



SCHOOL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2017 • VOLUME 23

End Of The Year

It's hard to believe that 2017 is coming to a close, but it is exciting to think about all the possibilities that 2018 will bring our way.

The beginning of a new year is a great time to assess how far you have come in meeting the goals set for 2017 and make plans to complete the ones that remain outstanding.

Parents Engaged in Education worked hard in 2017 and accomplished a great deal. We hosted two successful parent symposiums in our DREAM BIG initiative. In addition, we will be opening our Parent Resource Centre in early January at St. Rene Goupil Catholic Elementary School in Scarborough, Ontario. This centre will host a wide variety of free workshops for parents to support their children academically, physically and mentally. It will also feature a number of workshops for parent leaders on school councils

to assist them in being effective partners with their school Principal.

This is an important step for Parents Engaged in Education as we are one of the only province wide charities who focuses on parent engagement that serves both the Public and Catholic English school boards.

We hope that every administrator, teacher, parent and student in your board join us by DREAMING BIG and starting a positive wave in the conversations around education in our schools.

Watch for great things in 2018 from PEIE in our work to provide free resources and skill building opportunities for parents throughout the province.

Please distribute our newsletters to your parents as they always contain valuable information to assist them in their journey with their children in school.

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Christmas Around THE WORLD

The holiday season is celebrated by a wide range of communities in the multi-cultural rich country. This article is to briefly describe how the holiday season is celebrated around the world.



CANADA

With a population that is made up of people from many different cultural backgrounds, there are many different types of celebrations that take place. Many of the traditions and celebrations come from French, English, Irish, Scottish and Native/First Nation influences as these were among the first to call Canada home.

Fun facts:

- Canadians like to decorate their homes with Christmas trees, lights and other seasonal items.
- With the winter weather many Canadian's ski, toboggan, skate etc. during the Christmas holidays
- Turkey, Stuffing, Mash Potatoes, vegetables are among the specialties at a "traditional" Christmas meal.
- The Santa Claus Parade in Toronto is one of the oldest and largest street parades in the world. It started in 1913 and is broadcast around the world.



AUSTRALIA

With this country experiencing the complete opposite weather as Canada, their Christmas is actually celebrated at the beginning of summer!!

Fun facts:

- Australians often go house to house singing carols on Christmas Eve.
- They decorate their houses with bunches of Christmas Bush, a native tree of small green leaves and small cream flowers.
- In each state capital city there are large groups of carolers who sing in a candlelight ceremony.
- Australians love to put on Christmas pageants in halls, parks or take part in parades and firework displays.
- On Boxing Day most people go out and have barbecues and swim at the beach.



BELGIUM

Children in Belgium believe that “Saint Nicholas” brings them presents on December 6th, which is St. Nicholas Day.

In Belgium there are 3 different official languages, Flemish (Dutch), French and German. This means that saying Merry Christmas might be heard as “Vrolijk Kerstfeest” in Flemish, “Joyeux Noel” in French and “Frohe Weihnachten” in German.

Fun facts:

- Children put their shoes in front of the fireplace, together with some treats for Sinterklass.
- Sinterklass arrives on a horse and comes down the chimney to leave presents in the shoes.
- Just like in Canada, Sinterklass keeps a book with a list of all the children who have been “naughty” or “nice”.
- The visit of “Sinterklass” is a separate occasion than Christmas which is more of a religious festival.



CHINA

There is only a very small percentage of the population in China that celebrate Christmas. Because of this it is often the case that you will only see any kind of celebrations in the largest cities.

In Chinese Happy/Merry Christmas is “Sheng Dan Kuai Le in Mandarin and “Seng Dan Fai Lok” in Cantonese. There are other regional languages which have their own unique way of expressing this greeting.

Fun facts:

- Santa Claus is called “Shen Dan Lao Ren”
- If there are Christmas trees they are usually plastic.
- A tradition of giving apples on Christmas Eve is becoming more and more common.

