



SCHOOL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2020 • VOLUME 45

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PLANNING YOUR SCHOOL SPRING FUN FAIR

As the weather begins to change, many school councils are looking forward to spring and planning a school fun fair for their community. Although the people that attend often think this is an easy task, because it goes off seamlessly, it actually takes a lot of planning and effort on behalf of the volunteers.

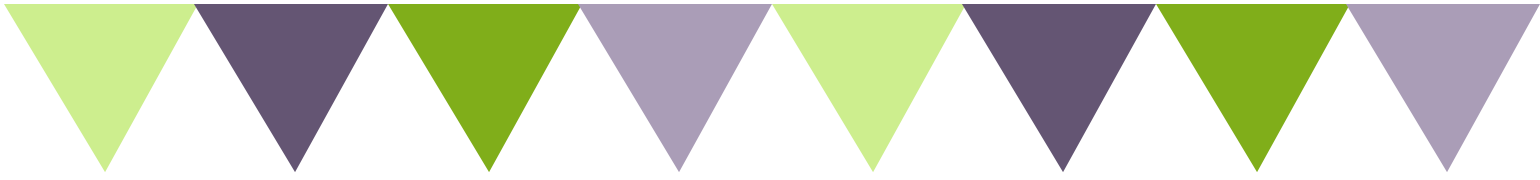
This month we are providing some tips to make your event both easier and more successful. In addition, we are discussing how to make sure that all families in your school community are able to attend, despite their financial situation. It would be a shame for any child to miss out. This month we have provided some quick tips on how a family might play a role that would result in their being able to take part in the fair for free.

I hope that the improving weather reinvigorates parents to engage with their children's learning both inside the house and out enjoying all that the outdoors offers to explore nature and discuss the changes that happen as seasons transition. We have included some ideas on outdoor learning activities for families which we hope you will share with your school community.

I wish you all a successful month and hope that March Break provided some time for parent leaders to get a much deserved break and for families to enjoy some quality time together.

Theresa Pastore

*Executive Director,
Parents Engaged in Education*



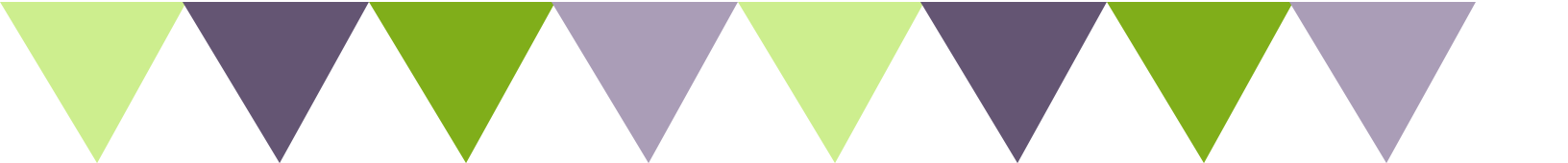
HOSTING A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL FAIR / CARNIVAL

One of the most popular school events can be the spring fun fair/carnival. It brings the community together in a spirit of fun. In my experience, this can be the most positive event of the year as well as the most challenging with a lot of details and logistics to work out. To make it successful and not too much work for one person, it is beneficial at the beginning of the school year to establish the “school fun fair/carnival committee”. This gives the committee lots of time to plan and a better chance for a successful event.

Before taking the necessary steps to execute the steps to a successful event, it is important to determine as a council what the goals are (i.e., Is it to raise funds or simply have a community event?).

Understanding the goal will help you make decisions regarding costs, ticket prices, food costs etc. If you want to raise money, you may want to charge a little more for tickets or add a small levy to the cost of the food being served.

The key factor in having a successful event is to understand how many people you expect to attend (if this is an annual event, use the past few years as a guideline to how many you estimate attending this year). Using these numbers and the established price of a ticket, you can now estimate how much money you can spend on games, inflatables and food. You may choose to sell individual tickets or wristbands for all activities depending on the amount of funds you wish



to raise and how much the community will spend that will give everyone a good time and feel positive about the event.

PLANNING STEPS AND TIPS:

LOCATION AND TIMING

Most school fun fair/carnivals are able to be hosted on the school property which saves the cost of paying for a location. If not, you may be able to get a permit for a city park or church property, however this usually comes at a cost. The other important factor of hosting the event offsite is the likelihood of having to provide additional insurance which also comes at a cost.

When you choose a date for the event always be sure to have a “rain date” alternative which you communicate with the community when promoting the event. This will help parents plan for both days if a change is required.

It is also beneficial to be aware of the local sports schedule that may make it impossible for parents to attend. A quick survey of the school community offering alternative dates can assist in choosing a date that will allow the majority of the school community to attend.

