



SCHOOL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2018 • VOLUME 32

WELCOME TO NOVEMBER

Welcome to our November newsletter. This has been a busy month for Parents Engaged in Education with the DREAM BIG School Council Training Symposium taking place on November 3rd, 2018. It was wonderful to see so many parents from across Ontario coming together to learn, share and network with each other. The input we received will help us plan for future sessions which parent leaders have asked for to assist them in their role as school council members in their schools. Watch for some exciting news to come!!

We know that this is also a busy month for parents with many boards hosting parent events and other organizations related to education offering workshops and conferences as well.

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Sara Westbrook

How Self-Regulation
Empowers Young People to
Move Beyond their Emotions

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November is also the time that parents will receive their child's first report card for this school year and will have the opportunity to meet with their child's teacher to discuss their progress. As founder and Executive Director of PEIE, I ENCOURAGE EVERY PARENT IN ONTARIO TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS TIME TO MEET WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER and discuss their child's progress and future plans.

There is solid research that shows that when teachers personally invite parents to attend, the number of parents who come out increases substantially. We hope that all teachers will help parents understand that they are welcome and encourage them to meet in order that together

you can support every child to be their best self. Keep in mind that there may be reasons a parent cannot meet at the times allotted and reach out to find out why they are not attending and if an accommodation could be made that would assist them in meeting with you.

At PEIE, we have launched the ENGAGE MALVERN project which is designed to address violence and teen suicide in a priority neighbourhood by increasing parent and community capacity in order that parents can better support and advocate for their child's learning, school and mental health. This is a pilot project that we hope will be successful and can be implemented in priority communities in other parts of the province. We will keep

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updating the work we are doing on this project as we move forward so that perhaps school councils can take some ideas and work them in their own school communities.

Lastly, November 27, 2018 is GIVING TUESDAY. PEIE seldom make fundraising requests, however, on GIVING TUESDAY we are asking all educators, administrators, parents, corporations and others who believe in the goals of our ENGAGE MALVERN project to please donate any amount of money in order that we can offer the types of opportunities and resources that are desperately needed in priority communities like Malvern. Please see our GIVING TUESDAY flyer included in this newsletter and donate if you are able. You will receive a tax receipt for all donations made to Parents Engaged in Education.

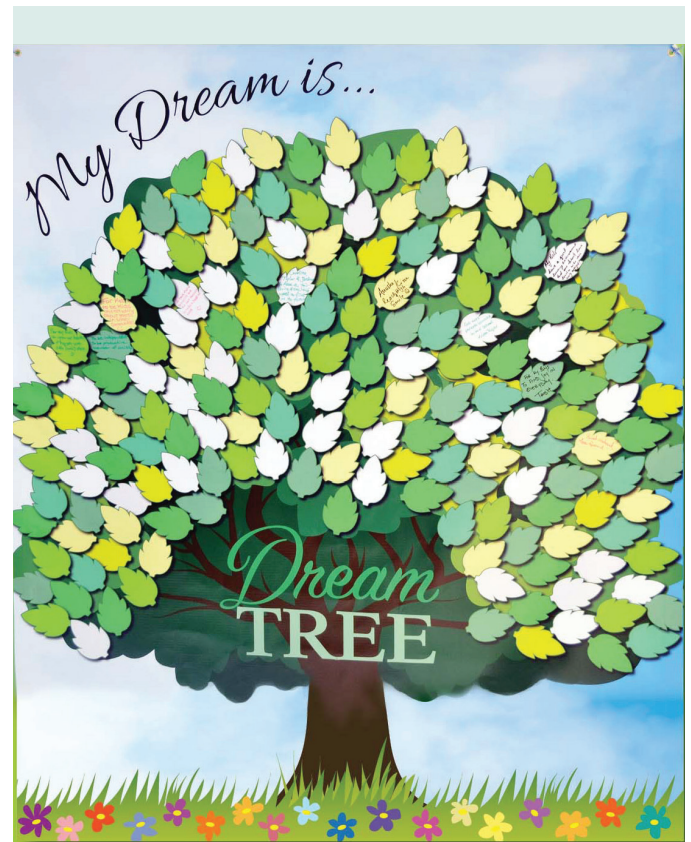
For your information, Parents Engaged in Education never charge parents, school boards or students for any events, resources and supplies for needy families. We do not charge membership fees, nor are we funded by the government, so your support allows us to continue as an organization made up of volunteers to continue the important work that we do every day.

