



SCHOOL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2016 • VOLUME 10

INSIDE this issue

PAGES 1 - 2

Welcome Back

PAGES 2

5 Minute Surveys

PAGE 3

Annual Meeting School
Council Elections

PAGE 4

Get on the Winning Team
Coach your Child's Education
Team

PAGE 6

How Can I Engage my Child
in Learning in Everyday
Activities

PAGE 10

The Annual General Meeting

topic of the month

Welcome BACK

It seems like summer passes a little quicker every year and there is less time between the end of school and the start of a new school year. For Parents Engaged in Education the 2016-17 school year promises to be both busy and exciting.

We have launched the most extensive research project on parent engagement ever done in the province. We are asking Directors, Superintendents, Principals, Parents and Students to provide feedback on the state of parent engagement today. The purpose of this research is to assist us in developing tools and resources which are relevant to how parents engage today in their children's education and their schools. In addition, to report to the Ministry, school boards and parents on our findings in order to educate them on the evolving state of parent engagement in Ontario. So much of the old data was developed years ago when things were much different then the world our children and parents live in today.

With declining engagement at home and at school, we are committed to making a difference.

It truly does take a village to raise a child, and, we need everyone's input so together we can be sure no child is left behind.

P.E.I.E. are also undertaking the development of the FIRST EVER PARENT ENGAGEMENT APP, which connects parents to the curriculum of their child on a grade-by-grade basis. It will be done in a game fashion so that parents can challenge themselves and develop skills to support their child's education.

We would appreciate anyone who would like to be involved in the testing phase of the app to please contact *theresa_pastore@hotmail.com*.

We will also continue this series of newsletters and brochures, which are all downloadable free from our website *www.parentsengagedineducation.ca*.

We look forward to working with all educators and parents this year and contributing to the success of our children's education.

*P.E.I.E. are also
undertaking the
development of the
FIRST EVER PARENT
ENGAGEMENT APP*

5 MINUTE surveys

Please see the links
below and take a moment to
contribute to a new perspective on
parent engagement in 2016. These
surveys are completely anonymous.

<http://bit.ly/PEIEParents>

<http://bit.ly/PEIEPrincipals>

<http://bit.ly/PEIESuperintendents>

<http://bit.ly/DIROFED>

<http://bit.ly/PEIETeachers>

<http://bit.ly/PEIECouncils>

<http://bit.ly/PEIESTudent>

ANNUAL MEETING

School Council ELECTIONS

Regulation 612 sets out the requirements surrounding the election of school council members.

Many schools simply invite parents to come to “school council elections” and since a lot of parents, especially those new to the school system, do not know the role or purpose of a school council few attend.

In order to attract parents to volunteer to run for election to the school council it is imperative that they know that the school council works in partnership with the Principal to improve the educational experience for all. Many think back to the old days of the PTA. These groups were largely responsible for fundraising and community social events. Today, the true role of a school council is to advise the Principal on all matters relevant to operation of the school, except teaching staff or individual situations.

The Annual General Meeting is an opportunity to engage and educate parents about the important role of the school council. To interest parents in attending this meeting, so that you can promote the idea of running for election to the council; consider having a speaker or two that would appeal to parents. It is great to attract parents from the JK/SK grades as they bring new perspective, ideas and can be involved for a number of years. Perhaps the Kindergarten teacher would agree to be a speaker and talk to parents about what the curriculum is and the purpose of learning in the early years. This group is always the most enthusiastic about getting involved since the school experience is new to most of them. It may be possible to get the superintendent or someone else from the board office to speak about the upcoming year and matters that are relevant to parents (i.e. Busing, bullying etc.).

Regulation 612 sets out the parameters of the school council election process. This legislation is designed to be sure that parents are given the opportunity to be true partners with the school principal and that members are elected in a fair and transparent process.

WHY TRY TO BUILD A BIGGER SCHOOL COUNCIL (A FEW WILL DO)

Although it can be difficult for some schools to attract parents to form a good size school council, it is something that should be a priority throughout the school year.

The parent leaders that make up a school council can be a tremendous asset to the Principal and the school community. Their children may identify issues that affect many of the students, such as schoolyard safety, which parents can bring to the attention of the council and try to discuss some solutions. If the school faces challenges that may be difficult for parents to get behind, the school council members can get all the facts from the Principal and work to make the situation easier when talking to other parents in the community. Funding cutbacks have presented difficulties for schools and school boards. A school may be considered for closure and the school council can engage parents to advocate on behalf of the school community to the board and present their reasons for not closing the school.