EVENT DAY VOLUNTEERS

Before committing to hosting a fun fair/carnival make sure that you have enough volunteers to set up games, sell tickets, sell food, supervise other activities like raffles, supervise inflatables etc. It is disappointing to spend months planning an event and find out that you only have 5 people willing to volunteer for jobs that need 20 people. Not only does this make it difficult for the volunteers, but often unsafe for the children attending.

Having volunteer t-shirts made up in a single colour so attendees will know who they can go to for assistance if needed will help keep things organized. Alternatively,

consider asking all volunteers to wear a single bright colour which will also help identify them for the community.

Don't get surprised, get parent and student volunteers committed early.

GAMES AND PRIZES

There are a lot of companies who rent carnival style games for this type of event. However, to save money, it is fun and worthwhile to get parent volunteers to make games. Simple games like fish pond, football throw, bean bag tic tac toe, balloon darts, hula hoop contest are easy for parents to create themselves. Consider having a contest, with students as judges, for the best homemade game and encourage all parents to participate alone or in a team.

Setting up a scavenger hunt inside the school can be a fun activity for students and is an opportunity for parents (especially those new to the school) to see the whole school.

One of the popular money making games is the “pie in the face” game with the Principal or a favourite teacher as the target. When the weather is nice, substitute the pie for a water balloon.

Old fashion games like the “three legged race” or the “potato sack race” are still crowd pleasers and are a great way for parents and students participating together as a team.

Prizes can be bought at a low cost by buying a bag of small items at a wholesale party supply store. It may be fun to involve the students by having them make paper “medals” for the first, second and third place winners for race games and paper bookmarks for games like the fish pond, tic tac toe etc.

The more involvement the school community has in preparing for the event, the more likely they will encourage their families to attend.

MAKING SURE EVERY FAMILY CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE SCHOOL FUN FAIR

Many schools use the Annual Spring Fun Fair to raise funds to support their plans to improve the educational experience of students and families in their school. Some sell “bracelets” that let students participate in activities or rides, while others charge to play games and purchase raffle tickets etc.

For some families this may discourage them from attending, especially those with several children, when their financial situation does not allow them to even consider putting out money for “fun” events like the school fair. As a parent community we would never want a child or parent to feel that they are excluded from any activity at the school, nor would we want the child(ren) to feel that they are being singled out to receive “charity” if they are just given a free pass to the fair.

Here are some tips on how to include families that may be financially challenged that allows them to retain their dignity and take part fully in the fun fair.

1. Ask the parents if they would bake some goodies for the fair volunteers, or for the bake sale, and in exchange they will receive a pass for their children to attend the fair.
2. Invite students, from families that may have financial challenges, to volunteer to assist with the running of the event. In exchange, the children in their family would receive a free pass to the fair.
3. The school council could identify specific students and their families to “win” fun fair passes, rather than donating them. This makes the children feel like winners and not different from the other students due to their families financial situation.
4. Perhaps some student designed posters would help promote your event to the school community. Inviting students from low income families to draw posters in exchange for free passes to the fun fair is another way that they can positively contribute and benefit by attending the event.
5. Often school councils will collect money for fun fair tickets or bands by going class to class. Ask a student that would benefit from a free pass to assist with this on their lunch or recess so they can earn their pass.

It is important for parent leaders to remember that a fun fair is not the only thing that families who are in difficult financial situations have to miss out on or do without. Many have to depend on food banks and donations of school supplies, clothes, toys etc. in order to support their families and this can affect the mental health of adults and children. If a school can provide opportunities for all families in their community to take part in every activity and event by empowering them with an opportunity to “earn” their way and not simply be given a “free pass” that reinforces a child’s impression that they are less than other students in the school. Even the youngest student can help in some way to make a school event a success.

The real goal of a school fair is to bring the community together in a spirit of fun and comradery and while it is beneficial for all students if it is also a successful fundraiser. At the same time, a school community where all students feel supported and empowered to succeed and take part in activities with their classrooms and friends is what should be considered a true success.