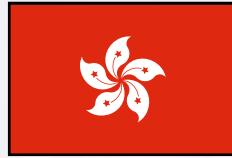


EGYPT

Only about 15% of Egyptians are Christians and they are the only part of the country that celebrate Christmas. Most Egyptian Christians belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church and have their own very unique traditions to celebrate:

Fun facts:

- Christmas Day is celebrated on January 7th, not December 25th.
- The Coptic month leading up to Christmas is called “Kiahk”.
- For 43 days before Christmas, Coptic Orthodox Christians do a special fast where they basically eat a vegan diet.
- Although not many Egyptians celebrate Christmas as we know it, most celebrate it as a secular holiday.
- In Egypt, Santa is known as “Baba Noel” (Father Christmas)
- In Arabic, Happy/Merry Christmas is “Eid Milad Majid” which means “Glorious Birth Feast”
- “Christmas” in Arabic is “eld almilad”



HONG KONG

Chinese Christians celebrate Christmas with church services in their native Chinese. At most Anglican churches, some of the services are offered in English because of the number of Europeans who work and live in Hong Kong.

Fun facts:

- Poinsettias and nativity scenes decorate homes, churches and other places.
- In Hong Kong, Santa Claus, is known as “Sing Daan Lou Yan” (Christmas Old Man) in Cantonese
- At this time of year Hong Kong celebrates “Winterfest”, a huge winter party. This is also famous for its New Year’s countdown and displays of lights and fireworks are seen all over the city.



JAMAICA

Christmas is a very special time in Jamaica and is celebrated by the majority of the population.

Fun facts:

- People might paint their houses and hang new curtains and decorations to celebrate Christmas.
- The main Christmas meal is usually served on Christmas Eve.
- A traditional meal might include fresh fruits, meat, salt fish, fried plantains, boiled bananas and freshly squeezed fruit juice or tea. An afternoon meal may include chicken, curry goat, stewed oxtail, rice and peas.



TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Christmas is a time of great celebration in Trinidad and Tobago with people having parties and celebrating with family, friends and neighbours.

Fun facts:

- Radio stations play Trinidadian Christmas carols and songs as well as carols from the US.
- Most people paint and make repairs to their homes. They often hang new curtains and lights to celebrate the season.
- The Christmas day meal is usually prepared throughout Mid-December and sometimes into the new year.
- New Year's Eve is known as "Ole year's night" in Trinidad, and like in Canada people like to let off fireworks to celebrate the New Year.

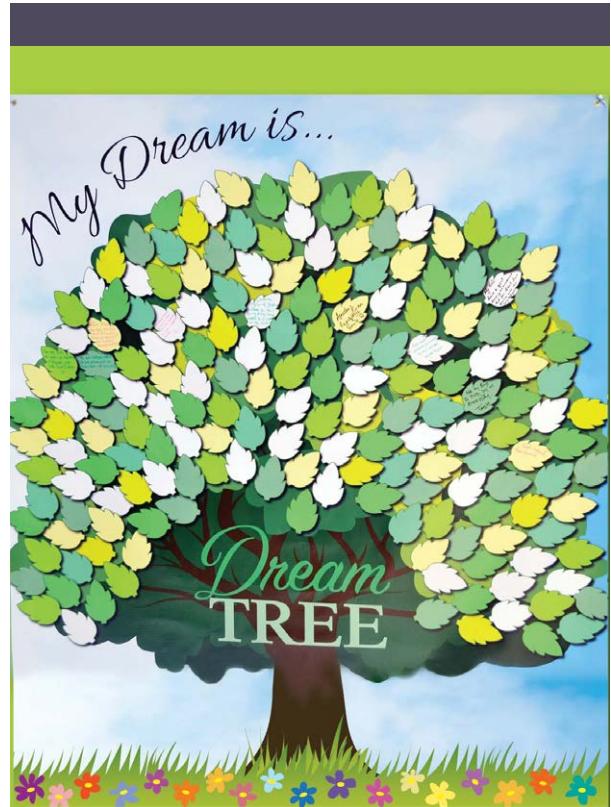


SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka is a mostly Buddhist country with only 7% of people who are Christians. Christmas is celebrated as a public holiday by everyone.

Fun facts:

- Christians in Sri Lanka, the Christmas season starts on December 1st and people let off fire crackers at dawn.
- The Christians go to midnight mass all over the country.
- Merry Christmas is "Suba Naththalak Wewa" in Sinhala, which is spoken in Sri Lanka.



Parents Engaged in Education have designed a "**DREAM TREE**" banner.

This vinyl banner is 5' x 6.5' with hundreds of blank leaves for parents and students to write their dreams.

This is a wonderful example of positive messages which will inspire the entire school community all year round.

GREAT FOR CURRICULUM OR PARENT/TEACHER INTERVIEW NIGHTS!!

