

# SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR'S GUIDE TO



# ENGAGEMENT

Strengthening Partnerships Within  
K-12 School Communities

2011



Association des directions  
et directions adjointes des  
écoles franco-ontariennes





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# Section 1



# INTRODUCTION & GOALS



## **Development Team 2010 - 2011**

**Arnott, Ken**, Elementary Principal, York Region District School Board, OPC  
Elementary Team Member

**Barchiesi, Mary**, Director of Professional Learning, CPCO  
Association Advisor

**Beauchemin, Jeanine**, Educational Consultant, ADFO  
Elementary Team Member

**Begg, Mary**, Educational Consultant, OPC  
Secondary Team Member

**Czupajlo, Ania**, Sr. Graphic Designer, CPCO  
Design and Layout

**Greenwood, Maggie**, Educational Consultant, OPC  
Editor

**Patterson, MaryAdelle**, Educational Consultant, CPCO  
Elementary Team Member

**Petit, Mark**, Educational Consultant, CPCO  
Secondary Team Member

**Therrien, Raymond**, Educational Consultant, ADFO  
Secondary Team Member

## Introduction

In Ontario, the publicly funded education landscape continues to develop as a diverse cultural mosaic, reflecting school communities that are language, faith and values based. This Ontario school landscape depicts a multi-faceted image, with the ongoing priority to provide a learning environment and curriculum that supports, encourages and enhances student achievement and well-being. Studies have shown that for student learning and achievement to improve, parents<sup>1</sup> must play an active role in their children's<sup>2</sup> education and for schools to become better, parents must be involved and engaged.<sup>3</sup>

This guide supports the understanding and implementation of *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools* and *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*. Both policies provide a framework for educators to identify and remove discriminatory biases and systemic barriers so that students, parents and all members of school communities are welcomed, respected and engaged. The primary focus of this guide is to establish a clear understanding of the various types of parent support, involvement and engagement. An essential understanding must be the recognition that meaningful partnerships among parents, educators and communities are the core of parent engagement.

As all partners in education strive to further enhance a system that focuses on the top priorities of high levels of student achievement and well-being, reduce gaps in student achievement and increase public confidence in publicly funded education, our system will develop and sustain an equitable and inclusive foundation. This foundation will support the fundamental understanding that parent engagement, and student achievement and well-being are directly linked.

School administrators play a vital role in connecting with and including all parents within the school culture and the learning environment in order to have a positive impact on student achievement and well-being. School leaders are the key to establishing a welcoming climate of open communication and partnership between parents and staff.

*Effective schools use their internal collaborative strength to seek out relationships with the community. They see parents more as part of the solution than as part of the problem. They pursue programs and activities that are based on two-way capacity building in order to mobilize the resources of both the community and the school in the service of learning.*

~ Fullan (2000) p. 4

<sup>1</sup> Parents - refers to parents, guardians and care-givers throughout this resource.

<sup>2</sup> Children - refers to all students in grades K-12 throughout this resource.

<sup>3</sup> Engagement - refers to both/either engagement and/or involvement throughout this resource.

## Goals

The purpose of this guide is to assist and support school administrators in the implementation of the Ministry of Education *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools* to improve student achievement and well-being.

*Parent engagement in school is nurtured when parents come to understand that such involvement is a key part of what it means to be a responsible parent, when parents believe they have the skills and know-how to make meaningful contributions to the school's efforts and when they believe that school staffs, as well as their own children, value their participation in the school.*

~ Leithwood (2010) p. 11

**Through the use of this guide school leaders will:**

- understand the vital role that each partner plays in shaping and sustaining a strong publicly funded education system in Ontario;
- understand and learn how to identify and remove discriminatory biases and systemic barriers so that students, parents and school communities are welcomed, respected and engaged by:
  - » understanding the role of an active, inclusive school council in creating caring, welcoming school communities that strive to engage all parents;
  - » continuing the use of the strategies of *Energizing Ontario Education* and *Putting Ontario's Leadership Framework Into Action*; and
  - » implementing both policies, *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools* and *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*.
- use the *K-12 School Effectiveness Framework* to identify clear strategies and set timelines for enhancing parent engagement to improve student achievement and well-being in all Ontario schools;
- build a collaborative climate, structure the organization for success and connect the school to its wider environment;
- provide opportunities for parent and student voice within their school communities; and
- build awareness of available research on parent engagement.

*Parents need to hold high aspirations and expectation for their children, and schools need to work in partnership with parents so that the home and school can share in these expectations and support learning.*

~ Hattie (2009) p. 70



## Section 2



# MINISTRY POLICIES & SUPPORTS

## Executive Summary of *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*

Ontario's Vision of Parent Engagement	
Parent engagement has a positive impact on student achievement and well-being.	
<p>Students are supported and inspired to learn in a culture of high expectations in which parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are welcomed, respected and valued by the school community as partners in their children's learning and development;</li> <li>• have opportunities to be involved, and also a full range of choices about how to be involved in the educational community to support student success;</li> <li>• are engaged through ongoing communication and dialogue with other educational partners to support a positive environment at home and at school; and</li> <li>• are supported with information and tools necessary to participate in school life.</li> </ul>	
The <i>Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools</i> identifies <b>four key strategies</b> designed to support parents as partners so that parents have the opportunity – and the skills, knowledge and tools – to engage with all education partners in fulfilling Ontario's core priorities for education.	
What We Know	Strategies for Success
The positive results of a genuine partnership between parents and schools include improved student achievement, reduced absenteeism, positive student behaviour, and increased confidence among parents in their children's schooling.	<p><b>Strategy 1: School Climate</b> Foster and sustain a positive, welcoming school climate in which all parent perspectives are encouraged, valued and heard. <i>Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools</i>, pp. 17-19</p>
<p>Parent involvement programs that are effective in engaging diverse families; recognize, respect and address cultural and socio-economic differences.</p> <p>Parents need to hold high aspirations and expectations for their children, and schools need to work in partnership with parents to support learning, so that the home and the school can share in these expectations and support learning.</p>	<p><b>Strategy 2: Eliminating Barriers</b> Identify and remove barriers to parent engagement that may prevent some parents from fully participating in their children's learning and to reflect the diversity of our students and communities. <i>Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools</i>, pp. 19-20</p>
Parents have a primary influence on their children's attitudes towards school, their learning and their future success.	<p><b>Strategy 3: Supports for Parents</b> Provide parents with the knowledge, skills and tools they need to support student learning at home and at school. <i>Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools</i>, pp. 20-22</p>
Positive parental aspirations and expectations for their children's educational achievement have a strong relationship with children's actual achievement.	<p><b>Strategy 4: Parent Outreach</b> Review and expand communication and outreach strategies such as local workshops, presentations, tools and resources to share information and strategies related to supporting learning at home and parent engagement in schools. <i>Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools</i>, pp. 22-23</p>

*Good schools become better schools when they are strongly connected with parents as part of the learning community.*

