



SCHOOL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

MAY 2019 • VOLUME 37

MAY

This month we are focusing our newsletter on the important factors that school councils focus on as the school year comes to a close.

We are including articles on school council chair transitions, recruiting retaining and succession planning and 7 ways to celebrate the end of the school year.

On another note, this month we include our new blog which discusses the “Shifting Tide of Parent Engagement”. The days when the majority

continued next page

INSIDE this issue

PAGE 1 - 2

May

PAGE 3 - 4

Beyond the Statistics
About High Need
Communities are
the Children

PAGE 6

The Shifting Tide of Parent
Engagement in Education

PAGE 7

Building a Successful
School Council

ST. CLAIR

**START HERE
FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE
IN TECHNOLOGY AND
TRADES**

apply **TODAY** for september
stclaircollege.ca

of parents are able to participate in school activities and events are changing and we need to find new ways to engage families so that our students do not miss out on learning or social events at the school and have support at home.

Next month, we will focus on some fun summer activities for parents that will support their child’s learning while school is on break. In addition, we will feature articles on “wrapping up the school year” for school councils.

We hope that you are finding our newsletters of value to your school and parent community. Our distribution list has continued to grow this year at a very robust rate and we thank you all for your support. If you have suggestions for resources/topics you would like to see covered in future newsletters please feel free to contact us directly at info@parentsengagedineducation.ca.

Theresa Pastores

WITHOUT LIMITS

EXPLORE

Spend 5 weeks learning French and discovering another part of Canada.

Most expenses are covered!

Apply by February 15 www.myexplore.ca 1.877.866.4242

BEYOND THE STATISTICS ABOUT HIGH NEED COMMUNITIES ARE THE CHILDREN.

LESS TALK, MORE ACTION NEEDED.

For years there have been high level discussions on the need to better support low income, highly racialized and new immigrant communities in Ontario (and realistically across the country).

During the past 25 years, I have read and been involved in discussions that identify the issues that schools in these communities face in terms of providing equal educational opportunities to students.

Recently, while volunteering at a school in a neighbourhood described above, the depth of the problem really hit home for me.

I was working with a Grade Three student who is receiving Special Education support to bring her

language and math skills up to grade level. She was excited to be learning to read and very proud of the progress she was making.

I gave her a book to take home to practice her reading at home. A tear rolled down her face as she asked “Do I really get to keep this book at home? Is it mine to keep forever?” When I told it was indeed for her to keep, she thanked me over and over and told me this was the second book that she would own herself. The first book she received was from an event our charity hosted in the community in the fall.

This simple interaction really opened my eyes to the problem at the grassroots level. We take for granted that



LUNCH BOX ORDERS

-  healthy meals
-  fundraising opportunities
-  convenient ordering program

Healthy school lunches are one click away!

- A Paperless & cashless online lunch program
- Full service solution
- In partnership with local vendors

Join us now!

1 (877) 426-6860
lunchboxorders.com
info@lunchboxorders.com

children have books, toys and supplies for school. Not only do these children not have these basics, the schools in these areas also suffer from a lack of resources to support students learning.

It made me realize that we must do something to address these issues that are prevalent in too many communities.

When schools in marginalized neighbourhoods are lacking technology and resources, what are we saying to the kids, and the families, that attend? How do we expect the students to feel they are equal to those who are lucky enough to attend schools in more affluent communities. How do we empower them with positivity to believe that if they work hard, the future is brighter than the life they are leading today.

When a student, like the one I am working with right now, goes back to school with a used backpack and worn out supplies that someone gave them the year before, how do we expect them to feel excited and valued.

When they rely only on trips to the library to have a book to read at home, and sometimes not even that when their parent is working two jobs and cannot take them to the library often, it is a situation we are committed to changing. When other kids start the school year with brand new backpacks full of new markers, crayons, pencils and notebooks, and another child returns with old supplies if they have any at all, it just is not right.

All of us connected to the education system, have to come together to make a difference. We cannot wait for the government or the school boards to try and make a difference at the system level.

As a small grassroots charity, we could do nothing else but fundraise while the larger charities are supported by every major corporation. On the grand scheme of things, people and companies donate to larger charities because they can relate to curing disease, supporting hospitals and funding well known national organizations.

**How do we empower
them with positivity
to believe that if they
work hard, the future
is brighter than the life
they are leading today.**

Donating to Parents Engaged in Education will put a book in a child's hands, provide a backpack full of supplies to inspire a needy child to be excited to return to school and to offer families the opportunity to receive resources and skill building opportunities to engage with their child's learning and mental health.

We cannot do it alone and we recognize that people are pulled in every direction to support a wide variety of charities, but a simple box of crayons, markers will make a difference to a child who has none.

A child will be able to return to school with a new backpack full of supplies for just \$25.00. We will do

the shopping, packing and work with community workers to be sure that the neediest children receive a backpack. All we are asking is for you to go to www.parentsengagedineducation.ca/donate and make a difference today.