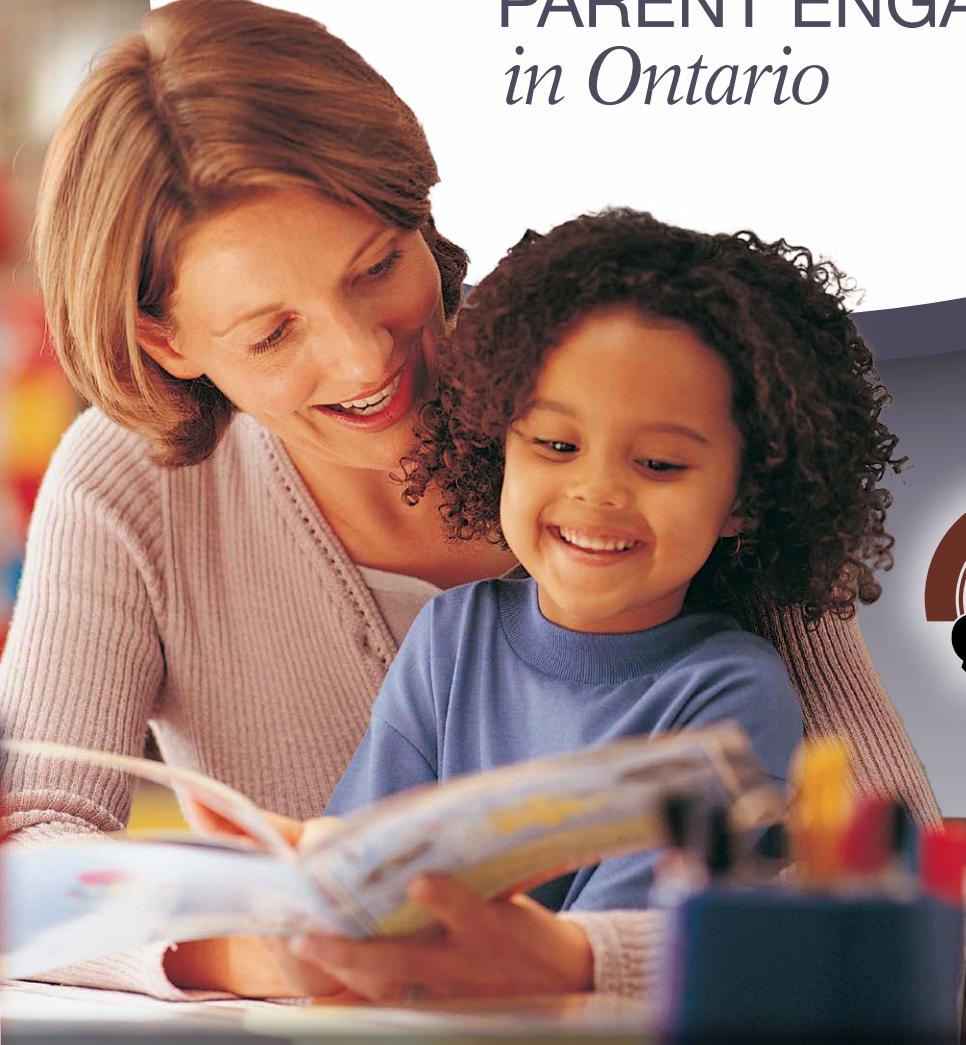
Our aim is to raise enough funds this year to offer priority schools in challenged communities a "**DREAM TREE**" to encourage their communities to strive for the best they can be.

While we work on this program, if your school would like to purchase a "**DREAM TREE**" for your community you

may do so by contacting
Theresa.pastore@parentsengagedineducation.ca.

The cost is \$200.00 plus shipping

(This is cost recovery only, we do not charge in excess of our cost)



SCHOOL BOARDS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT *in Ontario*



Waterloo Catholic
District School Board

The logo for the Wellington Catholic District School Board features a blue graduation cap inside a blue circle with a downward-pointing arrow.

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

IF YOU WOULD LIKE YOUR SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTED ON THIS PAGE,
PLEASE CONTACT PARENTENGAGEMENTGROUP@GMAIL.COM



ZIMBABWE

Most people in Zimbabwe go to Christmas services first thing in the morning on Christmas Day. After church people party in their homes and often people go house to house, visiting friends and family.