## Executive Summary of *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*

<b>Parent Engagement - Implications for Policy Development</b>	
<p>An effective parent engagement policy must acknowledge the importance of parent voice by providing multiple ways for parents to express their perspectives on education and to receive responses from other educational partners.</p> <p><i>Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, p. 11</i></p>	
<p>Research has shown that school practices to involve families make a difference in whether or not - and which - families become involved, as well as how they become involved.</p> <p><i>Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, p. 12</i></p>	
<p>A parent engagement policy that supports positive links through thoughtful, concrete actions contributes to a general awareness that all parents and families are welcomed at school.</p> <p><i>Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, p. 12</i></p>	
<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language</li> <li>• Parent education levels</li> <li>• Single parenthood</li> <li>• Balancing schedules</li> <li>• Lack of communication</li> <li>• School environment</li> <li>• Attitudes of school staff</li> <li>• Reduced involvement at the secondary level</li> <li>• Cultural influences</li> <li>• Socio-economic status</li> <li>• Geography – local challenges facing urban, rural and northern communities</li> <li>• Break down barriers that exist</li> <li>• Reduced parent engagement at the secondary school level resulting in reduced parent volunteerism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing technology advancements</li> <li>• Workshops for parents</li> <li>• Online tools and strategies</li> <li>• Increased knowledge and understanding</li> <li>• Broader opportunities for involvement</li> <li>• School councils</li> <li>• Parent Involvement Committees (PICs)</li> <li>• Parent Voice</li> <li>• Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs)</li> <li>• Home conditions that support children as learners at all grade levels</li> <li>• Shared experiences</li> <li>• Early Learning (FDKP)</li> <li>• Community partnerships</li> </ul>
<b>The Role of Communication</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective, ongoing communication results in positive and respectful relationships.</li> <li>• An effective network includes clear two-way channels for communication from home to school and school to home.</li> <li>• A variety of methods should be used to communicate with diverse parent communities, from newsletters, emails, face-to-face meetings, interactive websites, online surveys, phone trees, videos and webcasts.</li> <li>• Respectful, ongoing communication and transparency are essential if we are to fulfil our vision of parent engagement.</li> </ul>	

*Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*

## From Policy to Practice: **Checklist of School Actions**

Strategies for Success: School Actions (SA)	✓
SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school climate where parental input is welcomed, respected and valued.	
SA-2: Implement strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement by students, parents and our diverse communities.	
SA-3: Actively explore and utilize opportunities (such as Parents Reaching Out [PRO] grants) to further engage parents at school and at home to support student achievement. <a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/reaching.html">www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/reaching.html</a>	
SA-4: Review existing parent and community partnerships and seek to expand them to reflect the diversity of our parents and the broader community.	
SA-5: Discuss learning expectations and students' academic progress with students and parents, and make efforts to assist parents who do not understand the language of the school.	
SA-6: Actively support and encourage school council members and other parents to share their ideas for reducing the student achievement gap and to help inform school improvement plans.	
SA-7: Support strategies (e.g. workshops, resources such as tips sheets and translation of materials) for parents and students to develop skills and knowledge that support a positive learning environment.	
SA-8: Work towards representation of diverse parent groups on all school committees including school councils.	
SA-9: Implement the board <i>Equity and Inclusive Education Policy</i> , and its programs and action plans, to support parent engagement and reflect the needs of our students and our diverse school communities.	
SA-10: Monitor school climate (e.g. through surveys and focus groups) to help identify barriers to parent involvement or issues that should be addressed in order to foster and support a safe welcoming learning environment.	
SA-11: Review self-assessment processes to determine the effectiveness of the school's parent engagement strategies.	
SA-12: Communicate progress to the board and the school's local community including educators, students, parents and the public.	
SA-13: Continue consulting with parents during the IEP/IPRC processes.	
SA-14: Where schools are offering full-day kindergarten, inform parents about this new initiative and explain how it will provide young students with a stronger foundation for future learning.	

## From Policy to Practice: **List of Look-Fors**

As school leaders in discussion with your superintendent, and consistent with your board’s policies and guidelines, you may want to consider the following “look-fors” that measure parent engagement. These indicators may be useful in developing your own indicators at your school.

<b>Some Suggested Indicators that Measure Parent Engagement</b>	✓
Parents from diverse community groups are participating in meaningful school activities.	
A diverse representation of parents (cultural, ethnic, linguistic) groups are actively engaged on the school council.	
A greater number of parents (from various community groups) are participating at the school council meetings.	
Teachers are creating innovative opportunities for parents to be engaged in their child’s learning at home and at school.	
Parents are consulting the school’s website for information on various school initiatives and procedures, i.e. homework, security guidelines, after school activities and other services.	
Parents understand the vision/mission of the school.	
Parents are participating in the Parent/Teacher interviews.	
Parents attend school learning activities, i.e. education week, school pageant, open house, special outdoor activity, math night, reading night etc.	
Parents are providing input for improvement using tools such as online surveys, print surveys, etc., prepared by the school.	
The school’s culture is focused on student learning, achievement and well-being, and is dynamic and interactive.	
The school suspension rate is lower than previous years.	
The absenteeism rate is lower than previous years.	
Parent dialogue with classroom teacher is more frequent and focused on the student outcomes and results.	
Parents assist schools in understanding family circumstances and make recommendations for how best to work with their child at school.	
The school informs parents about school wide events and individual student progress, and parents contact the school when they need information or want to inform the school about their child.	
Parents respond to school communication and make themselves available when dropping off or picking up their children.	
Parents attend school meetings when possible and send a relative or friend as surrogate when they cannot attend.	

## Executive Summary of Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy

Vision
<p>We envision an inclusive education system in Ontario in which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all students, parents and other members of the school community are welcomed and respected;</li> <li>• every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning.</li> </ul>
<p>To achieve an equitable and inclusive school climate, school boards and schools will strive to ensure that all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable and accepted. All staff and students need to value diversity and demonstrate respect for others and a commitment to establishing a just, caring society.</p>
What We Know
<p>There is a need to work collectively to realize our vision of an equitable and inclusive education system, and to eliminate all types of systemic barriers from Ontario’s schools and society.</p>
<p>The equity and inclusive education strategy aims to close student achievement gaps by identifying and eliminating any biases and barriers that may limit students’ prospects for learning, growing and contributing fully to society.</p>
<p>The strategy recognizes that factors such as race, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, gender, gender identity and class may intersect to create additional barriers for some students.</p>
<p>The strategy recognizes that Ontario’s publicly funded schools must increase their efforts to develop an approach that will respond to the full range of needs within the education community.</p>
<p>Parents want our schools to bring out the very best in their children and help them reach their full potential in a positive learning environment free from discrimination and harassment.</p>

*Effective implementation is essential and is therefore a key component of this strategy.*

~ Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools -  
Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation, p. 11

Guiding Principles of the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy
<p>Equity and inclusive education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is a foundation of excellence;</li> <li>• meets individual needs;</li> <li>• identifies and eliminates barriers;</li> <li>• promotes a sense of belonging;</li> <li>• involves the broad community;</li> <li>• builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives; and</li> <li>• is demonstrated throughout the system.</li> </ul>

## From Policy to Practice: School Action Items Based on the Ministry of Education's Eight Areas of Focus

<b>1. Board Policies, Programs, Guidelines and Practices</b>	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement strategies to engage students, parents and the broader community actively in the review, development, and implementation of initiatives to support and promote equity and inclusive education.</li> <li>Implement board equity and inclusive education policies, programs, and action plans that reflect the needs of their diverse school communities.</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Shared and Committed Leadership</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide leadership that is responsive to the diverse nature of Ontario's communities and committed to identifying and removing discriminatory biases and systemic barriers to learning.</li> </ul>	
<b>3. School-Community Leadership</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement strategies to review existing community partnerships so that they reflect the diversity of the broader community.</li> <li>Work towards representation of diverse groups on school committees.</li> </ul>	
<b>4. Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review classroom strategies and revise them as needed to help ensure that they are aligned with and reflect school-wide equity and inclusive education policies.</li> </ul>	
<b>5. Religious Accommodation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the board's religious accommodation guidelines and communicate these guidelines to the school community.</li> </ul>	
<b>6. School Climate and the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement by students, parents and the community.</li> <li>Put procedures in place that will enable students and staff to report incidents of discrimination and harassment safely, and that will also enable the school to respond in a timely manner.</li> </ul>	
<b>7. Professional Learning</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review classroom strategies and revise them as needed to help ensure that they are aligned with and reflect school-wide equity and inclusive education policies.</li> </ul>	
<b>8. Accountability and Transparency</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report progress annually to the school board.</li> <li>Develop school improvement plans that are aligned with <i>Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy</i>.</li> <li>Review and establish self-assessment processes to determine the effectiveness of the school's equity and inclusive education plans and procedures.</li> </ul>	