Having a school council with diverse members can also be a communication path for the Principal to communicate school updates or changes by having members speak with those who need information in their own language.

A larger council gives members the opportunity to share the load and accomplish more for the students in the school.

To encourage participation by members and to engage additional parents try to offer meetings that provide good information and topics relevant to the school community.

Get on the WINNING TEAM

COACH YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL TEAM

By: Theresa Pastore, Executive Director – Parents Engaged in Education

It's a wonderful thing to walk into an arena or a soccer field and see so many parents, grandparents, aunts and friends cheering on their children. They are their biggest fans whether their child is the best on the team or just tries his/her best. In fact, look at the benches and you will likely see a couple of parents that volunteer to coach the team.

The lessons children learn from participating in sports can include teamwork, leadership skills, perseverance and a sense of accomplishment. Parents get the opportunity to be cheerleaders and build community relationships with other parents who are interested in the same thing.

These are all valuable experiences.

Why is it then that when a school hosts an event to provide parents resources or skill building opportunities often there are only a few that attend. Sure community bar-b-ques, movie nights and fun events might attract a good number of community members, but, when it comes to learning how to support their child's math skills

or how to improve their literacy achievement, often there are only a few that attend.

Our children learn the same skills mentioned above by becoming engaged in their school and their learning.

Parents are their child's most consistent educator. Teachers and Principals can change year after year, but, students come home to the same parents everyday. They have the single greatest influence on how their child views the value of education.

If parents send their children to school and believe that is sufficient effort to get them a good education then the research would say that they are wrong. What we know is that a child whose parents have huge expectations of them in terms of achievement will work hard and strive to meet those expectations. If a parent is engaged in their children's education it is likely they are more confident in school because their parents are cheering them on everyday at home.

Today so many of our children have mental health issues such

as bullying or stress in schools. If their parents are visible in school and talking about school everyday, it follows that they will be open to discussing these issues with their parents. When parents are visible in school and showing interest in their daily work and activities it more likely that children will be open to discussing school issues with them. In today's world it is more important than ever that our children feel their parents have their back.

WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO GET INVOLVED

So many parents are challenged to balance work and home there seems to be too little time to get all the things they have to in a day. It is easy to begin putting off having a conversation with their child about their school day and homework until the next day. Soon they may realize that they have not read with their child in more than 2 weeks, or failed to look at their agenda to see what's going on for that same period of time.

Education is the single biggest factor influencing a successful future for a child.

Learning starts at the beginning of life, when you smile at your child and they learn to smile back, when they first learn to crawl and you stand them up to encourage them to walk, to the day they walk on stage to accept their diploma – they look to you as the parent to teach them and support them along the way. Even as children become adults and have their own families, parents are there to answer the questions and provide encouragement.

Finding time to spend with your children to support their academic achievement will be one of the biggest accomplishments you have as they grow.

CHANGING TIMES IN EDUCATION

Today, like never before, our children are learning quicker and meeting newer challenges than we did when we were young. Curriculums are more ambitious and technology plays a much bigger role in their learning.

I have heard many parents say that they “can’t” support their children because they don’t understand the new math or the new inquiry based strategies that many are learning. The best way to learn these new methods of teaching is to engage with your child. Let them teach you as they learn and when you see that they cannot show you how they should approach a problem it is an indication they may need extra help at school. This is a great time to communicate with your child’s teacher. Let them know that your child may need to review the last lesson and where they seemed to falter.

This allows the teacher and parent to address the problem immediately so that it does not compound and affect their future understanding of the subject.

Many parents, including myself, had little or no exposure to technology as a learning tool. We watch our children surf the web, research or complete assignments on a computer or a tablet and it literally boggles our mind. This trend will only increase as our children prepare to become workers competing in a global market where their education and skills in this area will be paramount for success. Again, this is another area where our children can become our teachers. We need to show we are interested and learn how technology plays a role in their learning process today.

Besides depending on our children, schools often offer parent evenings that will provide valuable tools and resources for parents to support their children’s learning. It may not be possible to attend every opportunity presented to you, however, if you can make it to one or two of these types of events during the school year it will make you more confident in supporting your children’s learning.

BUILDING STRONG SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

The old saying “it takes a village to raise a child” is never more true than today.

With education funding providing challenges for schools, labour disruptions and mental health issues on the rise, school

administrators need parents to partner with them to improve the school community and the educational experience of the students. The most effective way to do this is to join your school council.

The school council is a government mandated group in every school empowered by Ontario Regulation 612 to work in partnership with the Principal to improve the educational experience of EVERY STUDENT in the school.