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¢

When ordering in bulk for 50 or more

*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*



**CAUSE
BRACELETS**

T-SHIRTS

THE SHIFTING TIDE OF PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION

For decades, when educational leaders (teachers, administrators or parent leaders) were asked for a definition of what they considered an “engaged parent” to be, the following traits would be the first to come to mind:

- They help their child with their homework.
- Attend events at school.
- Supervise class field trips.
- Have ongoing communication with classroom teacher.
- Participate in parent-teacher interviews.
- Volunteer as part of the school council.

In today’s world, the above list would make it seem that most parents would not be viewed as “engaged parents”. The stress of two parents working, single parent homes, high number of immigrant families who struggle to settle into a new life and the economic challenges that many face, all lead to an ever-changing view of what real parent involvement means today.

FACING TODAY’S CHALLENGES

The challenges that families face today mean that we need to look for new ways to support and provide resources for these parents to be involved in their children’s school life. Some of the following ideas may be helpful in working towards engaging these parents:

- Educators and parent council members may wish to ask how they can best communicate with parents. Try various methods such as e-mail, notes in the child’s agenda, translating materials so that parents can support their child’s learning.
- When invitations to school events are prepared, include the phrase “all family members welcome”.

This would mean that a Grandparent, Aunt/Uncle, Older Sibling etc. could accompany the student to the event. This way if the parent is working, the student still gets to attend and share the experience with their peers.

- If it is not possible for a parent to come into school to meet with the teacher on interview day, perhaps setting up a time for a phone call that would work for both would allow the parent an opportunity to be engaged in their child’s education.
- Do not assume that every parent understands terms that are common to us i.e. EQAO (Education Quality and Accountability Office assessment test), PD Day (Professional Development Day), etc. Parents can be a great support to their child when they fully understand what is happening at school.
- Let parents know that you understand their life situation. Be prepared to provide support in a manner that works best for them.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Perhaps we should start referring to “family engagement” instead of “parent engagement” when we look at how to structure resources and school events. In addition, it is so important that we value every kind of family involvement that supports our students. We cannot simply focus on academics but also support students emotionally.

We need to make a change in our thinking of “what can parents/families do for the school” to “what can the school community do to support this family”.

Like everything in life, parent engagement is a dynamic that is changing especially in priority communities, and we must change with it so that students are supported more fully and feel included in all aspects of school life.

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL COUNCIL

RECRUITING SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS

The best way to recruit new parents to a school council is for current members to talk about why they joined the council. Take every opportunity to talk to parents about the great work that your council does to support student achievement in the school. Even if the council has only made small steps towards their goals, let parents know what a valuable role they would play in reaching these goals. Talk about their interests and talents and how they see themselves playing a role on the council. Let parents know that the commitment can be as little as a couple of hours a month or as much time as they can contribute. Most of all, make them feel WELCOME!

RETAINING SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS KEEPING PARENTS COMING BACK!

It is often the case that the first school council meeting brings out a good number of interested parents. The challenge is always how to keep them coming back to subsequent meetings. To keep parents engaged, each meeting must offer them something of value. They must walk away from a meeting feeling they have learned something or contributed to something that will improve the learning experience of the students at the school. It is imperative to make everyone feel that they have a voice at the table by inviting them to comment or to introduce new ideas for the council to consider. Try to have each agenda offer something where parents of every grade level can be part of the discussion.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

KEEP YOUR COUNCIL STRONG YEAR AFTER YEAR

Establishing a successful school council takes a lot of work. Volunteer parents work hard to develop strategies and plans to support the students in their school. To make sure that those plans come to fruition, effective succession planning is vital. School council officers should begin discussion early with members who are interested in playing a leadership role by introducing the officer roles and responsibilities to them. Part of being an effective leader is to empower those that will succeed you when the time comes.

QUICK TIPS:

- Good communication with council members (get those agendas out early)
- An atmosphere of mutual respect
- Encourage newcomers to take part
- Support diverse parents where English is the second language
- Have meetings that offer something of value to members i.e. speaker on safe schools, EQAO, review of the school learning plan etc.
- Develop sub-committees that can accomplish most of the work outside a regular meeting so it doesn't become all that the council discusses i.e. fundraising
- **THANK EVERYONE WHO ATTENDS AND WORKS ON BEHALF OF THE COUNCIL**

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!

For more information, visit
ParentsEngagedInEducation.ca


Ombudsman
ONTARIO
ONTARIO'S WATCHDOG

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

1-800-263-1830

 @Ont_Ombudsman

 OntarioOmbudsman



Parents Engaged in Education

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO

Learn more about supporting students' mental health

Attend our annual meeting of members and hear from our medical, professional, teacher and student panel as they discuss how to support students' mental health.

When: May 30, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.
Where: 101 Bloor Street West

Can't attend in person? [Live stream](#) the event from anywhere.



Ontario
College of
Teachers

Setting the
Standard for
Great Teaching



Being here can lead to amazing things.



In 2050, the first spoken language in the
WORLD will be **FRENCH**
Can you help your child with French homework?

WE CAN. FOR FREE.



Parents

ENGAGED IN EDUCATION

www.parentsengagedineducation.ca
info@parentsengagedineducation.ca
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.



SPECIALIZING IN
RESILIENCE, CONFIDENCE
AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

WWW.SARAWESTBROOK.COM



Follow us on twitter  @parentengagcons