Adapted from *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation*, pp. 49-52

## From Policy to Practice: School Indicators for Developing your own Indicators for Implementation

<b>Board Policies, Programs, Guidelines, and Practices</b>	✓
The schools have reviewed their codes of conduct to determine that they include the principles of equity and inclusive education, and processes are in place to address harassment and discrimination.	
Meeting dates are scheduled to take into account faith holy days, in order to remove possible deterrents to attendance by parents and community members.	
<b>Shared and Committed Leadership</b>	
Training is provided for students, teachers and support staff on equity and inclusive education and leadership initiatives.	
<b>School–Community Relationships</b>	
The school has developed a profile of its diverse communities.	
Diverse communities are involved in partnership activities within the school.	
Processes are established to identify and address systemic barriers that may deter or prevent any community members from participating in school activities.	
Diverse communities are represented on existing school and board committees (e.g. Special Education Advisory Committee, Parent Involvement Committee, School Council, Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee).	
Mechanisms are in place (e.g. school climate surveys) to determine if parents/guardians feel welcome and comfortable in the schools.	
<b>Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices</b>	
A school procedure is established to assess learning materials for discriminatory bias.	
Training based on the belief that all students can learn is reflected in classroom teachers' and guidance counsellors' expectations of students, assessment and evaluation practices, counselling about available program options and other counselling practices.	
Resource and instructional strategies encourage open discussion of the prohibited grounds of discrimination under the Human Rights Code (e.g. race, gender, disability, faith) in society, the community, and the school.	
A variety of assessment strategies and instruments are used to inform short- and long-term planning to reduce gaps in student achievement and improve student learning.	
Parents are actively involved in assessment and placement decisions, including those required by the Identification, Placement and Review Committee.	

Adapted from the *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools - Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation*, 2009

<b>Religious Accommodation</b>	
A guideline is developed that outlines religious accommodations available to students and staff.	
The guideline is developed in partnership with multiple faith communities and with individuals who do not belong to a religion or practise any specific faith.	
The provisions of the guideline are actively communicated to students, teachers, parents, school staff, school councils and volunteers.	
Community resources are identified that can provide information to school staff about the faith needs of individuals in the school and school community.	
<b>School Climate and the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment</b>	
School codes of conduct are revised to explicitly address all forms of racism, discrimination and harassment.	
All students, parents and other members of the school community are welcomed and respected.	
Every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning.	
School codes of conduct reflect the needs of the diverse communities served by the board and are developed with the active involvement of students, staff, parents and a representative cross-section of community members.	
<b>Professional Learning</b>	
Antiracism and antidiscrimination training is provided, including training in prevention and early intervention strategies.	
Opportunities are provided for students, administrators, teachers, support and board staff, and trustees to participate in equity and inclusive education training and leadership initiatives.	
A board equity and inclusive education contact is identified to liaise with the ministry and other boards to share challenges, promising practices and resources.	
The principles of equity and inclusive education are modelled and incorporated in professional learning programs.	
Students are encouraged and supported in efforts to promote social justice, equity, antiracism and antidiscrimination in schools and classrooms.	
<b>Accountability and Transparency</b>	
Equity and inclusive education goals are embedded in school improvement plans.	
The equity and inclusive education policy is actively communicated to students, teachers, parents, school staff, school councils and volunteers.	
Steps are taken to increase the participation of parents/guardians, trustees, students, and the community in the development of the equity and inclusive education policy.	
All incidents of discrimination and harassment are addressed in a timely and appropriate manner.	

Adapted from the *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools - Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation*, 2009

## Parent Engagement Highlights

Research has shown that positive parental aspirations and expectations for their children’s educational achievement have a strong relationship with children’s actual achievement.

~ *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, p. 8

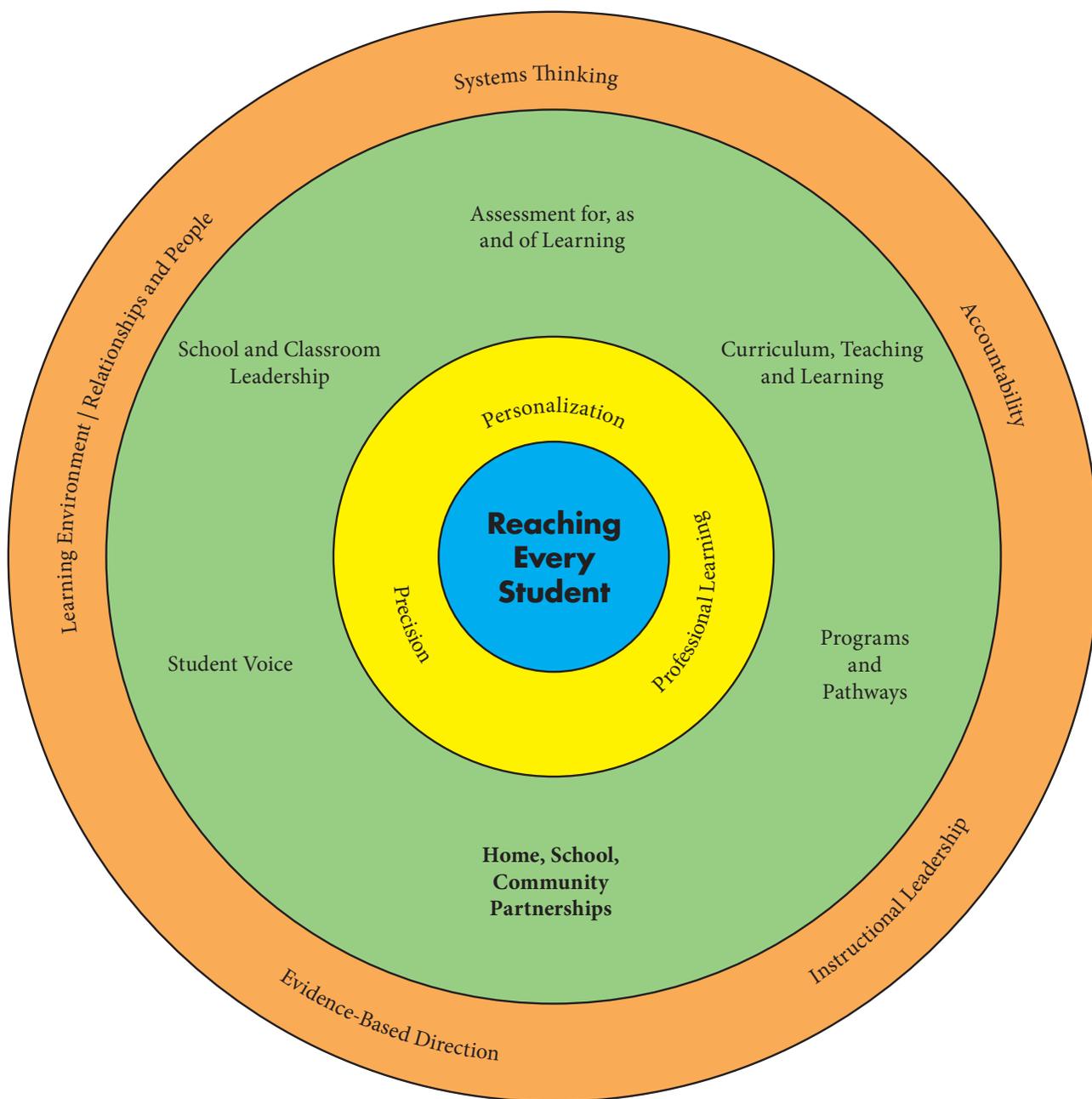
<p><b>Parents are involved:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in programs that often teach parents specific skills and strategies for teaching and reinforcing school tasks at home (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez &amp; Bloom, 1993);</li> <li>• often in school activities; and</li> <li>• when they are regularly engaged in communication with the school.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Epstein’s Six Types of Successful Parent Involvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Parenting</b> – help all families establish a home environment to support children as students</li> <li>• <b>Communicating</b> – design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and their children’s progress</li> <li>• <b>Volunteering</b> – recruit and organize parent help and support</li> <li>• <b>Learning at Home</b> – provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning</li> <li>• <b>Decision Making</b> – include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives</li> <li>• <b>Collaborating with the Community</b> – identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices and student learning and development</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">~ Epstein (2011) p. 395</p>
<p><b>Results of Parent Involvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academics, attitudes, attendance, behaviour and graduation rates improve.</li> <li>• Studies have shown that good schools become better schools with increased parent involvement.</li> </ul>	

