



# SCHOOL COUNCIL

## NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2018 • VOLUME 29

# SUMMER BREAK

June is the time of year when we start looking towards the long summer break in Ontario. As volunteers we have worked hard to provide our children with the support they need to succeed and to support the schools that they attend.

Our children look forward to the sunny weather and days that are spent with their family and friends. Parents also enjoy this time of the year when they can spend more time with their children either at home or during a vacation from work.

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If you are part of a school council, the summer break may give you the time to plan for next year or to learn more about the resources available to you to supplement your knowledge about your role and council operations. I hope that you will find the information we provide this year a help in this regard.

As much as we love the summer break, the start of school will be upon us before we know it so I have written articles on the Annual General Meeting (Council Elections) which may assist you in planning the process required to elect your next council members.

I wish everyone in the province a fun and safe summer and Parents Engaged in Education will be working hard to provide new resources as the new school year approaches.

Theresa Pastore,

*Executive Director*

*Parents Engaged in Education*

# SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR THE SCHOOL COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

Open with a personal message from the Chair. This could include their experience on the council ie. how many years they have been a member, when they became chair, what was their favourite issue or accomplishment that the council achieved under their time as chair, challenges that will carry over to next year and need parent support etc.

Thank all volunteers in the school, regardless of whether they were part of the council or assisted in other ways in the school.

Thank the Principal, teachers, secretary and caretakers who have assisted the council in achieving their goals.

Accomplishments – talk about the great work of the council this year. Remember to focus on the positive results that the council

has done for every student in the school. This is a great way to attract new parents to the council as they can see how much can be accomplished by the council that affects all students.

Challenges – perhaps there have been some ongoing struggles for the councils which have interfered with meet their goals or completing projects that they had planned. In this section, it is the opportunity to put them forth to the community, but it is not appropriate to use this section as a negative forum, instead it is an opportunity to talk about how these challenges might be addressed next year.

Encourage all parents to run for election to the school council in the fall.

Closing statement.

**NOTE: IF YOUR COUNCIL DID FUNDRAISING THIS YEAR AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT MUST BE INCLUDED.**

***SAMPLE ANNUAL REPORT - NEXT PAGE***

# ABC ELEMENTARY (SECONDARY) SCHOOL COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT (SCHOOL YEAR)

It has been my pleasure to serve as School Council Chair this school year. I became aware of the role and work of the council when my child was in grade two. It was apparent as I spoke to parents, who were involved in the council at the time, that they were actively involved in making the educational experience of all students in the school better. This was something I was interested in participating in.

I was elected to the school council when my child entered third grade. The next two years were both fulfilling and skill building as I became acquainted with the great group of parents that made up the council and proud of the work that we accomplished. It not only gave me the opportunity to feel good about what we had done as a council, but gave me insight into the possibilities of what could be accomplished. The next year I ran for school council chair.

When my child was in grade 5, I was elected school council chair. It has been a positive and challenging role. During these past few years I have felt more connected to my child's

education and school than ever before. I have enjoyed the partnership that I have formed with the Principal(insert Principal's name) and together I believe we accomplished a great deal for the students of the school.

## GRATITUDE

My role as chair of the school council allowed me to really appreciate the hard work that so many people put in to make our school such a successful and positive place for our children.

I would like to thank every volunteer that contributed time to events, programs, classroom activities, attending meetings and so many other things that kept the school a great place to be. It doesn't matter if you gave an hour or hundreds of hours, your contribution made a difference and did not go unnoticed by other parents, myself or the Principal (insert name).

I am grateful to the teachers, caretakers and the school secretary (insert name) who supported us to allow us to accomplish so much this year.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This year we provided three interactive family learning events which were very well received by the parent community.

In addition, the council brought parents together to advocate to the school board to prioritize repairs to the girls washrooms which were in a state of disrepair. We were pleased to see that this action brought about the improvements that we advocated for at the board level.