It takes no specific experience to make a difference by working with other parents on the council. The only thing you need is the desire to make the school a better place and to voice your opinions on how you think the council might support other parents to engage with their children.

The reaction when parents are asked to participate in the school council is sometimes that they don’t have the time. If you can give two hours a month to attend a meeting then your voice can really make a difference and you will have the satisfaction of demonstrating to your child that education is a high priority to you and should be to them.

**BE YOUR CHILD’S
CHEERLEADER!! COACH
THEIR WINNING TEAM –
THEIR EDUCATION TEAM!**

For more information on how to engage with your children in their academic journey and school visit

parentsengagedineducation.ca

HOW I CAN ENGAGE MY CHILD

in Learning in Everyday Activities

By: Theresa Pastore, Executive Director – Parents Engaged in Education

Today there never seems to be enough time to get everything done.

Parents may really want to engage their child in learning, but, it seems almost impossible to find time to think of new challenging activities or books they can learn from. I suggest that all parents take a deep breath, children learn everyday, in everything they do.

Here are some suggestions that might help and not require any, or little, additional time for you as a parent.

Before children are at an age when they can read, give them a set of measuring cups. When you are making dinner, ask them to measure out some of the ingredients. While they are measuring it is a great time to ask them some questions, such as, why is it important to measure? If we put one cup of water and one cup of milk in the mix, how many cups are we putting in? Something as simple as making hot dogs on the BBQ – if we are going to give everyone in the family one hot dog, how many hot

dogs do we need? If we have a bun for every hot dog, how many things do we have all together? If we put a knife and fork out for every person in the family, how many utensils are we putting on the table? These questions help them develop simple math skills and teach the concept of adding.

While you are working in the backyard, tell your child a story about your own childhood. Ask them to repeat the story back to you – this helps them listen and exercise their memory (you might be surprised at how their

version comes out).

If you are about to tackle a task, ask your child how they think you should do it. You might be surprised at what a useful suggestion can come out of a 4-6 year old.

As your child is discovering reading they love to impress you with their new found knowledge.

When you receive flyers in the mail ask them what words they can read. Guide them by telling them to look at some of the pictures to see what they

might tell them about what that flyer is about.

When you receive a letter or bill, ask your child if they could read you the address on the front as a way to teach them where they live so they can repeat it if they are ever lost or need help.

When you sit outside or go for a walk and someone walks by with a pet, ask your child how to spell “cat” or “dog”. Ask them questions about the animal to see the world through their eyes i.e. Why do you think that dogs have all that fur? I am sure that they wonder why dogs and cats don’t need clothes when we do. It is also a great time to talk about how nature has made these animals to have heavier coats in the winter and lighter coats in the summer. What is it called when their winter fur starts falling out? Why do you think a dog barks if you come near it? This is a great lesson about the affect of strangers. Since an animal will generally bark or even scream out when a stranger approaches it, especially if it is alone, explain to your child that they do this to protect themselves, hoping to ward off people from coming too close. This is a great opportunity to talk about stranger safety.

As their math skills progress there are even more opportunities in everyday life to engage them.

If you need a greeting card for a family or friend’s birthday, take your child with you to the store. Ask them to read a few aloud to you so you can pick your favourite. You can really make them feel important if you tell them they can

pick the card they think would be best after they read several to you.

If you are buying a toy with an age recommendation, ask your child to read it to you and take it further by asking why they think a child must be a certain age to use the toy. These lessons can be really helpful if you have younger children because it creates an understanding of why they cannot play with the toy and the older child might take the responsibility to be sure the younger children do not play with it.

If you are about to tackle a task, ask your child how they think you should do it.

When you’re shopping for groceries there are many opportunities to learn. Have them weigh the produce for you so they learn the concept of weight measurement and the affect that has on how much something costs.

When children get to the point of having steady hands and less impulsive actions it is great to involve them further in cooking and kitchen duties. Simple things like letting them measure and mix the ingredients in a recipe. Maybe the recipe was handed down from another generation of your family and this is a great opportunity

to talk about them with your child and what the world was like when they were young.

Buy blank cards and have your child write the message to the recipient for a special occasion. Have them ask the whole family what their favourite character or actor is and request that they write a story to read to everyone at dinner which includes these people.

If they are playing video games, sit with them and ask them to teach you how they strategize different scenarios in order to move on, how many times have they tried that particular level and congratulate them on their perseverance and their desire to be successful. Encourage them to think about how great it would be if they transfer these skills to their academic learning.