*“Just about all families care about their children, want them to succeed and are eager to obtain better information from schools and communities so as to remain good partners in their children’s education.”*

~ Epstein (2011) p. 393

## K – 12 School Effectiveness Framework

Home, School and Community partnership has been highlighted to demonstrate the connection of *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools* to the *K-12 School Effectiveness Framework*



Adapted from *K-12 School Effectiveness Framework*, 2010

## **K – 12 School Effectiveness Framework**

### **Curriculum, Teaching and Learning**

- A culture of high expectations supports the belief that all students can learn, progress and achieve.
- A clear emphasis on high levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy is evident throughout the school.
- Teaching and learning incorporates 21<sup>st</sup> century content, global perspectives, learning skills, resources and technologies.
- Learning is deepened through authentic, relevant and meaningful student inquiry.
- Instruction and assessment are differentiated in response to student strengths, needs and prior learning.
- Timely and tiered interventions, supported by a team approach, respond to individual student learning needs.

### **Programs and Pathways**

- Programs, pathways, and career planning meet the learning needs and interests of all students.
- Authentic experiences and experiential learning are built into all subject areas and programs.
- Students, parents and teachers understand the full range of pathways, options, programs and supports that are available.
- Students have opportunities to build on in-school and out-of-school experiences and activities to further explore personal interests, strengths and career options.

### **Home, School and Community Partnerships**

- The school council has a meaningful role in supporting learning and achievement for all students.
- Students, parents and community members are engaged and welcomed as respected, valued partners.
- The school and community build partnerships to enhance learning opportunities for students.
- Learning opportunities, resources and supports are provided to help parents support student learning and have productive parent-teacher-student conversations.

### **Assessment for, as and of Learning**

- Students and teachers share a common understanding of the learning goals and related success criteria.
- During learning, students receive ongoing, descriptive feedback based on the success criteria, from the teacher and from peers.
- Students are taught and regularly use self-assessment skills to monitor their progress towards achieving learning goals, and to set their own learning goals within the context of the Ontario curriculum and/or the Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- Assessment tasks are aligned with the curriculum, collaboratively developed by teachers and the resulting demonstrations of student learning analyzed to ensure consistency with success criteria.
- A variety of valid and reliable assessment data is used by students and teachers to continuously monitor learning, to inform instruction and assessment, and to determine next steps.
- Assessment of learning provides evidence for evaluating the quality of student learning at or near the end of a period of learning.
- Ongoing communication is in place to allow students, teachers and parents to effectively monitor student learning.

### **School and Classroom Leadership**

- Collaborative instructional leadership builds capacity to strengthen and enhance teaching and learning.
- Processes and practices are designed to deepen content knowledge and refine instruction to support student learning and achievement.
- Organizational structures are coherent, flexible and respond to the needs of students.
- Job-embedded and enquiry-based professional learning builds capacity, informs instructional practice and contributes to a culture of learning.
- Staff, students and school community promote and sustain student well-being and positive student behaviour in a safe and healthy learning environment.

### **Student Voice**

- The teaching and learning environment is inclusive and reflects individual student strengths, needs and learning preferences.
- School programs incorporate students' stated priorities and reflect the diversity, needs and interests of the school population.
- Students are partners in conversations about school improvement.
- Explicit strategies are in place to enable students to demonstrate strong citizenship skills such as leadership, teamwork and advocacy.

## A Caring and Safe School Culture

*Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools and Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* emphasise the importance of a caring and safe school. School administrators can use this checklist for self-assessment to identify what can be done to offer a caring and safe school culture for all students, staff, parents and community members.

Building a caring and safe school culture begins with knowing what a caring and safe school culture looks like. A caring and safe school is a place where all partners – students, staff, parents and community members – treat others fairly, with respect and kindness, and act in a socially responsible way towards all members of the school community, including students with special education needs.

It is an inclusive community where diversity is affirmed within a framework of common values, and where all members participate in decision making and cooperate to promote the well-being of all. Such a community is characterized by:

- caring and cooperative relationships;
- a framework of common values that includes:
  - » respect for democratic values, rights and responsibilities;
  - » respect for cultural diversity;
  - » respect for law and order; and
  - » respect for individual differences;
- clear and consistent behavioural expectations; and
- appropriate and positive role modeling by staff and students.

*“The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children’s families.”*

~ Epstein (2010) p. 389

## A Checklist for Assessing School Culture

- All members of the school community feel safe, comfortable and accepted.
- The learning environment is healthy, safe and orderly.
- The school atmosphere is positive, friendly and welcoming.
- Morale among students and staff is high.
- Teachers, students and parents feel that the environment is favourable to learning.
- Diversity is acknowledged, accepted and respected.
- The school mission and vision promotes student achievement.
- There are high expectations for all students.
- Students have opportunities to enhance their self-esteem and develop respect for themselves and others.
- Expectations for student behaviour are clear and effectively communicated, and students are supported in their efforts to meet those expectations.
- School leaders actively promote initiatives to strengthen instructional skills and techniques.
- The quality of classroom instruction is consistently high.
- Teachers receive recognition and support for their contributions to the students and the school programs.
- The value of teamwork is recognized and responsibilities are shared.
- Relationships and interactions between students and between students and teachers are positive and characterized by mutual respect.
- Community involvement in school activities is welcomed and encouraged.
- Parents are welcomed into the school through meaningful involvement as partners in the learning process.
- School leaders encourage risk taking, individual initiative and leadership growth.
- Mistakes are seen as an opportunity for learning.
- Consequences for challenging student behaviour are appropriate and are applied fairly.

Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario, p. 5

*If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development.*

~ Epstein (2011) p. 389



## Section 3



# SUPPORTING RESOURCES

The following pages contain samples of various tools and resources, which were selected from schools and boards across the province. Each may be modified to best meet the needs of your local school community.



## Sample 1

This sample survey may be used by school leaders to become more familiar with their school communities. It could be useful for a new principal coming into a school or for a principal who notices his/her school community is changing.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, 2010*:

- SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school climate.
- SA-2: Implement strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers.
- SA-7: Support strategies for parents and students to develop skills and knowledge.

## Parent Involvement Survey

As a school council, we would like to understand how best to serve the needs and wishes of our parent community to support student learning and well-being. By completing this survey, you will assist us in achieving this goal.