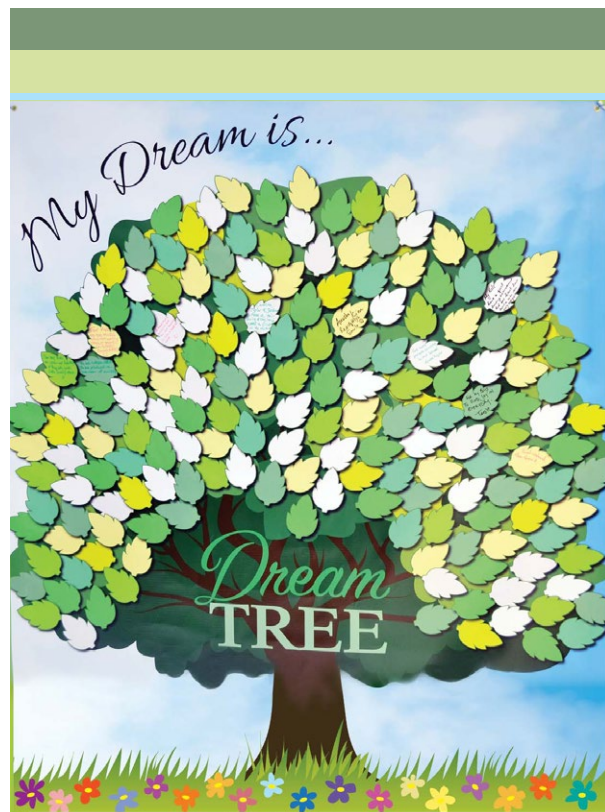
We were pleased, as a council, to be able to raise enough money (through the generous support of the school community) to purchase 16 iPads. These have been distributed throughout the school and the teachers reported back that the students are using them regularly in their learning.

## CHALLENGES

One of the challenges that we faced this year was communicating with parents. To be effective in engaging parents we need to build an email distribution list by having parents fill out a form at the beginning of the year giving us permission to communicate with them via email. This will be something that the next council can take further and it will improve the engagement factor within the school community.

I think that it would be beneficial for the new council to consider new fundraising strategies for the upcoming school year. We have sold chocolates for the past several years and sales are declining in the past 2 years. Perhaps something new would rejuvenate the fundraising possibilities for the school.

In closing, I would encourage every parent to become a member of this school council and to take on an executive position. I believe they would find it as fulfilling as I have.



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)





Image via Pixabay

# SAFE KIDS, HAPPY KIDS

## SUMMER SAFETY AT HOME

The kids have been cooped up all winter and now it's time to set them free – within boundaries. Summertime means lots of outdoor activities but it also means an increase in emergency room visits for mishaps such as **drowning**<sup>1</sup>, falls, and trampoline injuries, according to US News & World Report. Keep reading for a few tips on how you

can circumvent many of summer's most hazardous conditions at home.

### SECURE WINDOWS AND DOORS

Your windows frame the outside world as a beautiful picture, but improperly sealed, they allow the outside world to come to you and

not in a good way. **Redfin**<sup>2</sup> explains that you should check your window screens to ensure they are secure and patch any holes to prevent mosquitoes, which carry disease, from joining you and your family when you seek respite from the summer heat. You can reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home by eliminating sources of

1 [www.health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/childrens-health/articles/2009/06/19/summer-safety-8-reasons-kids-end-up-in-the-er--and-how-to-prevent-it](http://www.health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/childrens-health/articles/2009/06/19/summer-safety-8-reasons-kids-end-up-in-the-er--and-how-to-prevent-it)

2 [www.redfin.com/blog/2016/06/how-to-prep-your-home-to-avoid-summer-hazards.html](http://www.redfin.com/blog/2016/06/how-to-prep-your-home-to-avoid-summer-hazards.html)

standing water, such as birdbaths and upturned toys. If your windows will be open throughout the summer, make sure your child latches are engaged to prevent children from falling.

## BANISH BAD BUSHES

Mosquitoes aren't the only pests that can dampen your day. Sweep the perimeter of your home and look for areas where **snakes**<sup>3</sup> might hide. This includes piled up rocks and logs. While most snakes aren't poisonous, they can be frightening to young children. Other creatures, such as ticks and spiders, aren't that scary but pose a danger nonetheless. They like hiding in tall grass and dense shrubbery. Keep bushes and low-lying trees neat and tidy. Tip: bushes should be at least 24 inches from the exterior of your home to discourage pests from entering through cracks in your brick or foundation.

## TRIPPING AND FALLING HAZARDS

Falling, especially via **trampoline**<sup>4</sup> accident, is one of the top reasons parents seek emergency care for children each summer. Your children should never be left unsupervised outdoors, especially if playing on a trampoline. The Mayo Clinic points out that your trampoline should be outfitted with a safety net, pads and straps to keep it firmly in place and tethered to the ground. You should also have an entry ladder. Check the ladder for

loose screws. While you're at it, look at your deck, porch and pool stairs to ensure they are secured to prevent falling when enter and exiting these areas.

