

March

INSIDE
▼ *this issue*

02

School Councils
– Time to Spring
Forward

04

Spring Fun
To-Do List

06

10 Keys for
Communication
to Better
Improve Parent
Involvement

08

Mental Health
and the Great
Outdoors

2021

ParentsEngagedInEducation.ca

PARENTS ENGAGED IN EDUCATION



SCHOOL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 55

It has been another busy month here at Parents Engaged in Education! We have been busy spreading the word about our new Family Service Centre featuring Canada's first Education Bank in Scarborough, Ontario. For those wanting to learn more about the Family Service Centre, I encourage you to visit our website, or see more info on the Centre below.

As the weather begins to change, many of you are looking forward to Spring. I certainly know my family is! I encourage you to take a little time everyday and enjoy the outdoors. This month's newsletter is packed full of great ideas you can use over the next few months of Spring. We have included a Spring Fun to-do list. I challenge you to enjoy some of these activities with your family and would love for you to share your stories and photos with us on social media using the tag #springparentengagement.

I hope that the improving weather helps energize parents to engage with their children's learning both inside the house and out. Spring is a perfect time to enjoy all that the outdoors has to offer. Remember to explore nature and discuss the changes that happen as seasons transition with your child.

Stay safe,

Adrian Marmara

President, Parents Engaged in Education

adrian.marmara@parentsengagedineducation.ca

SCHOOL COUNCILS - TIME TO SPRING FORWARD

By Theresa Pastore

The month of March signals the end of winter and the beginning of spring. It is the time for school councils to spring forward and make those important plans to prepare for the next school year.

I know the initial reaction of many will be, “what already, we are still focused on this year”. That is

true, however, most councils do not have a June meeting. It is usually fun fair/community event time leaving only two meetings, April, and May to plan for the next school year.

There are a few important items to put on your next two meeting agendas:



1. OFFICER TRANSITION PLANNING:

There may be executive council members who will be moving on, either because their child is graduating, or they are moving. Now is the time to discuss who would be interested in running for executive positions next year. To ensure that the long-range goals of the council will remain strong, it is beneficial to hold a couple of special meetings concentrating on reviewing the roles and responsibilities of the various officer positions. It is the opportunity to discuss how the chair has found success this year, for instance how meetings were planned by the Principal, and the challenges they faced. For instance, how to get input from the parent community on items included on the monthly agendas.

2. RECRUITING PARENTS FOR NEXT YEAR:

Since school council elections take place very early in the new school year, this is the time to look at strategies for recruiting new parents to the council.

- a. To begin, look at the strategies you have tried in the past. What were the results of those efforts?
- b. Think about the parents who have attended meetings throughout the year who were not elected members but showed an interest in the council. Try to meet with them and encourage them to get involved. Have certain parents raised questions or comments about the work of the council? This is a good time to encourage them to run as voting members in the new school year.
- c. Consider whether the existing council represents the diversity of the school

community. If not, work with your Principal or community leaders to develop plans to engage parents from all ethnic, economic and learning (special education) communities. The council can only be effective for all students in the school if all groups are represented and have a voice on the council.

3. TEAM BUILDING EXERCISE:

Spring is the perfect time for the parent leaders in the school, in cooperation with the school Principal to organize a community clean up. The warmer fresh air is a great opportunity to round up students, parents and teachers to clean up the school grounds. Making the clean up a scavenger hunt will make the job fun and create an environment of team building for the whole school community.

4. REVIEW BY-LAWS FOR UPDATE:

School councils normally change their membership to some degree each year so it is beneficial to review the by-laws to be sure that they continue to adequately support the process and work of the council. It is important that all members understand the by-laws as they stand before making any proposals for amending them. For more information on school council by-laws, please read our blog, Is there a Need for School Council By-laws (<https://www.parentsengagedineducation.ca/parent-council/is-there-a-need-for-school-council-by-laws>)?

