parental skills. In addition, form partnerships with community organizations that support parenting skills development.

Offer opportunities for school to home communication about student progress and school programs.

Include parents in the school's decision-making process.

## PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AS A KEY GOAL IN THE S.L.I.P. FOR SCHOOLS

Research tells us that parental involvement is one of the most significant factors contributing to a child's success in school.

Parent involvement means:

- Level of achievement increases
- Attendance at school improves
- Homework is completed more often
- Students have a more positive attitude about school
- Students behaviour improves
- Higher graduation rates
- Student confidence increases

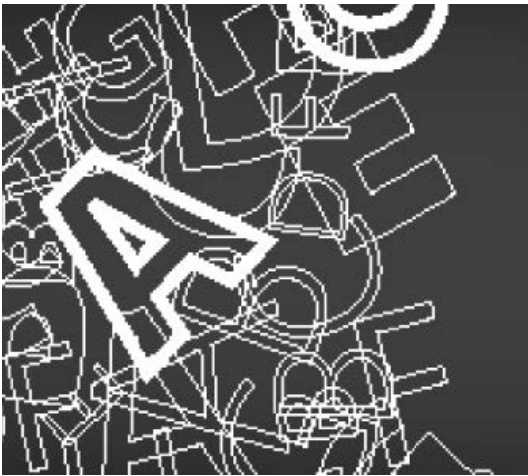
To ensure parents are informed about and involved in their child's education is a priority of the council and the school's S.L.I.P.

It is crucial that all schools set a goal in their improvement plan for increasing parent involvement.

## REGULATION 612

States that the purpose of school councils in Ontario is to partner with the school Principal and board to provide advice to increase student achievement.

The school learning improvement plan is the most important tool used towards this goal.



# ADOPT A SCHOOL

## “ADOPT A SCHOOL” COULD THIS BE THE SOLUTION TO UNBALANCED FUNDRAISING ABILITIES

The topic of fundraising has been a hot button issue for schools, advisory councils and school boards for as many years as I have been a volunteer. I have been personally involved in these groups for well over 25 years.

It has always been a difficult topic to remedy by boards across Ontario. This has been the case with some schools in more affluent communities. They have been able to raise thousands and thousands of dollars to enhance the educational experience of students in their schools. While other schools are unable to raise more than \$100 per year. This results in some students having less access to technology, sports and music equipment, field

trips and learning opportunities. All the while, others are having all these benefits due to the huge fundraising success of the school or council.

School boards have discussed ways to combat these inequities and some have taken action to balance the situation.

### CENTRAL POT/POOLING OF FUNDS

There has been attempts to force schools/parent advisory councils to put some of their fundraising funds into a central pot that would be shared with lower income schools. There is often great resistance to this approach because parents feel

they work hard to raise money for their school community. The funds raised offer the best resources to their children and other students in the school. They do not support contributing to a general pot which dilutes their opportunities and supports schools who are unable to raise funds themselves. Parent Advisory Councils in more affluent communities are also concerned that if word got out to their community that some of their fundraising dollars went to other school(s), they will stop contributing to future fundraising projects.

### SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

It has always been my experience that school partnerships can really



work to bring schools of various sizes and affluency together. I believe that school boards and Parent Advisory Councils should work to build strong partnerships. These partnerships between schools would benefit all students to a similar degree. It would build community relationships that become stronger over time. It would allow for resources and experiences of each school to flourish and benefit all students and their families.

## ADOPT A SCHOOL

If it is too much of a challenge to set up a program that builds school partnerships, perhaps a program of “Adopting a School” would make a difference to restoring some balance to the educational experience for all students.

An “Adopt a School” program would allow school advisory councils (with the permission of the Principal) at schools who raise a significant amount of funds, to approach the council (again with the permission of the Principal) of a school they would like to help support and work on a plan that benefits both schools.

The “Adopt a School” program could involve much more than simply one school helping to support the educational experience of students at another school through funding. It would also be an opportunity to build school community relationships.