Every walk or outside experience opens an abundance of subjects to engage your child. Have them pick up a leaf or two and ask what they know about it. Suggest that they go back and research more information about the tree that this leaf comes from and before they go to bed to tell you all that they learned. This is something you can do as you get the yard work done or walk the dog.

At this age the environment is a fascinating topic for children. They likely know more than you might about how clouds are formed, and why there are rainbows. At school they learn about the need to recycle, sort garbage and the benefit of composting – they can now be your teacher.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR CHILD AND THEIR SCHOOL – IT IS ONE OF THE MOST VALUABLE WAYS TO SPEND YOUR TIME.

ENGAGING WITH YOUR CHILD AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

The challenge at the secondary level is that often your child does not want to engage. They see every question you ask as interference in their lives. Often, they start to believe that their parents really don't know anything, they don't care about them and sadly that they are old enough to do everything they need on their own.

It is easy at this time for parents to start separating themselves from their children's education. We comfort ourselves with the idea that we got them that far and now they should be able to get themselves through school. They don't want you involved and you might believe that is actually a relief.

I have always held the opinion that the opposite is true. I believe that our children need us more than ever as they enter their teens and high school.

Apart from the academic struggles they face, often high school is when peer pressure and bullying can increase mental health issues. If we are not engaged with our children's education and school at this stage they may feel that we think they have got it handled and feel less like involving their parents. If education is not an ongoing discussion in your household, they may hesitate to tell you they are struggling with a certain subject, teacher or other issues.

Perhaps starting a discussion with a problem you might have had in school and asking if they have ever had the same issue might inspire them to open up and discuss it.

Find out their specific interests. It may be that you have a budding artist, poet or rock star in your midst. Ask them why they are interested in that area and how they think they can build that talent into their future goals. Don't discourage your future rock star, but, maybe you can impress on them that talent isn't all they need. They need to understand marketing, legal contracts, accounting etc., so education still remains a high priority. Even if they think they can hire people to do that, ask them how they would know if the person has their best interest in mind if they don't understand those things themselves. This is a great way to set a high academic standard for them to achieve without belittling their dreams.

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE

These are just a few strategies that I have used to keep engaged in my children's education. This article is meant to be a starting point to the hundreds of ways parents can engage and make learning part of their children's lives everyday whether it's a school day or not.

When presented with a variety of ways they can learn, they might not catch on that they are actually being educated!!

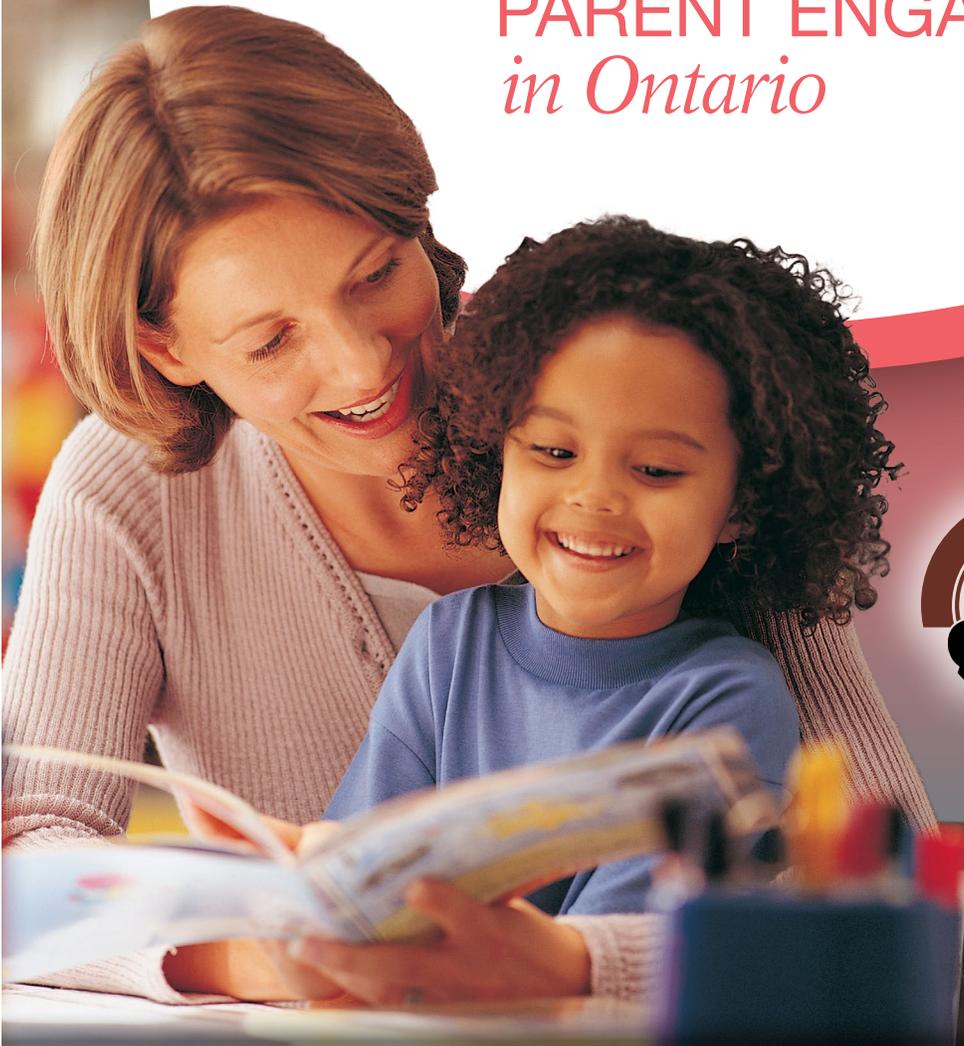
SUMMING UP PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Parent engagement can mean many things in a child's academic career. From working at the kitchen table, to helping with homework, to everyday activities like those above, to helping out in the classroom, to sitting as a partner with the principal to elevate the academic experience for all children in the school; anything, big or small, will benefit your child's future.