If you would like to download the presentations from the DREAM BIG school council training symposium, please go todreambig.parentsengagedineducation.ca.

I wish you all a successful month leading up to the always busy month of December!!

Theresa Pastore

Theresa Pastore,
Executive Director



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)

SCHOOL COUNCIL TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES FOR DECEMBER

December is a great month to celebrate the diversity of your school community. Many cultures celebrate in a variety of wonderful ways during the month often referred to as the “Holiday Season”.

Consider having a school event featuring the children from every ethnic group in the school demonstrating how their country celebrates the holiday season. To support this event, the school council could ask parents from each of these groups to write about their history of celebrations and how they now celebrate the holidays. The council could prepare a booklet to give to the school community when they attend the event or to send home with students.

Some interesting information on the various ways holiday celebrations take place around the world click [here](#) (insert article “Holidays around the World”).

A council could use this activity to recruit parents

from the various ethnic groups to participate on the school council. It is really important that all cultures are represented on the council as their voice is important in providing input and planning. It is important to make all cultures feel welcome and included in our schools.

Need help building a multi-cultural school council? Click [here](#) for some ideas. (Link to blog on building a multi-cultural school council).

This month is a great chance to socialize because many councils may not have a formal meeting in December. Hosting a teacher and volunteer Holiday Tea would be a wonderful way to connect with volunteers and show your appreciation for their work, as well as building good relationships with the educators in your school.

If you are partnered with any organizations, December is a good time to recognize their value to you by sending a card signed by all members of the council.



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GivingTuesday

November 27th, 2018

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A donation to Parents Engaged in Education's
ENGAGE MALVERN project will result in:

Reduced gun violence, gang activity and teen suicide.

We will do this by building parent and community capacity to better support their children's learning and mental health. As capacity increases, so will parent's and the community's ability to advocate effectively for the resources they need to build a positive future for their children.

Your donation will go towards the establishment of a learning centre and resources for children and parents in this great community.

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Parents
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How **Self-Regulation** Empowers Young People to Move Beyond Their Emotions



Young people have more demands on their attention than ever before – juggling school, extra-curricular

activities and constant interaction with technology. Stress is particularly prevalent in schools. Findings

from the Toronto District School Board survey on student mental health found:

- Almost a third of the grade seven and eight students surveyed said they are concerned about relationship issues such as making friends and fitting in
- Nearly half worry about family matters all the time or often; the majority have anxiety about school work all the time or often
- 59 percent worry about their future

- 11 percent feel unable to overcome difficulties all the time or often

So much of their stress can be reflected back to their inability to recognize their emotions and

stressors. These emotions and stressors can be triggered by their own thoughts or through the words and actions of others. Even though they have a lot on their plate they are expected to be able to make responsible choices in spite of all the emotions and stressors they encounter daily.

In order to make responsible choices, be resilient and confident, young people need to learn the essential skill of self-regulation – a skill that will improve their emotional and mental well being.

Self-regulation is training their brain to recognize their behavior, emotions, thoughts, and learning to deal with them in healthy ways so they can

Self regulation makes it easier for young people to move through challenges and choose how to respond to events in their lives.



return to making choices from the character traits that mean the most to them (i.e respect, loving, kind, compassion, responsible etc). They must choose to believe that they are capable of identifying emotions and moving through them in a healthy way instead of just suppressing or reacting from them.

There is a growing awareness that the more young people can self regulate, the easier they are able to move through tough emotions and stressors so they can choose how to respond to the circumstances

in their lives. I believe self-regulation is like a muscle - it can be exercised and strengthened.

There are many ways to exercise the muscle of self regulation. Here are 3 of my favourites:

1. MINDFUL BREATH

When a child's brain is taken over by emotions like frustration, anger, disappointment, they are more likely to become disengaged and start to

make choices from their emotions which blocks their ability to make choices with a calm, clear mind. When consumed with emotion redirecting them becomes almost impossible. When this happens to my son Kai who is 6, I ask him to identify his emotions by pointing to the [‘elephant magnet poster’](#) we have on our dishwasher. It's an easy way to help him see the emotion he is feeling and looking at the elephant faces helps him express which helps him calm down.

2. CREATE A LIST OF HEALTHY WAYS TO RELEASE EMOTIONS

Knowing how to positively release emotions in advance helps the emotionally charged child to better cope with challenges and stressors. Since everyone is different, each child will need their own list of what calms them down and brings them back to feeling more balanced. Moving through their emotions in a healthy way will allow them to return to making choices from their character traits.

