



SCHOOL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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LET'S CELEBRATE THE SECOND HALF OF THE SCHOOL YEAR!!

This month's newsletter offers a little something for every parent.

For school council members we offer some great ideas to re-energize your council, shaking off the exhaustion that the holidays can cause most of us. As the days grow longer and we begin to plan for the second half of the school year, it is time to look at what the first few months have brought to

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students and the school and look at what can be done in the next months to make it a spectacular year for all!

This month we also feature some great tips for parents to support their children's education. Please feel free to share with your parent community.

We hope that you will find this month's newsletter valuable to your school's parents and if there is a topic that you would like to see covered in our next newsletters please contact me directly.

Theresa Pastore

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FEBRUARY

TIME TO RE-ENERGIZE YOUR COUNCIL!!

Now that the holiday season is over, and as daylight increases every day, it is time to bring a renewed energy to your school council. There is still 4-5 months left of school and lots to do!!

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO INJECT SOME SPIRIT INTO YOUR COUNCIL PLANNING;

1. The new year often already has many events and activities planned at the school, but volunteers may be harder to attract and keep engaged as they get the kids back to school and start reorganizing following the holidays. Make sure that your core group of volunteers are not overwhelmed by dwindling numbers to assist in the great plans that have to be implemented to complete the goals of the council.

Every member on the council can help keep volunteer numbers strong by getting in touch with every parent who has participated in the past and remind them of the positive experience of supporting the students and families in the school.

Welcome them back to the new year and ask them what their goals are for the rest of the school year. Let them know what an important role they play in making good things happen at the school.

In addition, to contacting those who have been involved in the past, remember that parent engagement is a continual process and recruiting of new volunteers/members should be ongoing and the start of the new year is a great time to welcome new people. Put up posters in the school reminding parents about the value of parent engagement, not only for the students but for the parent and the school.

STUDENTS BENEFIT

- Increased academic achievement
- Attend school more regularly
- Have better social skills
- Show improved behaviour
- Be more positive in their outlook towards school



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- More likely to complete homework and stay on track with school work
- Graduate and go on to post-secondary
- Improved mental health

PARENTS BENEFIT

- Feel more confident as a important member of the school community
- Increased confidence in their ability to support their child's learning
- Be held in higher esteem by teachers
- More likely to continue their own education
- Build productive relationship with school Principal
- Have more opportunity to socialize with other parents at the school

SCHOOLS BENEFIT

- More positive atmosphere in the school community
 - Are able to offer more opportunities to support students
 - Teachers have better relationships with parents
 - Parents have a better understanding of issues facing staff and can work together with them to resolve them
2. Show appreciation to parents who have worked hard during the first half of school. You might consider:
- Host a simple midyear "thank you" breakfast, tea or part of a meeting focused on the good work done by volunteers thus far
 - Put a notice in the school newsletter thanking parent volunteers
 - Send a thank you card in the mail (takes so little, but will mean so much)
 - Praise volunteers when speaking to others at school

- Ask if your local newspaper if they would feature an article about the important work of your school volunteers

3. Invite special guests/speakers to pump up your next meetings.
4. Refocus on subcommittee work so that meeting time is better managed and parents get more out of shorter meetings. *Remember that parents have to get home and get their kids ready for the next day at school.
5. Do a short survey of parents to determine what topics they would like to discuss at upcoming meetings.
6. Look at ways your council can welcome the parents in the various ethnic cultures that make up your student body.
7. Check in to make sure that current parent volunteers are not burning out. Ask them for ideas on how work could be delegated to make the burden less on one or two people. Take a critical look at the planned schedule for the rest of the year and decide as a council which activity/event will off the biggest return.

Remember always that the chair is responsible for keeping meetings and the council on track, but does not have to take everything on themselves. I know many chairs who do not want to run again for this position because they take on too much and the experience ends up not being a positive one. It is important that a chair embrace others who can work with them to accomplish the goals of the council. It means that as chair, you must establish trust with your council members to do great work and that you can even miss an event if you have a family priority without worry.