## REMOVE POISONOUS PLANTS

Chances are, you won't have to deal with any of the world's deadliest plants, but poison ivy, poison sumac, and poison oak can cause severe itching and an ugly rash. Remove these and other potentially dangerous plants from the yard where children are likely to play or visit. **The Canadian Biodiversity Information Facility**<sup>5</sup> offers more information on many of the most common poisonous plants.



## FENCING

Ideally, your children's play area will be fenced in to prevent wandering and also to keep unwanted animals from interrupting their outdoor experience. Keep children's play areas at least 30 feet away from the road, if possible.

## REMOVE GRILL FROM PLAY AREA

Remove your propane grill from your kids' play area and keep it covered when not in use. Children may accidentally bump up against the grill and ignite the flame, creating a burning and fire hazard.

## COVER SANDBOX SO ANIMALS WON'T USE IT AS A TOILET

There are few things less appetizing than walking up on bacteria-laden animal excrement when you're trying to enjoy your afternoon outdoors. This is especially true in your children sandbox, which makes the perfect toilet for neighborhood cats. When not in use, cover the sandbox with a removable cover.

As cliché as it sounds, prevention really is the best medicine, especially where your kids' safety is concerned. While you can't avoid some accidents and injuries, you can eliminate many common safety hazards. With a few minutes of prep work now, you and your children can enjoy your lawn and garden until Old Man Winter makes his next seasonal appearance.

3 [www.todayshomeowner.com/how-to-avoid-snakes-in-your-yard-and-garden/](http://www.todayshomeowner.com/how-to-avoid-snakes-in-your-yard-and-garden/)

4 [www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/expert-answers/trampoline-exercise/faq-20058001](http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/expert-answers/trampoline-exercise/faq-20058001)

5 [www.cbif.gc.ca/eng/species-bank/canadian-poisonous-plants-information-system/canadian-poisonous-plants-information-system/?id=1370403266274](http://www.cbif.gc.ca/eng/species-bank/canadian-poisonous-plants-information-system/canadian-poisonous-plants-information-system/?id=1370403266274)





# I Dream BIG



Purchase DREAM BIG T-shirts and Bracelets & do a fundraiser for your school

**This is a chance to celebrate the positive spirit of your students**

Build positive school communities to DREAM BIG for their students

Encourage all parents to DREAM BIG for their children

**Shirts - \$10 • Bracelets - .75¢**

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*This is offered on a cost recovery basis only, so if you order in bulk you save what we save!*

*For pricing information, please contact us at [dreambig@parentsengagedineducation.ca](mailto:dreambig@parentsengagedineducation.ca)*



T-SHIRTS

CAUSE BRACELETS



# SUMMER SCHOOL FOR SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Most of us can remember when we were in school and it was finally SUMMER!! We couldn't wait to spend 8 – 9 weeks having fun, soaking up the sun and sleeping in. Then our parents give us the good news that they wanted us to go to summer school. They talked us into the extra credit or new interest we could develop by devoting half of our summer to school.

It may not have seemed like such a good thing at the time, in fact it likely seemed like some kind of punishment, but I think as we grew we recognized the value of this additional educational opportunities.

Like our children, we parents look forward to the summer as a break from the volunteer work we contribute to the school and the school council. It is a time for us to plan vacations and spend more time with the kids in a more relaxed vibe.

As council members you can use the summer to do some extra learning as well. Perhaps through the year you have heard some good ideas like increasing parent engagement in technology, communication plans, creating a formal long range plan for the council or other interesting things you would like to learn more about.

Consider taking some time this summer to research these topics to bring new ideas to your school council

at the start of the new school year. This will be really beneficial because once you are back to school and things get busy, it is just something that is hard to get the time to do.

Where to start — you can check your board website to be sure that you have reviewed all the material available on there.

People for Education have many parent tip sheets on their website in several languages. You can find them at:

<https://peopleforeducation.ca/topics/parent-involvement>

Parents Engaged in Education feature a school council brochures series that focus on specific areas to build an effective school council. These include, but are not limited to:

Recruiting, Retaining and Succession Planning  
for School Councils -

<https://www.parentsengagedineducation.ca/media/docs/resources/school-councils-recruiting-retaining-and-succession-planning.pdf>

School Council Communication

<https://www.parentsengagedineducation.ca/media/docs/resources/school-council-communication.pdf>

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info@lunchboxorders.com

### Team Building Strategies

<https://www.parentsengagedineducation.ca/media/docs/resources/school-councils-team-building-strategies.pdf>

### School Council Building an Effective Three Year Plan

<https://www.parentsengagedineducation.ca/media/docs/resources/school-councils-3-year-planning.pdf>