Fun facts:

- Everyone wears their best clothes on Christmas and this may be the only time of the year they get new clothes.
- Children believe that Santa Claus brings their presents in the morning so they can show their friends at Church or at one of the parties they will attend.
- The special food eaten at Christmas is chicken with rice. Chicken is actually very expensive in Zimbabwe and is a luxury enjoyed at Christmas.

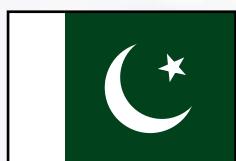


MEXICO

Christmas is celebrated from December 12th to January 6th. From December 16th to Christmas Eve, children will perform the “Posada” processions. “Posada” is Spanish for Inn or Lodging. There are nine Posadas. These celebrate the part of the Christmas story where Joseph and Mary looked for somewhere to stay. During this time, houses are decorated with evergreens and paper lanterns.

Fun facts:

- Nativity scenes are one of the most popular decorations in Mexico and are known as “nacimiento”. They are often life size figures.
- Christmas Eve is known as “Noche Buena” and is a family day.
- Midnight Mass is popular around the country and is known as “Misa de Gallo”
- There are lots of fireworks on Christmas Day.
- Pointsettia flowers are known as “nochebuena” (Christmas Eve) flowers in Mexico.
- Some children believe that Santa Claus comes on December 24th, however in the south of Mexico most expect presents on January 6th at the Epiphany, which is known as “el Dia de los Reyes”.



PAKISTAN

In Pakistan, December 25th is a public holiday, but it is in memory of Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. Christians make up a very small part of the population. Most Christians in Pakistan live in the country and are quite poor.

Fun facts:

- Christmas is celebrated with a big procession that takes hours to reach the Cathedral to begin the services.
- Christmas is known as “Bara Din” which in Urdu and Punjabi means the “big day”.
- Christian areas will see houses decorated and with a star on the roof.
- The Christmas tree is an important decoration.
- In Pakistan, Santa Claus/Father Christmas is known as “Christmas Baba”.



PHILIPPINES

Christmas is a long and festive season in the Philippines. Indeed it is not unusual for carols to begin being played in September. Most Filipinos are Christians with about 80% of the population being Catholic. It is the only Asian country with so many Christians.

Fun facts:

- Christmas traditions in the Philippines are a mixture of western and Filipino customs.
- “Parol” is a Christmas tradition which is a bamboo pole or frame with a lighted star lantern on it. This is the most popular decoration in the Philippines.
- Most homes have a big open house to welcome family and friends and this is known as “Noche Buena”.
- Merry Christmas is said in eight different ways according to the 8 major languages. A couple of interpretations are; “Malipayon nga Pascua” in Sugbuhanon, “Maugmang Pasko” in Pangalatok .



INDIA

Christmas is actually quite a small festival in India, compared to other religious festivals due to the fact that only 2.3% compared to people who belong to other religions.

Fun facts:

- In Hindi Happy/Merry Christmas is “Subh krisamas”, in Urdu it’s “Krismas Mubarak”, in Sanskrit it’s “Krismasasya shubhkaamnaa”, in Tamil it’s “kiristumas valttukkal”, in Telugu it’s “Christmas Subhakankshalu” and there are many other languages in India which have their own expressions for Merry Christmas.
- Instead of a Chirstmas tree, a banana or mango tree is decorated.
- Sometimes people use mango leaves to decorate their home.
- In India, Father Christmas or Santa Claus delivers presents to children from a horse & cart.
- Santa is known as “Christmas Baba” in Hindi, “Baba Christmas” in Urdu, “Christmas Thaathaa” in Tamil and “Christmas Thatha” in Telugu

HANUKKUAH

The Jewish population do not celebrate Christmas, but, do celebrate this festive season known as Hanukkuah.

Hanukkah is celebrated around the world for eight days and nights.

Hanukkah celebrates the victory of the Maccabees or Israelites over the Greek-Syrian ruler, Antiochus about 2200 years ago.

A Menorah is a special nine-branched candelabrum, also known in Hebrew as a Hanukiah.

Each night of Hanukkah, an additional candle is placed in the Menorah from right to left, and then lit from left to right. On the last night, all the candles are lit.

A dreidel, or sivion is a four-sided top that has a Hebrew letter on each side.

Traditionally, Hanukkah is a time when children are encouraged and rewarded for their Torah studies. Consequently, it became fashionable to give the children Hanukkah money and presents during the holiday.

Hanukkah is celebrated in the home beginning on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev.