USE THIS TIME WISELY

Spring is the perfect planning time for moving into the new school year. It is also a good time to look at what you have accomplished and what goals can still be met before the end of the year.

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
- ☐ Make a spring craft
- ☐ Pick flowers
- ☐ 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
- ☐ 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
- ☐ Colour Easter eggs
- ☐ Plant a tree for Earth Day
- ☐ Roll down a grassy hill
- ☐ Make all things maple
- ☐ Collect rocks
- ☐ Paint rocks
- ☐ Build a fort



Photo by Aamyr on Unsplash



PARENTS ENGAGED
IN EDUCATION

.....

FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE

FEATURING
CANADA'S FIRST
EDUCATION BANK

.....

*A diverse, inclusive
and safe space for
ALL*

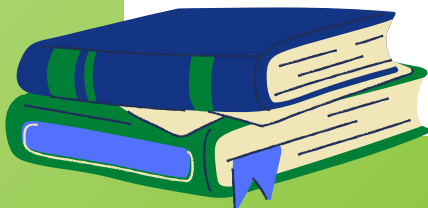
THE FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE IS LOCATED AT
857 MILNER AVE. UNIT 104, SCARBOROUGH, ON M1B 5N6

Our Hours of Operation Are:

Wednesday - 3:30pm to 7pm

Saturday - 10am to 3pm; Sunday - 10am to 3pm

**DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS, FAMILIES MUST MAKE
AN APPOINTMENT TO COME INTO THE FAMILY SERVICE
CENTRE/EDUCATION BANK BY CALLING: 416-546-1467**



10 KEYS FOR COMMUNICATION

TO BETTER IMPROVE PARENT INVOLVEMENT

By Parents Engaged In Education



USE THESE 10 KEYS FOR COMMUNICATION TO HELP YOU REACH OUT TO MORE PARENTS.

Remember the ways you reach out to parents can either help build involvement, or it can work against your school council. These tips should help put you on the right path.

1. INVITE PARENTS TO GET INVOLVED.

Make sure your school community knows that they are welcome at all school council activities.

2. MAKE IT EASY TO VOLUNTEER.

Be sure to use a bulletin board in school or get familiar with and use Google Forms as a place where parents can sign up to volunteer for events. Be sure to include a photo to attract volunteers to your event. Most importantly, remember to include contact information on all your correspondences.

3. SHOW VOLUNTEERS YOU VALUE THEM.

Being appreciative is key. Remember to always thank your volunteers.

4. COMMUNICATE REGULARLY.

Send newsletters, e-newsletters and update your school councils social media channels regularly.

5. PROMOTE SCHOOL COUNCIL ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

So parents know how the group's efforts are benefiting the school.

6. RECOGNIZE VOLUNTEERS.

Include the name and photo of each person along with their accomplishments. Use your various communication channels to applaud these volunteers.

7. DISPLAY PHOTOS OF VOLUNTEERS AND SCHOOL COUNCIL PARTICIPANTS.

To show that the school council is fun and inclusive.

8. USE TECHNOLOGY TO INVOLVE PARENTS.

If parents at your school are online, you should be too. Just be sure to keep paper copies of your communications available for those who want or need them.

9. TRANSLATE SCHOOL COUNCIL COMMUNICATION FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING MEMBERS OF YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

Doing this whenever possible is a great way of making them feel included.

10. USE PERSON-TO-PERSON CONTACT.

Recruit others to pass on flyers and school council information. Never miss an opportunity to engage parents, especially those who might view the school council as a clique. Sometimes the simplest method of word-of-mouth works best.



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)

MENTAL HEALTH AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS



By Parents Engaged In Education

As the daylight hours increase and temperatures warm, one of the best activities families can do is get outside. Mental health experts advise it helps to reduce stress and anxiety for people of all ages. In addition, the physical exercise is an outlet for pent up energy from the worries and problems faced by everyone.