### 1.1 I/we have children in:

- |                                  |                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> JK      | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 6  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SK      | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 7  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 8  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 9  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 12 |

### 1.2 Please check as many activities as apply.

#### I/we currently participate at the school by:

- volunteering in my child's classroom/library
- attending class trips/events
- helping with school events
- coaching a school team
- being on a school committee
- helping with fundraising
- other activities: please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- not involved

### 1.3 I/we attend school council meetings: Yes No

1.4 Please check all appropriate statements in the sections below.

**I am/we are not involved in the school council because:**

- child care is required
- difficulty understanding English
- uncomfortable in the education environment
- do not feel welcome at the school
- meetings conflicts with my work schedule
- other activities are at the same time
- school councils do not meet my needs
- parent groups are too political
- no interest in being involved at this time
- other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**1.5 I/we attend school council meetings:**

- to support the school community
- to be informed
- other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. School - Home Communications**

**Please indicate the most effective method of communication by using the following scale:  
4 - most effective 3 - effective 2 - not effective 1 - least effective**

- \_\_\_ communication sent home with your child
- \_\_\_ communication mailed home
- \_\_\_ email
- \_\_\_ phone call
- \_\_\_ face-to-face meeting
- \_\_\_ classroom website
- \_\_\_ school webpage
- \_\_\_ automated message system
- \_\_\_ public sign board
- \_\_\_ other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

*“Principal’s should encourage regular surveys of parents to gauge their satisfaction with the quality of education and track it over time.”*  
~ Reach Every Student - Energizing Ontario Education, Ministry of Education (2008) p. 13

**3. Please indicate your level of involvement in the following activities using the following scale:**

**4 - always 3 - sometimes 2 - rarely 1 - never**

- participate in school council meetings
- participate in school council fund raising activities
- volunteer in the classroom
- read to my child
- discuss the school day with my child
- supervise my child when doing homework
- play games with my child
- watch educational television shows with my child
- use the internet for research with my child
- take my child to the library
- talk with other parents about school and education
- talk to the teachers on a regular basis
- talk to teachers only if concerned about my child's progress
- attend parent/teacher interviews
- talk to the principal
- read all school communication
- other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. I would be interested in attending information sessions on the following topics:**

- homework
- literacy
- numeracy
- reading
- bullying
- uses of the computer
- other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. What would be the best time of the day to offer information sessions:**

- 9:00 a.m.
- 10:00 a.m.
- lunch time
- 4:00 p.m.
- 6:00 p.m.
- other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.



## Sample 2

This sample may be used by the school administration or the school council to get feedback regarding parents' level of interest about student learning and achievement. This short survey targets increased parent involvement in the school and their children's learning.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school climate.
- SA-5: Discuss learning expectations and students' academic progress with students and parents, and make efforts to assist parents who do not understand the language of the school.
- SA-6: Actively support and encourage school council members and other parents to share their ideas for reducing the student achievement gap and to help inform school improvement plans.

## Parent Involvement Survey - Learning and Achievement

4 - Strongly interested 3 - Interested 2 - Somewhat interested 1 - Not interested

Learning Activities	Rating Scale			
<b>1. Literacy nights that focus on a variety of topics such as:</b>				
Literacy at home	4	3	2	1
Assessments	4	3	2	1
Evaluation	4	3	2	1
Report cards	4	3	2	1
The Ontario curriculum	4	3	2	1
Other topics, please specify:				
<b>2. Information sessions on topics such as:</b>				
Positive student behaviour	4	3	2	1
Student achievement	4	3	2	1
Healthy nutrition	4	3	2	1
Parent leadership role	4	3	2	1
Other, please specify:				
<b>3. Be part of a committee to build social networking tools and strategies</b>				
	4	3	2	1
<b>4. Workshops on topics such as:</b>				
Awareness among cultural linguistic groups	4	3	2	1
Volunteering	4	3	2	1
How to help my child at home	4	3	2	1
Other social, emotional, mental, spiritual and cognitive dimensions Please specify:				



## Sample 3

This sample cover letter may be used by the school administrator or the school council chair to gather feedback regarding parents' level of satisfaction about the school. This is part of the school council's advisory role with the principal and the school administration.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school climate.
- SA-6: Actively support and encourage school council members and other parents to share their ideas for reducing the student achievement gap and to help inform school improvement plans.
- SA-8: Work towards representation of diverse parent groups on all school committees, including school councils.
- SA-11: Review self-assessment processes to determine the effectiveness of parent engagement strategies.

## School Council - Parent Survey

Dear parent(s),

Two years have passed since the last parent survey was conducted. Next year, the current three-year school plan comes to a close and a new three-year plan will be developed. Our intent is to support the principal and the school staff in developing a School Improvement Plan that reflects your views in key areas such as curriculum development, the learning environment and parent involvement to help support student achievement and well-being.

**Your survey feedback is important.** We cannot over emphasize the value of the response information. The previous survey had a very high return rate and these results focused the school's efforts in areas such as library improvements, literacy, purchases of computer equipment, board funding and staffing allocation, school culture, curriculum and extra-curricular programs, the behaviour code and the lunch policy. Our intention is to be proactive in the planning process and from this year forward, a parent survey will be conducted every three years.

We have designed the parent survey to help us understand your expectations, collect your insights and address your issues. We encourage open and honest responses. We look forward to your input and have provided plenty of space to comment as necessary. We guarantee we will carefully review each response as we did with the previous survey.

Please return your sealed envelope to the classroom teacher. Individual results will be kept confidential. Your responses will be opened and reviewed individually by the Survey Subcommittee of the Council. **Please complete one survey for each child** you have enrolled in the school. In order to help us analyze the data, please identify the grade level of each child.

Please take the time to respond. We look forward to your ideas.

Thank you,

Your Parent Survey Subcommittee

**Please indicate the grade level of your child:**

\_\_\_\_\_ JK, SK      \_\_\_\_\_ 1-3      \_\_\_\_\_ 4-6      \_\_\_\_\_ 7-8      \_\_\_\_\_ 9-10      \_\_\_\_\_ 11-12

	Yes	Somewhat	No
1. Are you pleased with the school goals? Please specify:			
2. Are you satisfied with the physical condition of the school? Please respond as appropriate to each one:			
• cleanliness	_____	_____	_____
• safety	_____	_____	_____
• general repair	_____	_____	_____
• washrooms	_____	_____	_____
• other: _____	_____	_____	_____
3. Are you satisfied with the school facilities and resources? Please respond as appropriate to each one:			
• library	_____	_____	_____
• gym (sports facilities)	_____	_____	_____
• gym (stage and performance equipment)	_____	_____	_____
• music room	_____	_____	_____
• playground facilities	_____	_____	_____
• classroom resources	_____	_____	_____
• front foyer and hall	_____	_____	_____
• other: _____	_____	_____	_____
4. Do you feel student safety, supervision, and discipline inside the school and in the playground are appropriate? Please comment:			
5. Are you satisfied with the overall quality of the education program for your child?			
6. Are you satisfied with the overall quality of the literacy program for your child?			
7. Are you satisfied with the overall quality of the numeracy program for your child?			
8. Are you satisfied with the overall quality of the anti-bullying program for your child?			

	Yes	Somewhat	No
<p>9. Are you satisfied with the overall quality of sports programs and extra-curricular activities for your child? Please respond as appropriate to each one:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• intramural sports</li> <li>• school teams</li> <li>• recess activities</li> <li>• electives</li> <li>• art</li> <li>• theatre</li> <li>• drama club</li> <li>• school band</li> <li>• student council</li> <li>• other: _____</li> </ul>	<p>_____</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
10. Do you know how your child is doing at school?			
11. Does your child have any concerns about going to school? (includes walking to/from school, bussing to/from school, or while at school, etc.) Please comment:			
12. Do you think your child is assigned meaningful homework?			
13. Do you think your child is assigned an appropriate amount of homework?			
<p>14. Which of the following activities do you use to help support homework/classroom learning at home? Please respond as appropriate to each one:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sign homework organizers when requested</li> <li>• provide support for teachers</li> <li>• inform teachers of homework concerns or difficulties</li> <li>• provide a quiet location to do homework</li> <li>• encourage effort, achievement and positive attitude</li> <li>• monitor homework</li> <li>• provide praise, interest and concern</li> <li>• encourage daily reading (e.g. newspapers, magazines, books)</li> <li>• other: _____</li> </ul>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
15. Are you interested in other areas of support such as homework club, parenting information, study tips, reading circles, etc? Please comment:			



	Yes	Somewhat	No
20. Do you feel the school is communicating the following items in an effective manner? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school newsletter</li> <li>• classroom newsletter</li> <li>• website</li> <li>• email</li> <li>• agendas</li> <li>• school office</li> <li>• school administration</li> <li>• teachers</li> <li>• report card</li> <li>• other: _____</li> </ul>	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
21. Are you satisfied with the opportunities provided for volunteering in the classroom?			
22. Are you pleased with the interactions you have had with the principal/vice-principal?			