When Kai is overwhelmed with emotion, I bend down so I am at his eye level and I say, 'Kai breathe. Take a deep breath in and blow out slowly.' I breathe with him. We repeat 'the breath' 3 times or whatever amount he needs in order to calm himself. Even though there are times that Kai doesn't always choose to take 3 deep breaths – just by me saying it and doing it I am planting the seed of self regulation in his mind. I

Being overstimulated can affect a child's ability to take in information, sustain attention and deal with distractions or frustrations.


have actually heard Kai say to one of his friends when they are frustrated 'you can take 3 deep breathes.' Proving that he is listening ☺

Since I am a presenter at schools, I decided to ask students their Healthy Ways to Release Emotions.

Here are the most common ones that the students shared:

HEALTHY WAYS TO RELEASE EMOTIONS

PRAY HAVE ALONE TIME GIVE A HUG/GET A HUG TALK TO YOURSELF IN THE MIRROR
 TALK TO SOMEONE THINK OF SOMETHING FUNNY TAKE A WALK
 WRITE A NOTE THEN RIP IT UP AND THROW IT AWAY
EXERCISE **BREATHE** GO SHOPPING PHOTOGRAPHY VENT TO THE PERSONS PHOTO
 DRAWING YELL/SCREAM INTO A PILLOW DO SOMETHING YOU LOVE WATCH A MOVIE
 LISTEN TO POSITIVE MUSIC VIDEO GAMES DRAW YOUR FEELINGS
DANCE PAINTING CUDDLE WITH SOMEONE COLOURING
TALK TO FAMILY BIKING BRUSH YOUR HAIR
 WRITE A STORY PLAY A SPORT SING TAKE A SHOWER/BATH
 WALK YOUR DOG SAY WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU OUT LOUD ALONE IN YOUR ROOM RUN JOURNAL
 PUNCH A PILLOW CRY CREATE SOMETHING FROM PLAY DOH TALK TO A PET SLEEP
 GO TO BED JOURNAL/WRITE IN A DIARY SWIMMING CHAT WITH A FRIEND EAT CHOCOLATE
 HAVE A SNACK SWING READ A BOOK TIME OUT THINK SOMETHING NICE ABOUT YOURSELF
 COOL OFF HANGOUT WITH A FRIEND MAKE SOMEONE ELSE FEEL GOOD (GIVE A COMPLIMENT)
 WRAP YOURSELF IN A BLANKET AND DRINK HOT CHOCOLATE LAUGH JUMP ON TRAMPOLINE



3. MAKE CHOICES FROM CHARACTER TRAITS INSTEAD OF EMOTIONS

Circumstances bring up emotions. Many young people are making choices out of these emotions. These emotions not only feel overwhelming but they also feel permanent. Emotions are Temporary. Choices can be Permanent.

It's important for our children to understand that, since emotions shift & change from moment to moment, they are not a reliable place from which to make all choices. The more reliable place for making choices, that will give a better end result, is called a Character END RESULT. Choices made from character traits, give young people the ability to see beyond their immediate

emotions so that they can choose to be resilient, confident and respectful.

My son Kai has a character end result. His is 'I Choose to Be Respectful, Gentle and Kind.' We created this Character End Result for him because around the age of 2 every time he felt frustrated or angry, he reacted by hitting. I would say, 'Kai, I know you're angry. It's ok to feel angry however it doesn't mean you can hit and hurt other people. You can hit pillows, not people.'

I would then have him say, 'I Choose Gentle.' I would show him what gentle feels like by lightly running my hand over his cheek or his hand. Then I would ask him to show me what gentle feels like. If he did roughly, I would ask him to

When young people don't know how to control or release what they are feeling in a healthy way, it's easier for them to make emotion-based decisions.



show me again. When he did show what gentle felt like – I would praise him saying, ‘Yes, that’s choosing Gentle!’ (When your child is elevated with emotion refer to their Healthy Ways to Release before having this conversation. Once they have calmed down the above conversation is much more impactful.)

Everyone, including my husband, family members, even Kai’s teacher, were on board with redirecting him and reminding him to ‘Choose Gentle.’ After a few months we all noticed a BIG difference!

Staying diligent, showing through example and providing constant reminders to your child is so important. We all want our kids, whether at home, in the classroom or out in the world, to be thriving emotionally.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara XOXO". To the left of the signature is a simple line drawing of a heart.



*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



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