



SCHOOL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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WELCOME TO 2020!

January is a great time to look at how far we have come in the first months of the school year. It is also a great time to reassess and look at how much impact we can have in the last half of the school year. We take what we've learned (what does our school community respond to, feedback they have provided on their needs and wants etc.) and we use that to adjust or reconsider our plans for the next five months.

For school councils, January meetings are the time to address your goals, plans and budget. Are you on track? If not, what actions can be taken to put the council back on track or new ideas that should be considered to meet the needs of the community.

This month we feature articles on ideas to re-energize your council as well as quick tips for your January meeting. For parents, we include an important article on our kids use of smartphones and the developing reliance that some children have come to have on their phones.

Parents Engaged in Education are committed to providing resources

and opportunities for parent leaders in school councils in Ontario to have the tools that will make their job not only easier, but more fulfilling. For parents, we continue to offer important information on education, safety and mental health. We hope that you will share our newsletters and blogs with parents that you think will benefit from the resources provided.

Despite all the current controversies surrounding education in Ontario, we encourage parent leaders and all parents to keep our children excited about school and education and not burden them with negativity. Often we think when we are talking to other parents at school, in person or by phone that our children are not affected, but little ears are listening and are affected by our attitudes towards school. Let's work together to keep children DREAMING BIG!!

Theresa Pastores
Executive Director,
Parents Engaged in Education

SCHOOL COUNCILS LET'S SHAKE THINGS UP!

January is a great time to “shake things up” for your school council. With the holidays behind us and an exciting next half of the school year ahead, this month is an opportunity to celebrate the work that has been accomplished so far and plan for the next few months. Here are some ideas to consider as you look at how to “shake things up”.

REV UP TECHNOLOGY USE

- Use a platform like Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams allows members to participate even if they are unable to attend in person. This will help increase the number of parents who can be involved in council meetings and council work. In addition it will make people feel more involved in the operations of the council.
- Consider your social media plan and look for ways to increase your presence. January is a great time to attract more parents in your school community to follow you on social media. Remember to keep them up to date with the exciting things your council is working on. Social media is a great way to educate parents on the value of engaging with their child and school.

CHANGE UP YOUR MAJOR SCHOOL EVENT

- Try something new this year. Often, we get stuck in a rut because it's easier to just repeat the same event each year. January is an excellent time to look at the possibility of doing something different this year.
- Take the time to talk to other school councils

to explore new ideas. Find out what has worked as well as what has not. It is also a good time to consider partnering with a nearby school. Partnering is a great way to offer an event that both school communities will benefit from.

REWARD YOUR TEAM

Your volunteers have worked hard these past few months. January is a great time to boost their spirits by recognizing their valuable contribution to the council and school. It costs less than \$20.00 to purchase blank certificates which you can design yourself for each volunteer personally. A Certificate of Appreciation combined with a cost effective frame will do wonders to inspire your group! It is also a wonderful way to reenergize them for the second half of the school year.

HOLD AN “OPEN TO ALL” ROUNDTABLE MEETING

Host an open meeting. Invite all parents to provide input on what they would like to see take place in the upcoming months. Use this time to ask for parents feedback on information they would like to receive

from the council. This is a great way to increase parent involvement and to plan for the next several months. Remember when sending notice and or invitations to parents to stress that this is not a forum for individual or staff related issues to be voiced. Rather remind them that this is an opportunity to contribute to making the educational experience of every student better. It is also a meaningful opportunity to increase involvement of all parents in their children's education, mental health and school.

CHANGE UP YOUR MEETINGS

- After a few months of meetings it is easy to just continue on the same path for the rest of the year. Use this time to shake things up! Changing things up will not only keep current members interested in attending meetings, it will also attract new people to consider taking part in upcoming sessions. Consider changing meetings to alternate dates and times that might allow more parents to participate. Have a guest speaker at each meeting. Many are available at no cost (for instance school board staff, public health, local service providers, school bus companies might offer a presentation on safety etc.).
- Consider adding a social element to meetings. Adding a social element will help members get to know each other better.

The most important thing to remember in January is that even the smallest accomplishment made thus far is a benefit to the students and school. Even councils with just a couple of members can make a difference.

10 SCHOOL COUNCIL TIPS TO KICK OFF JANUARY

Here are 10 quick tips that may help councils get ready for the second half of the school year. January is the perfect time to regroup and get focused.