ABORIGINAL CELEBRATIONS

From Christmas.LoveToKnow.com, the following list is a small sample of Native American Christmas traditions observed by some tribes.

THE HANDSOME FELLOW

Many cultures have a “friendly figure” who treats children to candy and gifts during Christmas. For many Native Americans, this gentleman is known as the Handsome Fellow.

Legend refers to a Creek leader named Chief Hobbythacco, which translates to English as ‘handsome fellow.’ He was part of the diplomatic efforts in Colonial America and would bestow other tribal chiefs with gifts to share among their people. Some Native Americans encourage children to believe that the Handsome Fellow is responsible for leaving presents on Christmas Day, while others believe Santa comes to visit.

THE WINTER SOLSTICE

The Winter Solstice has always been a reverent period for Native people all over the world during the Christmas season. It’s a time to offer gratitude, honour family and ancestors, and follow a ritual observance of beliefs.

RELATED Solstice Show: Last Meteor Shower of Year Ushers in Winter

The fact that Theological historians also place significance on this same time period for the date of Christ’s birth makes the Solstice a vital component in holiday celebrations. A few days before Solstice, members of some tribes make prayer sticks in honour of an ancestor or native deity. They plant the sticks during a ceremony on the Solstice.

Check various American Indian museums in the U.S. for Solstice celebrations. Many state

museums, as well as the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. hold events.

DANCING

Numerous Native American tribes host dances on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Celebrations can include a manger scene and a recreation of the Wise Men offering gifts to the Christ child.

Some Natives observe the similarity between the Chiefs of the Great Nations and the Wise Men; and the act of bestowing gifts onto the newborn babe to that of the Great Thunderbird offering gifts to braves in the fields.

READ MORE AT:

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2013/12/25/native-traditions-celebrate-christmas-day-152863>

This is just a quick overview of some of the cultures that make Canada so rich. We hope that you will share this with your parent community and encourage them to talk about how Christmas is celebrated around the world with their children, so they have a better understanding of how other students in their school will celebrate this holiday season.

Parents Engaged in Education





ONTARIO'S WATCHDOG CHIEN DE GARDE DE L'ONTARIO

If you or your child are struggling with a school-related fairness issue or having difficulty navigating the bureaucracy – whether it's about a school bus route, an individual education plan or a suspension – we might be able to help.

Every year, the Office of the Ontario Ombudsman (www.ombudsman.on.ca) helps hundreds of students, their families, and those who work in Ontario's school board system find solutions and resolve complaints about countless issues related to schooling and school board administration.

For example, we have helped students and families with problems about access to bus service, student discipline policies, supports for special education, the condition of school buildings, customer service provided by board staff, and other matters within the authority of individual school boards.

WHAT IS THE ONTARIO OMBUDSMAN AND WHAT DO WE DO?

The Ontario Ombudsman is an Independent Officer of the Legislature who promotes fairness, accountability and transparency in Ontario's public service.

Under the leadership of Ombudsman Paul Dubé, we oversee more than 1,000 government and public sector bodies, including Ontario's 72 school boards and 10 school authorities.

Our Office is independent and impartial. In other words, we are not advocates – instead, we review the administrative actions and decisions of school boards, and look for fair solutions to problems.

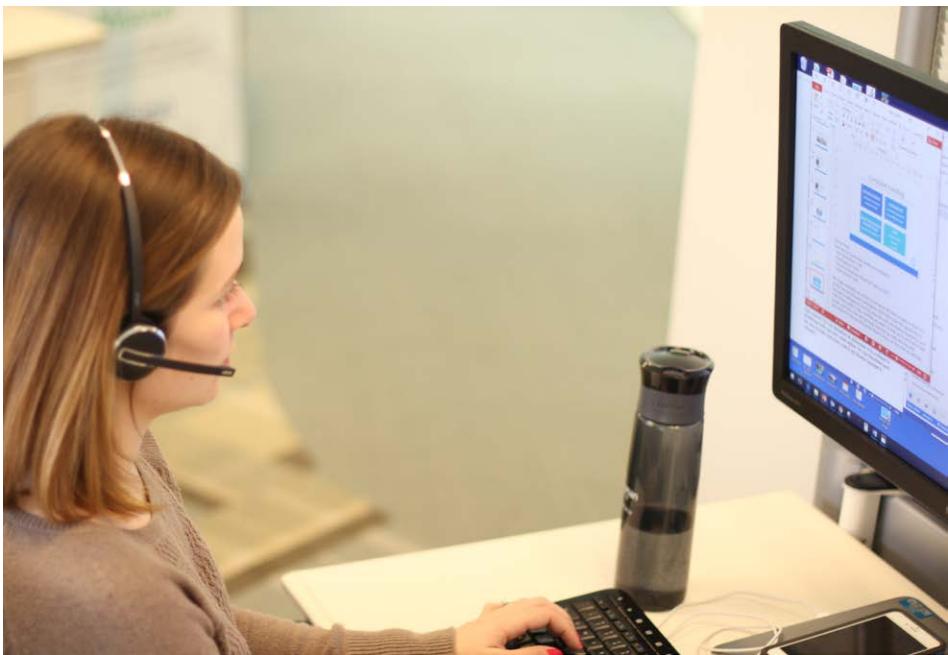
We are an office of last resort – you should attempt to resolve your complaint directly with the school board first. If that does not lead to a resolution, you can contact us and we will determine if we can provide help or referrals.