Children and teenagers benefit from re-directing their focus from their everyday school and family responsibilities to less stressful situations and activities. As little as 30 minutes outside can have good results. Don't let a little rain or overcast

skies stop you! The important thing is connecting with nature.

Due to the current COVID restrictions of interactions, any grouping of people (even when outdoors) is restricted to those members who live daily with one another. Remind children to maintain distance from others, wear their masks and wash hands when they return indoors.

*Sources: for definition of mindfulness
greatergood.berkeley.edu
www.mindful.org
positivepsychology.com*

The activities below are intended to train a person to mentally focus in the present moment.

This involves using all the senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell) to channel thoughts and feelings. Doing this without judgment and knowing that there is no one right or wrong way to think or feel is the key to redirecting anger, boredom, or anxiety. This is often referred to as “mindfulness”. With practice and support from others, school age children, teenagers and adults can all learn this skill. Such things as creativeness of thought, improvement in communication including listening skills, etc. are increased as well as a reduction of stress.

The activities suggested below

Source: <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org>
(but also many other websites)

MINDFULNESS 5-4-3-2-1

No materials are needed, just imagination.

Have children say out loud:

5 things you can see – “I see...”

outdoors: a bird, a bus, a car, a tree, a leaf

indoors: a spoon, a book, a hat, shoes, a pen

4 things you can touch – “I can touch...”

outdoors: bark of a tree, someone’s hand, etc.

indoors: stuffed animal, the floor under my feet, etc.

3 things you can hear – “I can hear...”

outdoors: car horn, rain falling, etc.

indoors: radio, music playing, the shower running in the bathroom, etc.

2 things you can smell – “I can smell...”

outdoors: flowers, garbage

indoors: soap, food cooking

1 thing I can taste - “I can taste...”

outdoors: a raindrop on my tongue, if you can’t think of anything say your favourite thing to taste

indoors: food, toothpaste in my mouth

Source: www.healthiersf.org

“Stress Reduction Activities for Students”

SILENT BALL

(OR OTHER SOFT OBJECT)

***Best recommended for larger families**

Minimal equipment needed

- at a park or outdoors, have children sit or stand in a circle – with a ball or other soft object
- with music (or someone singing) pass the ball from side to side to the next person
- when the music stops, the person with the ball takes 1 step back from the circle
- when passing the ball, no one may speak
- all passes must be easy passes for the recipient
- if someone speaks, or passes inappropriately, they must step out
- indoors, the same can be done within a safe, large enough space
- use a stuffed animal or other easy to pass safe object

Older children can be the monitors of the music and “rules” of the game.

Adult supervision is recommended to ensure fairness of play.

ANIMAL CHARADES

Can be an indoor or outdoor activity

- at a park or outdoors, one person selects from pre-submitted examples of animals in a paper bag
- that person must act out the movements and sounds of the animal for the others to guess
- each person takes a turn after that, if younger children cannot read the animal names, an older child can “coach” the younger child
- the same can be done indoors in a large enough, safe space

FREEZE DANCE

Minimal materials needed (a device to play music) Can be an indoor or outdoor activity

- an older child can use a phone to play music, while the others dance
- when the music stops, everyone has to freeze

Source: <https://www.todayparent.com>

PAPER BAG SKITS

Minimal materials needed

Can be an indoor or outdoor activity

Can involve children and adults, divided into teams

- a group is given a bag of commonly available items such as a spoon, a toy, a sock
- each group has ten minutes to create a skit and perform for the other group

SCAVENGER HUNT

Can be an indoor or outdoor activity

- older children can help younger ones
- give each person a bag to collect items on a list:

Outdoors - a pine cone, a flat rock, 3 pine needles, 2 leaves, a feather, something you like and explain why you like it

Indoors - a dirty sock, a pencil, 2 crayons, 1 reading book, etc.