The research states that parent engagement results in the following:

1. Higher academic achievement
2. Better attendance at school
3. Better social skills i.e. Less behaviour issues
4. Higher graduation rates
5. Higher chance a student will move on to post-secondary school
6. Students are more confident

For as challenging as lack of time can be for all of us, the reality is that children seem to grow up very fast and the things we put off until tomorrow can affect their academic achievement in long run.



SCHOOL BOARDS
THAT SUPPORT
PARENT ENGAGEMENT
in Ontario



**Waterloo Catholic
District School Board**

**Wellington
Catholic**
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD 

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE YOUR SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTED ON THIS PAGE,
PLEASE CONTACT PARENTENGAGEMENTGROUP@GMAIL.COM**

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

REGULATION 612 PROCESS

- An election shall be held during the first 30 days of each school year, on a date determined by the chair after consulting with the Principal.
- The Principal of the school shall give 14 days written notice of the date, time and location of the election to every parent with a child enrolled in the school. This notice may be given by providing notice to the parent's child to deliver or by posting the notice in a location accessible to parents.
- A person is eligible to be elected if they are a parent/guardian of a child at the school, providing they are not employed at the school. If they are employed by the board elsewhere, they must declare this prior to the election.
- The election will be conducted by secret ballot.
- The number of parents to be elected shall be established by the council by-laws or as the board establishes.
- Following the election, the Principal shall inform the community who has been elected to the council.

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

As with all things, communication is the most important tool in getting parents to attend the Annual General Meeting and consider becoming part of the school council. Consider some of the following suggestions:

- Send a letter home to parents promoting the benefits of parent engagement.
- Communicate the accomplishments of the current year school council to let parents know what a valuable part they can play in the school.
- Post messages on the parent bulletin board in the school about the meeting including the speaker that will take part.
- Dedicate a portion of the website to the Annual General Meeting.
- Have the Principal speak about the important role of the school council at curriculum night and encourage parents to run for election.
- Speak to new Junior Kindergarten parents at orientation about becoming involved in the school council. Often the most enthusiastic parent members can come from the earliest grade.

SAMPLE AGENDA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

- Welcome
- Principal Address
- Chair Address
- Annual Summary of Activities Report from previous year's council
- Annual Financial Report from previous year
- Speaker/Presenter
- Review Nominations
- Request any self-nominations from the floor
- Election Committee conducts election
- Adjournment
- (Excellent time to serve refreshments and get to know new council members)
- Providing child minding will help encourage participation at the AGM. Contact your local secondary school for students who need community hours to provide care.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO

Experienced. Knowledgeable. Respected.

Find out how well-qualified your child's teacher is.

Learn more at oct.ca/findateacher



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.



ONTARIO'S WATCHDOG
CHIEN DE GARDE DE L'ONTARIO

**Have a problem
with your
school board?
We could help.**

Contact us: 1-800-263-1830 | www.ombudsman.on.ca



Parents
ENGAGED IN EDUCATION

www.parentsengagedineducation.ca

parentengagementgroup@gmail.com

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.

Follow us on twitter  @parentengagcons