You may also find some of the articles and blogs on our website helpful as well. For instance, social media is becoming a “must” for councils to get their message out to their school community. Our Chief Digital Officer has written a great series of blogs on the effective use of social media for school councils. Some of the topics include:

#### 10 Ways to Increase Involvement on Your School Council Facebook Page:

<https://www.parentsengagedineducation.ca/social-media/10-ways-to-increase-involvement-on-your-school-councils-facebook-page>

Tools to help making posting on social media quick, simple and looking fantastic:

<https://www.parentsengagedineducation.ca/social-media/3-tools-to-help-make-posting-on-social-media-quick-simple-and-looking-fantastic>

12 back to school ideas for social media:

<https://www.parentsengagedineducation.ca/social-media/12-back-to-school-ideas-for-social-media>

One of the articles that you might consider sending out with your notice of upcoming school council elections is “6 Myths about School Councils”. You can find the article at:

<https://www.parentsengagedineducation.ca/parent-council/6-common-school-council-myths>

In addition, this blog may also be a help to increase school council engagement before elections in the fall, it is titled “Why Join your school’s parent council” which can be found at:

<https://www.parentsengagedineducation.ca/parent-engagement/why-join-your-schools-parent-council>

You will find many more resources which are all free for you to read or download at

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

**HAPPY SUMMER!!!**  
**PARENTS ENGAGED IN EDUCATION**



# 7

## Ways To Build Your Child's 'VILLAGE'

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

You've probably heard the saying "it takes a village to raise a child". When children enter their preteen and teen years, many start to rely more on the relationships with their friends, and less on their parents.

This can be problematic if they believe their friends are the only people they need in their village. Without the benefit of life experiences, friends can't give the support and advice a young person needs to responsibly navigate to adulthood.

When telling my personal stories during my UPower parents' presentations, I share what I wrote in my journal when I was young. The majority of my entries revolved around my friends instead of my sadness and confusion around my parent's divorce, also the lack of relationship with my Dad after the divorce and the boy in my class who made fun of me most days.

My mum could see I was struggling and recognized I needed more than she could give me. She realized she needed to expand my village. So she started sending me to character development course, support groups, and leadership camps. As a preteen and teen, I wasn't the least bit interested in going. Getting really angry telling her I didn't want to go and telling her I didn't like her, got me nowhere. My mum would reply, "You don't have a choice."

When I look back I realize that I couldn't see the benefits of her choices. All I could see was that her choices were taking away time from me hanging out with my friends. No Matter, my mum was committed to expanding my village by introducing me to mentors, coaches, teachers and new experiences that taught me to be confident, responsible and resilient.



One of the most valuable gifts we can give is teaching them the importance of reaching out to others and learning from different mentors and role models.



sarawestbrook.com

Sometimes as parents we think we should be enough for our child and if we aren't, we feel we have somehow failed. Teaching your child the importance of reaching out to others and learning from different mentors and role models will not only enrich and expand their "village", it will also help develop their mental, emotional and physical well-being.

**Here are seven options to consider:**

### 1. LEADERSHIP & CHARACTER BUILDING COURSES

Courses give young people the ability to discover their potential while learning teamwork and social skills, often while creating positive change in the community.

**Some great options include:**

- Programs offered by the YMCA<sup>6</sup> or your local community centre.
- **Youth Leadership Camps Canada<sup>7</sup>**
- **Landmark Forum<sup>8</sup>**
- **Toastmasters<sup>9</sup>** runs a program that helps build communication and listening skills.

### 2. YOUTH GROUPS & COMMUNITY CENTRES

Youth centres run a variety of social, educational, and recreational programs including day camps, homework clubs, computer clubs, leadership training, fitness, church clubs and even literacy classes. These programs are often very affordable or free.

<sup>6</sup> [www.ymcagta.org/youth-programs/youth-leadership-programs](http://www.ymcagta.org/youth-programs/youth-leadership-programs)

<sup>7</sup> [www.ylcc.com](http://www.ylcc.com)

<sup>8</sup> [www.landmarkworldwide.com/the-landmark-forum/for-young-people-and-teens](http://www.landmarkworldwide.com/the-landmark-forum/for-young-people-and-teens)

<sup>9</sup> [www.toastmasters86.org/programs/marketing/496-youth-leadership-program](http://www.toastmasters86.org/programs/marketing/496-youth-leadership-program)

### 3. SUPPORT GROUPS

If your child is going through rough times, a support group can be really helpful.