We value collaboration in problem solving, so wherever possible, we will work with school boards to resolve complaints via their local complaint mechanisms.

Our complaint resolution officers help resolve individual complaints quickly and informally, most often in two weeks or less. Our Office also identifies, investigates and suggests solutions to broader system-wide issues that affect large groups of people. These systemic investigations often lead to major changes in policies and even provincial laws.

If you do not know if your complaint falls under our Office's jurisdiction, contact us and our complaint resolution officers can advise you.





If you do not know if your complaint falls under our Office's jurisdiction, contact us and we can advise you.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

These real-life examples help illustrate the kinds of problems we help solve:

- We helped a Grade 4 student access school bus service after his parent raised concerns that the young boy had to cross a busy intersection to walk to school.
- We prompted a school board to develop clearer guidelines for principals and teachers-in-charge after a child was kept out of class for more than two hours over an incident.
- We persuaded the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School board to clarify its decision process on school closures after parents complained about the board's decision to close two schools.
- We made suggestions to the Rainbow District School Board on ways it can improve its code of conduct procedures after a trustee complained to us that the board was not following its own policy.
- Our recent systemic investigation and recommendations led the Toronto District and Toronto Catholic District school boards to improve the planning and management of their school bus service, including launching an online portal with live updates of school bus delays and clarifying routes with school bus drivers well in

advance of the first day of school.

- You can read more about these and other successful complaint resolutions on our website at www.ombudsman.on.ca.





Please contact us if you would like copies of our posters and brochures.



A participant at a PEiE event talks with Ombudsman Ontario staff on October 28, 2017.

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

The Ontario Ombudsman is an office of last resort, so we recommend you try to resolve your complaint directly with the school board first. You may wish to discuss the matter with a teacher or principal, and if it still cannot be resolved, bring the matter to a school board official. If you are still not successful after taking these steps, you can contact our Office and we will determine if we can provide assistance or referrals.

Depending on the case, we may make inquiries with the school board if we need more information. We will also make sure to keep you updated through the process.

A system-wide issue that comes to our attention might lead us to undertake a systemic investigation, after which the Ombudsman may make findings, issue a public report with recommendations, and follow up to ensure the recommendations are implemented.

LEARN MORE

Our services are free and confidential. Students, parents, other family members, school board staff, teachers, trustees, members of interest groups or anyone with a school board-related concern can make a complaint to our Office. We welcome complaints! We firmly believe complaints are the best source of feedback to make Ontario's school boards work better.

You can learn more about us online at www.ombudsman.on.ca. You can reach us by phone at 1-800-263-1830, by email at info@ombudsman.on.ca, fill out a form on our website, or keep an eye out for our outreach staff at future PEiE events. Stop by and say hello! If you would like copies of our brochures and posters, drop us a line at thewatchdog@ombudsman.on.ca.



THE ROLE OF SELF- ADVOCACY IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

sarawestbrook.com

I recently spoke with a recruiter for a local university who shared a common (and alarming) trend that many young people are applying without the ability to advocate for themselves as they are used to their parents advocating for them.

Without the life skill of self-advocacy, they lack the ability to be self-reliant and resilient in the face of challenges and disappointments. Some are hearing NO for the first time.

There will be times when a parent needs to advocate on behalf of their child (for example when they are too young or the issue is about their safety and their mental and emotional well-being.) When this occurs, it's important to use it as teachable moment so that the child understands what happened and how they might solve it for themselves in the future. Then, if and when appropriate, they will be able to advocate on their own behalf.