“Our commitment to the best education for all students impels us to respect and support the wishes of parents in other faith communities for religious education in the public school system... which will reflect their values and beliefs.”

~ This Moment of Promise (2002) p. 7



## Sample 4

The home/school partnership is one of the essential components of an effective school. This survey is designed to help us better understand the level of parent involvement both at school and at home and help guide us in school improvement planning. Please take a few minutes to complete the following survey and help us gather important information about our partnership and how we, as a team, can enhance your child's school experience. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. Results will only be reported in summary form; no individual person will be identified.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, 2010*:

- SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school climate.
- SA-6: Actively support and encourage school council members and other parents to share their ideas for reducing the student achievement gap and to help inform school improvement plans.
- SA-8: Work towards representation of diverse parent groups on all school committees, including school councils.

## Parent Involvement Survey - Home/School

### Part A: Tell Us About Yourself (Demographics)

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender of person completing this survey:

- Female
- Male
- Filled out by more than one person

Please identify the number of children that you have in each division at this school.

- Junior/Senior Kindergarten
- Primary (grades 1-3)
- Junior (grades 4-6)
- Intermediate (grades 7-8)
- Senior (grades 9-12)

## Part B: Helping your Child

It is important for schools to provide families with information that will assist them in establishing home environments to support children as students. In this section of the survey, we are interested in finding out if there are any topics of information that parents need to assist them in supporting their children as students.

Which topics would you like more information about in order to help your child do well in school?

	Not at all interested	A little interested	Somewhat interested	Very interested	Extremely interested
Child/adolescent development	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Communicating with children/teens	<input type="checkbox"/>				
How to help my child(ren) learn at home	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Substance abuse awareness (tobacco, alcohol, drugs)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Student's self-esteem	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Peer pressure	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Health and nutrition	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Behaviour code	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Equity and Inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Motivating my child(ren)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Time management skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please list any other topics you may be interested in:

### Part C: Communication

We want to communicate clearly to you and we want you to be able to communicate with us. This part of the survey deals with the effectiveness of the school's current forms of communication and how you use them.

1. The table below lists some of the ways that schools communicate with parents. Please rate the effectiveness of these forms of communication in **your** school community.

	Not at all effective	A little effective	Somewhat effective	Very effective	Extremely effective	Don't Know	Not Available
School newsletter	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Meet the teacher/ open house	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Student agendas	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Report cards	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Parent/teacher interviews	<input type="checkbox"/>						
School Council meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Parent Involvement Committee meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>						
School webpage	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Telephone conversations	<input type="checkbox"/>						
School sign	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Email	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Online conferences	<input type="checkbox"/>						
The Community Blackboard	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Please comment on any other communication tools used in your school community:

## 2. How often do you...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Not Applicable
Contact the school about your child(ren)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Attend parent/teacher interviews	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Attend School Council meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Attend Parent Involvement Committee meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Respond to report card	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Read the school newsletter	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Attend special events (open house, concerts, performances)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Visit the school website	<input type="checkbox"/>					

**Part D: Volunteering**

Many schools rely on parent volunteers to assist with student learning, school events and in making decisions. We would like to know about your volunteer experiences and barriers to participation.

1. Were you invited to volunteer at school in the last two years?  Yes  No
2. Did you seek the opportunity to volunteer at the school in the past two years?  Yes  No
3. From the list of volunteer activities, which ones did you participate in during the past two years?

Activity	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Helped with an event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coached a team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Led a club or activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organized or acted as a guest speaker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteered on a school trip	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Served on School Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helped organize a Home and School event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participated as a classroom volunteer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assisted with planning graduation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helped to run a fund raising event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assisted with the nutrition program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please list any other volunteer activities that you were involved in over the last two years.

4. What makes it difficult for you to volunteer at the school? (Please check all that apply. If you feel there are no barriers, check the last box only):

- Unaware of the various volunteer opportunities
- Conflict with my work schedule
- Child care responsibilities
- Feeling unwelcome at the school
- Feeling shy/nervous about volunteering
- No interest in volunteering
- Not interested in the volunteering opportunities offered
- Language barriers
- Lack of time
- Lack of transportation to the school
- Volunteer screening process (police check)
- Information about volunteer opportunities not received on time
- There are no barriers to my involvement at school as a volunteer

Please list any other reasons why it might be difficult for you to volunteer at the school.

5. What suggestions do you have on getting other parents involved?

### Part E: Decision-Making Process

Schools recognize and appreciate the input of parents when making school decisions and encourage the development of parent leaders and representatives. This section of the survey asks about your involvement in the decision-making process in the school.

	Yes	No	Unsure
<b>School Council</b>			
1. Does your school council meet regularly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does your school council actively participate in providing advice to the principal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are parents'/guardians' concerns well represented by the school council?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)</b>			
4. Are you aware of the boards' Parent Involvement Committee that meets regularly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Have you or your school council representative attended a PIC meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Other</b>			
6. Have you been involved in any other committees/organizations other than school council or Parent Involvement Committee that have provided advice at the school or board level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Does the school actively seek ideas from parents on school-related issues (e.g. School Improvement Plan)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Have you given your ideas or advice on school-related issues to the staff or school council members?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Do you know how to get involved in the decision-making process at your child(ren)'s school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Does the school staff consider your opinion when it comes to making decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Would you like to contribute more to the school decision-making process (Please check all that apply):

- No, I am satisfied with my current level of participation.
- Yes, but I do not feel encouraged by the school.
- Yes, but I do not know how to get involved.
- Yes, but I do not have time.
- Yes, but the time of the meetings is inconvenient.
- Yes, but communicating in English is difficult for me.
- Yes, but I do not understand the issues very well.
- Yes, but I do not feel comfortable.

Please list any other barriers to your participation in school decision-making.

## Part F: School and Community Collaboration

This section of the survey asks about your use of community services. Many resources and services are available within our community. By collaborating with these organizations, we can strengthen school programs, student learning and development.

Please respond to each of the following statements.

	Yes	No	Unsure
Information about community services is readily available at my child's school (e.g. Recreation Centres, Public Health, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you used any of the community services/organizations that you heard about through the school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the school acknowledge and support events involving members of ethnocultural communities (e.g. Black History Month activities, Chinese New Year, Aboriginal Day activities, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you encourage your child to participate in volunteer projects that serve the community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you attended at least one school activity or event to support your child (e.g. awards assembly, school play, athletic or arts event, concert)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Part G: Learning at Home

Learning occurs at school and at home. This final section of the survey asks about your involvement with your child's schoolwork at home. As you answer the following questions, please focus on **ONE** of your children at this school.

Please check the grade level of this child:

- Junior/Senior Kindergarten
- Primary (grades 1-3)
- Junior (grades 4-6)
- Intermediate (grades 7-10)
- Senior (grades 11-12)

1. How often do you participate in the following activities with your child?

Activity	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Not Applicable
Help develop reading skills	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Help develop writing skills	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Help develop mathematical skills	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Explore career pathways with your child at home	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Prepare for tests/exams	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Follow a homework schedule	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Use school agenda/planner for monitoring learning	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Monitor homework to ensure that assignments are completed on time and done to the best of his/her ability	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Obtain outside educational support to assist with learning at home (i.e. tutoring, homework club)	<input type="checkbox"/>					

2. What other activities do you engage in that enrich your child’s learning experiences (e.g. visits to the library, encouraging a special interest, etc.)?