For instance, if the two schools have different cultural populations,

it would be great to hold a school event for both communities that focused on multiculturalism. A sharing of the history, traditions, arts and food from the various ethnic groups within both schools would be a celebration of the diversity that makes each school unique. In addition, there may be special programs or events planned at the individual schools which they can come together on and both benefit from a shared experience. Sometimes smaller schools do not have enough students to form a team for certain athletic competitions. However, if a larger school “adopts” the small school, perhaps it would be possible to have a few athletes from the smaller school participate on a combined team.

The possibilities are literally endless...

- If the larger school is going on a field trip that would not be possible without fundraising, they could invite the appropriate class from the school they are “adopting” to attend with them and pay for their portion.
- The spring offers a great opportunity for the two schools to work on hosting a fun fair for both communities.
- Consider trading books from the two school libraries that would refresh books available to all students. Rather than simply agreeing to share a specific amount of money, look for ways to be creative about improving

opportunities for the students in the other school.

To be clear, it is not our suggestion that the “Adopt a School” program would be perceived as charity for one school from another. This program could give students from both schools the chance to experience more. The benefits of sharing events etc. with each other and gaining a better understanding of each other’s strengths and challenges would be valuable to both.

Together parents and students could work collectively to optimize shared strengths and overcome some of the challenges they both face.

At the end of the day, kids are kids. It is not their fault that some benefit from affluent communities and others do not. As adults, we can and should work to find a way that all students have the same excellent educational experience.

### Find more resources on our website

If you haven’t already done so, we encourage you to surf our website. We have a great list of links to other valuable parent engagement resources on our links page. If you are looking to find more articles like this one, check out the rest of our blog or visit our brochures page. We are constantly trying to add new content for parents to enjoy.

[parentsengagedineducation.ca](http://parentsengagedineducation.ca)

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT  
AND SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO

# BECOME A PEIE AMBASSADOR

AND BE A PART OF YOUR CHILD'S  
SCHOOL COMMUNITY



**Parents**  
ENGAGED IN EDUCATION  
*Ambassador*

*A P.E.I.E. Ambassador will...*

Promote the mission of the organization.

Share the organization's resources with their school community.

Work to engage other parents with their children and their school.

Be their child's biggest CHEERLEADER in school!

*For more information, visit*  
**ParentsEngagedInEducation.ca**



## Can the Ombudsman help you?

The Ombudsman resolves and investigates complaints about Ontario public sector bodies.

Do you have an unresolved problem with a school board?

Our staff have helped thousands of parents and families with school board issues, such as:

- Student busing and transportation
- Special education
- Student safety
- School board administration

We can:

- Refer you to local officials who can resolve the matter
- Investigate problems and recommend solutions
- Answer questions and help you navigate the system



[www.ombudsman.on.ca](http://www.ombudsman.on.ca)

1-800-263-1830

@Ont\_Ombudsman

OntarioOmbudsman



Parents Engaged in Education

## ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO

### Protecting our Students

Positive mental health enables good learning, yet, **one in five** students experience a mental illness or concern each year.

Learn how Ontario Certified Teachers can support students' mental health at [oct.ca/resources/advisories/mental-health](http://oct.ca/resources/advisories/mental-health)



Ontario  
College of  
Teachers

Setting the  
Standard for  
Great Teaching



# Being here can lead to amazing things.



In 2050, the first spoken language in the  
**WORLD** will be **FRENCH**  
Can you help your child with French homework?

**WE CAN. FOR FREE.**



[www.parentsengagedineducation.ca](http://www.parentsengagedineducation.ca)  
[info@parentsengagedineducation.ca](mailto:info@parentsengagedineducation.ca)  
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.



SPECIALIZING IN  
RESILIENCE, CONFIDENCE  
AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

[WWW.SARAWESTBROOK.COM](http://WWW.SARAWESTBROOK.COM)



Follow us on twitter @parentengagcons