Spring Fun To-Do List

- Have a backyard picnic
- Take a long walk
- Plant seedlings
- Fly a kite
- Look for four-leaf clovers
- Go puddle jumping
- Blow bubbles
- Feed the ducks
- Go to the playground
- Listen to the birds chirping
- Open all the windows in your house
- Go to a petting zoo
- Go to a baseball game
- Make a spring craft
- Pick flowers
- Go to the farmer's market
- Make brunch for Mother's Day
- Draw with sidewalk chalk
- Take a bike ride
- Go on a hike
- Read a book outside
- Play a game of catch
- Try a backyard science experiment
- Go on a nature scavenger hunt
- Visit a museum
- Eat jelly beans
- Identify spring flowers
- Jump rope
- Drive with the windows down
- Eat sunflower seeds
- Build a birdhouse
- Make mud pies
- Create a butterfly garden
- Dance in the rain
- Wash the family car
- Color Easter eggs
- Plant a tree for Earth Day
- Roll down a grassy hill



MUST-HAVES FOR A SUCCESSFUL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FAIR

Spring is a time for opening the windows and doors, sloshing through the mud and celebrating the end of a very cold and snowy winter. It is also the time when school councils begin planning for their annual spring school fair.

If your elementary school is preparing and planning for a spring fair, here are some ideas to make it a success.

- Invite parent volunteers to form part of the planning committee, even those that do not regularly participate in the school council. Keep in mind that some parents do not want the commitment of attending or participating in regular school council meetings, but, would be pleased to help out on a fun activity like the school fair.

Ask what talents, skills and interests that volunteers have that they would like to contribute to the planning and execution of the spring fair. By utilizing their interests you are more likely to keep them interested and committed to the project from start to finish.

- Work with local businesses to see if they could support the event by donating money or product that would enhance the experience for the school

community. Simple donations from the business community that serve the families in your school can make a great difference in the outcome of the event and the resulting fundraising. **You may consider some of the following:**

BAKERY

Could provide some product to sell at the bake sale or as a thank you to your volunteers who will need to be kept fed throughout the day.

MOVIE THEATRE

Often they will provide a big bag of popcorn (or two) that can be distributed into small bags for sale to students.

PRINTER

Your local printer may assist with design and printing of the fair flyers.

PIZZA, COOKIE, KIDS' SNACK PROVIDERS

If you have access to these types of businesses they may be open to providing free or buy one get one coupons as prizes for games etc.

TOY OR BOOK STORES

Often agree to donate a product or two as prizes or raffle prizes to help raise funds.

PROFESSIONAL SPORTS TEAMS

Are also generally good about donating a signed piece of merchandise for fund raising events or raffles.

- Connect with your local secondary school to engage students who need community service hours to assist in operating the fair or providing fun activities like face painting, balloon twisting etc.
- Have an alternative plan if you are hosting a “rain or shine” event, that will accommodate your fair activities indoor if the weather does not cooperate.
- To cut down on costs while still making the day a lot of fun for the kids you might consider having volunteers make games or develop activities that can be just as entertaining as high-priced inflatables etc. These might include:
 - A small plastic pool along with fishing rods and small hoops that can be numbered make a great “Fish pond” game.
 - A large wooden or cork board with balloons that include prize tickets which the participants can throw darts at to win the prize.
 - Put three hula hoops out on the lawn or playground and provide small footballs. Children must get the ball into the hoop to win a small prize.
 - Similar to the above, get three bushel baskets and basketballs. The kids get three chances to get a basket to win.
 - Dress Up Races – get Moms and Dads to donate some old clothes. The game is to put 5 or 6 pieces into a “fun” outfit for children to dress up in. Then put a line at the end of a short race field. The children have to dress up and race each other to the finish line. First to get to the finish line, gets a prize.
- Egg on a Spoon Race – just as simple as that. Kids line up, pick up an egg, put it on their spoon and race to a finish line. First to finish with their egg intact, wins.
- Blind Artists Challenge – participants are shown a simple picture, blindfolded and then challenged to recreate the picture they have seen. The winners are the ones closest to the original picture.
- Principal/teacher Dunk Tank – always lots of fun.
- Three -legged race – this popular game is so easy to prepare for your next fun fair. Simply provide rope for two members of a family to tie one leg each together and then race to the finish line.
- Plinko – it is easy to make the popular Plinko board. Simply get a large peg board, put nails or screws in rows that are staggered to allow a ball to run down in different directions into cups that are numbered according to the prize they would win. A plastic hockey puck works great to slide down the board.
- Red Cup Pong – nail red cups (or any colour) to a board in lines forming a square. From a distance of 12 – 18” the player must bounce a ping pong ball into the cup. To win, the player needs to get three balls in a row.
- Bingo – you can usually pick up this type of game for really cheap (if not convince a store owner/manager to donate) and is easy to involve the whole family in a game. This is an excellent game to make books a prize and encourage families to read together.

I hope these ideas will help make your Spring Fun Fair a great success and an opportunity to really build community spirit.

HAVE FUN!

Theresa Pastore

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO

Do you know who does what in education?

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

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

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Share the organization's resources with their school community.

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

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For more information, visit ParentsEngagedInEducation.ca

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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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