3. For Middle School and Secondary School Parents:

Do you discuss with your child their course selections before you sign their Secondary School option sheet?

Yes  No

*Thank you for taking the time to complete the Parent Involvement Survey. Your responses will assist the school in better meeting the needs of your child.*

Adapted with permission from the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.

## Sample 5

This checklist can be used to review your current parent engagement activities, and to stimulate discussion and ideas for future activities and events.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-3: Actively explore and utilize opportunities (such as Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grants) to further engage parents at school and at home to support student achievement.
- SA-6: Actively support and encourage school council members and other parents to share their ideas for reducing the student achievement gap and to help inform school improvement plans.
- SA-10: Monitor school climate to help identify barriers to parent involvement or issues that should be addressed in order to foster and support a safe and welcoming learning environment.

## Involving Parents in the School: Tips for School Councils

### Parent Involvement: A Checklist

- Have we used surveys and other information-gathering tools to assess what parents need and want, and to ask for their opinions and suggestions?
- Have we determined the barriers, which may prevent some parents from participating?
- Have we considered applying for a Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grant?
- Do we understand the needs of parents whose first language is other than English?
- Have we explicitly invited parents to volunteer in a variety of school activities?
- Do we know how parents are getting our information, and how they would like to receive it?
- Do we routinely gather parent contact information and use it effectively to keep parents informed?
- Do we have an organized plan for parent engagement activities this year?
- Do we know who has assumed responsibility for each activity within the plan?
- Do we respond immediately when parents indicate a willingness to volunteer or participate in other ways?
- Do we have a school information package for newcomers?
- Do we have an organized method for meeting and welcoming new families?
- Do we actively encourage parents to attend school council meetings?
- Do we acknowledge and involve parents who attend council meetings for the first time?
- Do we provide information or an information event specifically geared to the needs of newcomers?
- Have we successfully addressed barriers to parent participation such as childcare, transportation, language services and off-site/off-hours events and programs for those who cannot attend regular events?
- Do we regularly provide school events that showcase student work and activities, address issues of concern and provide information of interest to parents?

- Do we involve the community in the life of the school through such events as career and community fairs?
- Do we offer training for volunteers to help ensure that they feel confident and equipped for their roles?
- Do we provide parents with the information they need to work effectively with school staff and to support their children's education at home?
- Do we celebrate our multicultural community by offering events that feature varied traditions, customs and sports?
- Do we prominently display information about the school council in a high visibility area of the school?
- Does school council have a presence at school events?
- Do we have a school council newsletter and/or is the school council represented in the school newsletter?
- Does the school council have a presence on the school website?
- Do we send frequent reminders to parents?
- Do we participate as guest speakers wherever possible in the community, outside of school?
- Do we recognize the efforts of parents and school council members, to encourage greater involvement and participation?

*Involving Parents in the School: Tips for School Councils:* [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/checklist.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/checklist.html)

“*Parents have a primary influence on their children's attitudes towards school, their learning and their future success.*”

~ *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools* (2010) p. 8

## Sample 6

The following sample guide was developed as a practical tool to support the Ministry of Education's *School Councils: A Guide for Members* (2001, Revised 2002)

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school, climate where parental input is welcomed, respected and valued.
- SA-2: Implement strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement by students, parents and our diverse communities.
- SA-6: Actively support and encourage school council members and other parents to share their ideas for reducing the student achievement gap and to help inform school improvement plans.

## Checklist for Successful School Council Meetings

School councils are required to meet at least four times a year. Although the school council chair will preside over the meeting, principals should work with the chair to organize and conduct a successful meeting. Here are some suggestions:

### Principal's Role:

- In setting the agenda with the chair, consider putting together an orientation session for your council with a particular focus on reviewing your by-laws and setting group norms. Decide on a maximum length for each meeting.
- Meet with your chair once prior to each school council meeting to collaborate and plan the agenda. View yourself as a mentor in helping your chair to understand his/her responsibilities and fulfill his/her duties.
- In partnership with the chair, be aware of the necessity to remain neutral and provide alternative ways to solve problems and make decisions. Encourage decision-making through consensus.
- In collaboration with the chair, advertise the date, time and place of the meeting. Notify parents and students far enough in advance so that people can arrange their schedules. You may want to publish the dates for the entire year. Put the meeting details in your school newsletter, post them in the office and use the message board outside your school if you have one. Post dates on the school website.
- Support the chair in conducting the business part of the meeting first and invite a guest speaker to speak on topical issues to attract interest.
- Be prepared to provide the chair and council with relevant/pertinent information, e.g. EQAO scores, new board policy, etc.

### Council Chair's Role:

- Prepare an agenda in advance of the meeting in conjunction with the principal.
- Consider placing time limits beside each item to ensure you get through the whole agenda. If necessary, be prepared to adjust the schedule to allow more time for some items.
- Ensure, as is your duty, that someone is taking recorded minutes during the meeting. Pass around an attendance sheet for everyone to sign. Collect email addresses. Consider asking parents to include the grade(s) of their children.
- Open the meeting with a welcome and a thank you to those who have attended. Introduce yourself and any other speakers. If numbers are manageable, ask all participants to introduce themselves and indicate their involvement with the school.
- Start the meeting with a review of the agenda. Ask if there are any other items to add. These items should be added at the end of the meeting under "new business."
- Take the items one at a time. Tell the participants what each item entails. Is it for information only or is this a decision item?
- Allow participants to ask questions during each item and ask to "go around the table" to try to ensure that no one person is dominating the discussion.
- Resolve as many issues as you can. Only move items forward to the next meeting if more information is needed or if you do not have enough time to discuss it.
- Provide a summary of what has been discussed, what has been decided and what will be moved forward to the next meeting.
- Plan (or reiterate) the date for the next meeting.
- Ensure that the approved minutes are available to the school community for review following the meeting. Consider posting them in or near the office and on the school website respectful of the majority languages in the school community.

*“Commitment to our student’s well-being is the driving force behind everything we do in education.”*

*~ Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009) p. 24*

### Other Things to Consider:

- Arrange babysitting facilities.
- Put students who will be addressing the council on the agenda first, so they can leave early.
- Set up the meeting room in advance (tables, chairs, technology) so you are not spending time during the meeting on this.
- Ensure there is proper signage directing parents to the meeting room once they enter the building.
- Point out the locations of washrooms before the meeting starts.
- Announce breaks at the beginning of the meeting.
- Consider providing coffee/tea/juice/water. This will make people feel more welcome. Parents may choose to take turns providing refreshments.
- Provide healthy nutrition.
- Ensure there is a sense of welcome to all parents.
- Acknowledge and thank all who contribute and participate in school council meetings.

## Sample 7

This sample activity planner can be used as a helpful organizer to assist the school council in goal setting and to prepare an application for Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grants that support the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school, climate where parental input is welcomed, respected and valued.
- SA-2: Implement strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement by students, parents and our diverse communities.
- SA-6: Actively support and encourage school council members and other parents to share their ideas for reducing the student achievement gap and to help inform school improvement plans.

## Parent Engagement Activity Planner

<b>Activity name:</b>
<b>Goal(s) of the activity (should align with system/school goals for improving student achievement):</b>
<b>Who is our target audience?</b>
<b>When will the activity take place?</b>
How often?