February is also a great time to explore and communicate to your school community activities and events that will be available to families during the March school break. Check with your local Library, YMCA, local children's theatres etc. to see what will be offered during the break. This will be greatly appreciated, especially by newcomers to the school who may not know what the local community offers youth and families.



I

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GENERAL HOME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

As a parent, you can help your child or teen learn techniques to manage his or her anxiety. While it is always advisable to seek professional help, especially in more severe cases, help is not always readily available. Even if you seek help in managing your child's anxiety, you can still play a key role in helping your child. Although there are different types of anxiety problems and specific strategies aimed at helping children cope with various fears, there are some general strategies that can help any child who is experiencing anxiety problems. **These include:**

1. Teaching your child about anxiety
2. Learning to relax
3. STOP plan or realistic thinking
4. Facing fears

HOW TO DO IT!

STEP 1 TEACHING YOUR CHILD ABOUT ANXIETY

This is a very important first step, as it helps children and teens understand

what is happening to them when they experience anxiety. Let your child know that all the worries and physical feelings he or she is experiencing has a name: **ANXIETY**. Help your child understand the **facts about anxiety**.

FACT 1:
Anxiety is normal and adaptive as it helps us prepare for danger.

FACT 2:
Anxiety can become a problem when our body tells us that there is danger when there is no real danger.

To learn how to explain this to your child, see [How to Talk to Your Child about Anxiety](#)

STEP 2 LEARNING TO RELAX

The second step involves helping your child or teen learn to relax. Two strategies can be particularly helpful: calm breathing and muscle relaxation.

1. CALM BREATHING:
This is a strategy that your child can use to calm down quickly. Explain to your child that we tend to breathe faster when we are anxious. This can make us feel dizzy and lightheaded, which can make us even more anxious. Calm breathing involves taking slow, regular breaths through your nose. For more information see [Teaching Your Child Calm Breathing](#).

2. MUSCLE RELAXATION:
Another helpful strategy is to help your child learn to relax his or her body. This involves having your child tense various muscles and then relax them. You can also have your child use "the flop," which involves having your child imagine that he or she is a rag doll and relax the whole body at once.

For more information see [How to Do Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#).

STEP 3

STOP PLAN OR REALISTIC THINKING

Often, the worries that children and teens have are **unrealistic or very unlikely**, but when they are anxious it is difficult for them to recognize this. For example, your child might worry excessively about mom and dad being in a car accident if they are late coming home.

One way to help your child examine his or her thoughts and decide whether the worries are unrealistic is to use the STOP Plan. The STOP Plan helps children recognize their anxiety and unhelpful thoughts, and develop new thoughts. For older children and teens, you may want to help your child challenge his or her unrealistic or anxious thoughts.

For a young child, see [Healthy Thinking for Young Children](#)

For or teens, see [Realistic Thinking for Teens](#)

Note: Younger children may have a more difficult time identifying exactly what they fear; however, they can benefit from coming up with some coping statements that they can say to themselves to help them deal with feelings of fear or anxiety. For example, “It won’t go on forever, it will end.”

STEP 4 FACING FEARS

The final and most important step in helping your child manage anxiety involves helping your child face his or her fears. If your child has been avoiding certain situations or places due to fear, it is important for him or her to start entering those situations or places. However, it can be easier for your child to start with something that is less scary, and work up to situations and places that cause a great deal of anxiety.

Work together with your child or teen to make a list of feared situations or places, such as going places alone, entering a crowded grocery store, riding the bus, or any situation that is being avoided. Once you have made a list, arrange them from the least to the most scary. Starting with the situations that cause the least anxiety, encourage your child to repeatedly enter the situation and remain there until he or she notices his or her anxiety start to decrease. Once your child can enter that situation with little anxiety, he or she can move on to the next item on the list. For more information, please see the [Helping your Child to Face Fears: Exposure](#) module.

For more general information, see [Helpful Tips for Parents](#) and [Healthy Habits for the Home](#)



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