1. Host a parent “Welcome to 2020” coffee and donuts (or healthy snacks) opportunity for parents and volunteers. This is a great opportunity to increase participation in future meetings/work of the council and to appreciate the work of your volunteers.
Use this time to solicit ideas for future activities of the Council and engage new volunteers.
2. Review the School and Council calendar and create a communication plan to promote events to encourage increased participation.
3. Review Council budget to be sure you are adhering to the draft approved budget established at the beginning of the school year. Make any necessary changes based on the fundraising completed in the first half of the term.
4. Meet with Sub-Committee Chairs for updates. Take time to discuss their plans for each committee. This will ensure everyone is working towards the same goal.
5. Thank your volunteers by creating certificates or cards of appreciation.
6. Meet with the Principal and discuss council work to date and get input on priorities for the balance of the school year.
7. Plan for upcoming meetings. Guest speakers, presentations, communication plan to promote meetings etc.
8. January is the perfect time to consider Succession Planning for Executives. It is the time to ask council members if they might be interested in moving into an Executive position next year and begin mentoring them to help prepare them to be successful next year.
9. Pump up your Social Media! Now is the time to map out a plan for the next few months. Use the time to increase participation in meetings and provide parents with great information/resources.
10. Remember to balance your volunteer work and your personal commitments. BURN OUT is real! Be realistic about how much time and effort you can contribute and still enjoy the work you are doing.

WHAT IF IT'S MORE THAN ADDICTION

ARE YOUTH EMOTIONALLY ATTACHED TO THEIR SMARTPHONES?

Posted October 24, 2019 by Jennifer Shapka



Although this blog and website is primarily focused on the issue of cyberbullying, there are other topics relevant to kids and technology, such as problematic smartphone use and addiction, that are having a negative impact on youth's mental health.

WHY PROBLEMATIC SMARTPHONE USE/ ADDICTION?

The widespread use of smartphones in modern culture has given rise to many concerns among parents and researchers alike. Specifically, overuse of these devices by young people has been associated with several problematic behaviours, including the compulsive use of smartphones in inappropriate situations, such as when one should be sleeping, while driving, or while in class. To date, researchers have conceptualized these problematic behaviours as a new form of behavioural addiction, such as gambling or overeating, where instead of being addicted to a substance the individual is addicted to the behaviour, or the feeling experienced by acting out the behaviour.

WHAT IF IT'S NOT JUST AN ADDICTION?

Several researchers have voiced concerns over applying this medical-addiction model to such a novel, common, and potentially functional dependence on smartphones. In other words, they are concerned that using this medical-addiction model, in which excessive smartphone use is compared to a substance use disorder, is an oversimplification of the psychological motivators driving these behaviours.

AN ATTACHMENT THEORY FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING PROBLEMATIC SMARTPHONE USE/ADDICTION

Recent work has applied the use of an attachment theory framework, rather than that of addiction, for understanding youth's relationships with their smartphones.

Attachment theory is a well-established biologically adaptive framework used to describe human relationship bonds. Though it was originally conceptualized to help understand relational bonds between two people, it has also proven useful for understanding human relationships with objects, such as smartphones.

Youth's relationships with their smartphones can be conceptualized using the four key characteristics of attachment bonds:

1. Proximity Maintenance: constant connection to their smartphones.
2. Safe Haven: use of their smartphones to feel relaxed, escape problems, lift mood.
3. Secure Base: increased feelings of confidence and security in the presence of their smartphones.
4. Separation Anxiety: feeling of anxiety upon being separated from their smartphones.

IMPLICATIONS

Understanding that youth may be using their smartphones as a source of security, confidence, and

anxiety reduction (to satisfy their attachment needs), here are a few things to keep in mind when dealing with your children's smartphone use:

- Avoid judging, blaming, or shaming youth for their smartphone use.
- Find other ways to bolster youth's feelings of safety/ anxiety reduction (e.g., encouraging screen-free family time; being accountable/reliable – be a consistent source of support and trust for your children).
- Provide an alternative to smartphone use: suggest that you watch television or play online games.
- Model the behaviour you would like to see in your children.

Takeaway: Navigating youth's technology use is a difficult process (for both of you!) so be transparent and negotiate boundaries together.

Jennifer Shapka, Graduate student in the Human Development, Learning, and Culture Program at the University of British Columbia. Author of: "Moving beyond addiction: An attachment theory framework for understanding young adults' relationships with their smartphones."

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ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO

Do you know who does what in education?

Various stakeholders play a role in your child's education. Learn more about:

- the Ministry of Education
- the Ontario College of Teachers
- school boards
- principals
- teachers
- and more!

Download our infographic at oct-ooeo.ca/whodoeswhat



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Is your child struggling in school?



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Contact us to get
your child help at school.



Make a Difference

You can make a difference in your child's future. The **Talk With Our Kids About Money** program uses fun activities to engage kids in discussions about money matters that are relevant to their lives. Free resources to help - organized by the age of your child.

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Resources are available at **no cost** via the website go to:
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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.

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CHEERLEADER in school!

For more information, visit
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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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