DESIGN OR REDESIGN A PLAYGROUND

Can be an indoor or outdoor activity

Materials needed: notebook, pencil

If visiting a playground is not possible, children can use their imaginations to come up with their own version of an ideal playground based on prior experiences or images they see online.

- older children can complete the drawing with the younger ones
- when visiting a playground have children draw an ideal playground
- ask questions such as:
What would you add to the playground? |(more swings, a covered shelter)
What would you take away?

Would you add flowers and trees? Where would you put them, what kind and colours?

What colours would you make the playground apparatus?

- when the children return home, they can colour their drawing

DESIGN OR REDESIGN A BUILDING(S)

Can be an indoor or outdoor activity

Materials needed: notebook, pencil

If visiting a playground is not possible, children can use their imaginations to come up with their own version of an ideal playground based on prior experiences or images they see online.

- have children look at their apartment complex, townhouse, house and ask similar questions as above such as:

What would you add to the building? (a shelter from the rain/snow, more flowers)

What would you take away?

What colours would you use?

- encourage older children to sketch and draw their ideas

VISIT YOUR LOCAL PUBLIC LIBRARY

- A reminder that many Public Library branches have remained open for “contactless” pick up and drop off of materials. Please contact your local branch to find out their protocols and procedures.
- Patrons should find out if their local branch is open
- If they have access to a computer, you can place books on hold and the library will call when the books are available for pick up
- Patrons must be masked and have their library card available for pick up. In some cases, library cards are digital
- In addition, some branches may have “book bundles” of 2-3 children’s books grouped according to themes. These can be seen from the entry way and can be borrowed on the spot, no hold is required.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO

Learn about funding for therapy and counselling

The Ontario College of Teachers exists to safeguard students.

We provide families with support for therapy and counselling for students who have allegedly been sexually abused or subject to child pornography by a teacher.

Find out more at: oct.ca/parents/funding_therapy.

We're here to help.



Ontario
College of
Teachers

Setting the
Standard for
Great Teaching



THANK YOU

To educators and parents for everything you are doing at home
We stand with you as your partners in learning

nelson.com/learningonline **NELSON**



ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT
AND SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO

ONTARIO ENGLISH
**Catholic
Teachers**
ASSOCIATION

**We're all
in this *together.***



**Stay strong,
stay safe.**



Unity is our strength.
Education workers,
students, parents,
and families will
get through this
together.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO

Helping You... Help Your Child



- 100% Canadian
- Based on Ministry Expectations
- Makes for a great fundraiser for schools to assist parents in helping with their child's education.



Proven Successes

Please tour our web site and find out how these resources can benefit both students and parents from Grade 3 to Grade 10.

Visit www.learningadvantage.ca

Our Learning Advantage Books

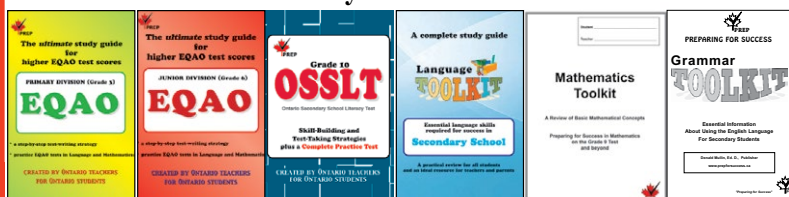


Our French Immersion Books



Grammar Toolkit

An excellent tool for any student in Grade 6 and above!



Seneca

Connect with Us Virtually

- Sign up for a webinar
- Book a virtual advising appointment
- Take a virtual campus tour

Learn more:
senecacollege.ca/visitus



LITTLEDEW
DESIGN STUDIOS
LITTLEDEWDESIGNS@GMAIL.COM

GRAPHIC DESIGN • MARKETING • PHOTOGRAPHY



Parents
ENGAGED IN EDUCATION

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.

www.parentsengagedineducation.ca
info@parentsengagedineducation.ca

647-408-2091

Follow us on twitter  @parentengagcons