They can get both the guidance of an experienced, qualified adult, while being supported by peers in similar situations. As a teen I attended Alateen, a support group for young people who have an alcoholic in their life. Of course I didn't want to go! In being made to go I began to realize I wasn't alone and gained strength through that knowledge.

Check out this list of Ontario support groups or ask your school, church, community centre, and other parents.

[www.psychologytoday.com/ca/groups/adolescents-teenagers-14-to-19/ontario](http://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/groups/adolescents-teenagers-14-to-19/ontario)

### 4. VOLUNTEERING

All teens must log 40 volunteer hours to graduate from high school. Giving to the community

regularly helps teach children responsibility and compassion. **It also has many other great benefits including:**

- Reducing depression by supporting and helping other people.
- Improving confidence, happiness, and optimism.
- Boosting the immune system for better health.
- Decreasing challenging emotions.
- Preparing children for employment by teaching responsibility.

Pick an organization close to your child's heart. You can even volunteer as a family to help build connection and create memorable moments together. Check out **SparkOntario** or **Charity Village** for volunteer opportunities.

[www.sparkontario.ca](http://www.sparkontario.ca)

[www.charityvillage.com](http://www.charityvillage.com)

Giving to the community regularly helps teach children responsibility and compassion



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

## 5. SENIORS

According to **research from Stanford University**<sup>10</sup>, aging adults play critical roles in the lives of young people, especially the most vulnerable in society.

**One study**<sup>11</sup> showed that when a child is mentored by an adult, they are: 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs; 27% less likely to begin using alcohol; 52% less likely to skip school.

While benefits of these intergenerational relationships go both ways, teens receive:

- Developing empathy, understanding, and respect for elderly people.
- Participating in mature discussions.
- Learning history and past times.
- Having the opportunity to teach skills such as technology.

If your child doesn't have access to grandparents, try family friends, or check for programs with your local seniors home.

## 6. SPORTS TEAMS

Working as a team for a common goal develops a strong sense of belonging while teaching cooperation, respect, and communication.

Team sports are a great way for children to interact with other young people their own age, creating valuable friendships while being mentored by a coach.

Check with your child's school, local community centre, or the city for sports programs near you.

## 7. THERAPY

Sometimes something deeper is going on for a



<sup>10</sup> [www.news.stanford.edu/2016/09/08/older-people-offer-resource-children-need-stanford-report-says/](http://www.news.stanford.edu/2016/09/08/older-people-offer-resource-children-need-stanford-report-says/)

<sup>11</sup> [www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org)



young person. They may be experiencing ongoing depression, anxiety, mood instability, panic attacks, self harm, or substance abuse. In these cases, a therapist may be the best option to help them through difficult times and tough emotions.

Your child will probably not thank you for expanding their village. However, one day as an adult they will look back as I did and say...

“Thank you mum. I couldn’t say it when I was younger, but as the adult me, I am truly thankful ‘you made me go’. I am happy you didn’t allow my tantrums, frustrations, sadness or anger stop you from following through with your commitment to expanding my village.”

Love Sara

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sara' with a heart symbol and 'XOXO' written below it.



## *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](http://www.sarawestbrook.com)



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resources and skill-  
building opportunities  
to school councils  
throughout Ontario to  
assist with:*

**Better  
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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



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

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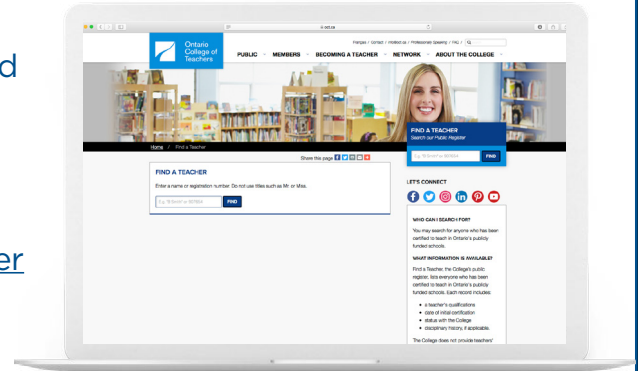
Parents Engaged in Education

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

### Do you know who your child's next teacher is?

All teachers working in Ontario's publicly funded schools must be qualified and certified by the Ontario College of Teachers.

See how qualified your child's teacher is by searching our public register at [oct.ca/findateacher](http://oct.ca/findateacher)



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In 2050, the first spoken language in the WORLD will be FRENCH  
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WE CAN. FOR FREE.

## Parents

ENGAGED IN EDUCATION

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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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