Self-advocacy in young people needs to be developed to ensure their success in relationships, at school and beyond.

A young person who can self advocate:

- Recognizes their needs, responsibilities, weaknesses and strengths.
- Looks for a solution and understands what actions are necessary to overcome challenges.
- Bounces back more easily from disappointments, setbacks and mistakes.
- Asks for help when necessary and can articulate what they need from others to get their desired end result.

For example, if a child is struggling with math, instead of classifying themselves as a failure, or expecting to have someone else solve the problem, they ask their teacher for extra support or advice on what resources they can access to get the help they need.

HOW TO TEACH CHILDREN SELF-ADVOCACY

Both parents and teachers can help children to develop self-advocacy by:

1. PRAISING EFFORT, NOT OUTCOMES

Regardless of whether a child reaches their desired outcome, they learn that what's important is the strategy they tried, the choices they made and the effort they put in. These are in their control and can be changed to get a better result.

2. DEVELOPING PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS

As adults, we can often not only see the reason a child struggles, but also a solution to help them overcome that challenge. It can be tempting to help them by telling them what they need to do. However, the only way a child can learn to self-advocate is knowing how to be self-reliant.

They learn this when you coach them to reflect on why things worked and didn't work, what strategies they used, what choices they made and how they

might do things differently the next time. Unless they are in danger, resist the urge to step in and do things for them.

3. ALLOWING THEM TO SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

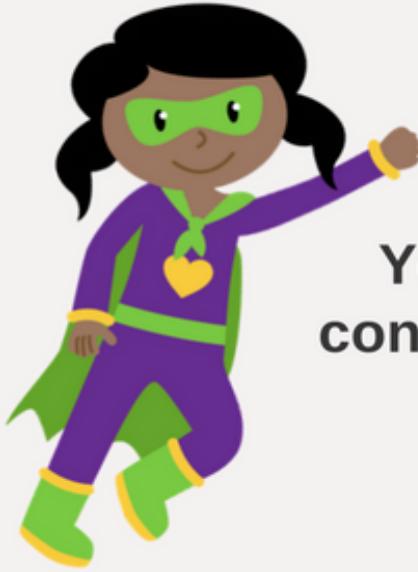
Young people learn confidence by having their own voice. Here are 4 important ways they can learn to speak for themselves:

1. Give them a say in decisions about their lives. This doesn't always mean they get what they want. It means they can participate in the discussion, voice their opinions and be heard.
2. Encourage them to make eye contact and speak to adults on their own behalf. This could begin with ordering food at a restaurant or paying for an item at the store or calling when they can't make an appointment.
3. Let them face appropriate consequences at school, or during extra-curricular activities. This teaches them to be responsible for their actions and to deal with emotions.



Self-advocacy in young people needs to be developed to ensure their success in relationships, at school and beyond.

sarawestbrook.com



Young people learn confidence by speaking for themselves.

4. Allow them to solve their own disputes with others, only stepping in when necessary.

4. HELPING THEM TO IDENTIFY AND RELEASE THEIR EMOTIONS

Children who can identify, feel and release emotions in a healthy way are happier and have richer relationships. This is an ongoing process and takes effort to strengthen.

Listen to them when they share what is bothering them without trying to make it better. Then ask them the emotion they are experiencing. If they don't have the words, they can use the Elephant Poster to assist them. Once they have identified their emotion, ask them how they can release it in a healthy way. One of my favourite ways to release my emotions is journaling . Here are some other suggestions .

As parents and teachers it's important to understand the line between interfering and advocating. We don't want to see children struggle. We want to make life easier for them. By strengthening their self-advocacy voice, we arm them with the skill of standing up for themselves instead of sheltering them from the necessary steps needed to get their desired result. They will also learn the importance of knowing they won't always get their own way and that life is full of challenges, disappointments and mistakes.

SELF-ADVOCACY STARTS WITH PARENTS AND TEACHERS

When parents and teachers work together as collaborators in the development of self-advocacy, children learn the importance of discussion, problem solving and asking for help.

As adults, they will be able to step into the world confident in their ability to be successful along with the resilience they will need to bounce back from their challenges, setbacks, disappointments and mistakes.

Until next time....



about the author

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 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, many exercises and quotes found inside.

To book a presentation or to learn more about Sara visit www.sarawestbrook.com

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!



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



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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.

Follow us on twitter @parentengagcons