<b>Are there any barriers that impede some parents from participating?</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical plant</li> <li>• language</li> <li>• child care</li> <li>• transportation</li> <li>• time of day</li> <li>• other</li> </ul> <p>How can these barriers be overcome?</p>		
<b>Communication plan (include any costs):</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectives</li> <li>• Key messages</li> <li>• Timing</li> <li>• Strategies</li> </ul>		
<b>Who will be directly involved in running the activity (individuals/groups)?</b>		
<b>Implementation tasks:</b>		
Task:	Contact:	Date Completed:
<b>How will we know that we have achieved our goal(s)?</b>		
<b>Additional comments:</b>		

## Sample 8

This sample will help members of the school council to understand the process for applying for the Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grants for School Councils for 2011-2012.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school climate where parental input is welcomed, respected and valued.
- SA-2: Implement strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement by students, parents and our diverse communities.
- SA-6: Actively support and encourage school council members and other parents to share their ideas for reducing the student achievement gap and to help inform school improvement plans.

## Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants for School Councils for 2011-2012

(April 2011)

Parents Reaching Out grants have helped to increase parent engagement across the province by supporting a wide range of projects, such as:

- How to identify and reduce biases and systemic barriers to parent involvement;
- How to bring many cultures together to celebrate diversity and build bridges;
- How to enrich parents' skills and knowledge with resources such as a parent library, parent welcome kits, and techniques such as parent information nights;
- How to help parents communicate more effectively with their children and address key issues such as bullying;
- How to provide multi-language services to engage parents whose first language is not English or French;
- How to create connections between parents, schools and community services; and
- What parents can do at home to help with their children's success at school.

School councils may apply for grants to support school-based initiatives focused on engaging parents who may experience challenges in becoming involved in the school due to language barriers, recent immigration, poverty, newness to Ontario's school system or other factors.

School councils are encouraged to work with schools and their school board's Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) to identify potential project opportunities. School councils may submit a project proposal on their own, or in partnership with other school councils, parent or community groups.

### Project Guidelines

School councils can submit only one proposal. If a school council submits more than one proposal, ONLY the first proposal submitted will be processed. The maximum amount provided for a school council proposal will be \$1,000. All proposals must be approved by the school council through a motion of the school council.

Projects must comply with the regulations, by-laws, policies and guidelines of the school board and school council. The school principal can provide information in this area. School councils may develop proposals:

- individually;
- with another school council(s) in the same board; and
- with other groups in the school or community (i.e. Family of Schools).

When working in partnership with other groups, each school council is eligible for the maximum amount of \$1,000. Each school council is responsible for its project budget, the successful completion of the project and the submission of a final report to the Ministry. School councils must verify and abide by their by-laws, guidelines and policies, and those of the school board when applying in a partnership.

### Project Focus

The grants are intended to support school-based initiatives to reach parents who face barriers to becoming involved in their child's education or school under the following categories:

#### Part 1

1. Communication – could include translation of documents into other languages, providing parents with information related to curriculum or other school-based initiatives
2. Geography – reaching parents living in a larger or remote geographic area
3. Parents New to the System – parents who have a child in school for the first time, have recently moved into the area, or have recently arrived as newcomers to Canada
4. Other types of barriers

#### Part 2

The grants should focus on initiatives that are designed to inform or engage parents in support of improved student achievement and well-being.

#### What project costs or activities are NOT eligible?

- Activities that have already taken place
- Payment to staff including salaries, honourariums, gifts
- Purchase of goods and services for which the Ministry provides funding, such as textbooks, library books, manipulatives, school furniture, laptop computers, cameras, projectors, student transportation, etc.
- Student focused activities/purchases including speakers, books, dual-language books, welcome to Kindergarten bags, student materials or supplies for home use - e.g. markers, paper, glue, scissors, software, prizes, student agendas, calendars, arts and crafts, scrapbooks, supplies
- Computer software, voice messaging systems or website maintenance
- Capital items such as televisions, sports equipment, shelving
- Celebrations such as barbecues, fun fairs, volunteer teas, dinners
- Entertainment costs, including movies/dances/concerts/performances
- School signs, announcement boards/screens
- Refreshments - **exceeding the maximum of 15%** of total grant
- Promotion - **exceeding the maximum of 5%** of the approved funding
- Prizes or incentives to parents and/or students
- Lessons for parents - French, English as Second Language, computer, CPR
- Fridge magnets, recipe books

### Applying for a Grant

- The application is to be completed and submitted online.
- Information must be saved to allow work on the applications at different times.
- Make a copy of the completed application for the school council file and provide a copy to the director of education and principal of the school.
- Keep your registration email address active for one year for future notifications.

## Sample 9

This sample provides a list of suggested projects to help the Parent Involvement Committee or the school council members think about ways it might use the Parent Reaching Out (PRO) funds.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-4: Review existing parent and community partnerships and seek to expand them to reflect the diversity of our parents and the broader community.
- SA-7: Support strategies for parents and students to develop skills and knowledge that supports positive learning environment.
- SA-8: Work towards representation of diverse parent groups on all school committees, including school councils.

## Accessing Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants to Enhance Parent Engagement

We encourage you to reach out to your parent community and engage as many parents as possible in supporting their child's learning and making your school a place where parents feel welcomed and valued as partners.

Adapted from: OFHSA - Ontario Federation Home and School Association: [www.ofhsa.on.ca](http://www.ofhsa.on.ca)

### Project Focus

Projects most likely to receive funding are those that:

- increase volunteer recruitment and involvement in the school;
- broaden the events held at the school to bring in more parents;
- provide support for parents helping with homework;
- build parent and family literacy skills;
- build community links through activities; and
- develop communication tools to meet the needs of diverse parents.

The specific programs you choose should focus on increasing parent involvement, especially hard to reach parents, those who are disengaged, struggle with English, face serious economic challenges, or are new to Canada and the education system.

The following page is a list of suggested projects to help your association think about ways it might use these PRO funds.

## Project Idea File

- Resource/information kits for parents new to the school. Kits might include school, school board, and Home and School documents, contact information and a “who does what” brochure for the school and the school board, or tips for homework support.
- Funds to have materials translated for parents whose first language is neither English nor French.
- Engaging the services of a translator for parent information meetings, parent-teacher interviews, meetings with the principal or trustee.
- A series of Parent Education Nights on topics such as the language and math curriculum, supporting your own child’s learning, taming the homework monster, the role of a trustee, superintendent, director, principal, teacher. Explore translation services for these evenings as well, and provide trained, paid child care, and refreshments.
- Host evenings to teach parents and kids about good nutrition, healthy food preparation, and the importance of finding time to work together as a family. Open these sessions to your entire parent community.
- Volunteer recruitment projects; reach out to parents not already engaged, survey what they need to be more involved in and then provide training, supports and encouragement. Develop resources/programs to reach stay-at-home and working parents, moms and dads, new Canadians and ESL adults.
- Develop plans and resources that can engage parents of hard-to-serve young people.
- Host a speaker/support network series to help parents deal with issues such as drug and alcohol use, smoking, behaviour problems, bullying programs and obesity.
- Provide tips for parents to help children become better readers.
- Set up a Buddy System for new families to help them become familiar with the school’s culture and operation.
- Encourage new parents to build community bridges with the parent community – activities involving by new comers and existing community parents, family gym nights, international sharing/multicultural nights to explore different traditions and cultures.
- Adopt another school with a more challenging population/need. Provide child care, food, clothing and information nights. Investigate the “Family & Schools Together” program as a model for helping schools where parents need help to get organized. Bring the Home and School model to them.
- Enlist the help of community agencies to identify parent needs and provide resources in your community.
- Try new communications tools for parents in your community – website design. Offer computer access in your school to parents without a computer at home.

*We hope that this list may spark an idea for a unique proposal that will meet the needs of your community. Home and School Councils may also take a role in helping their Associations plan and undertake projects. Regional PRO grants are also available to Home and School Councils.*

Home and School Associations are strongly encouraged to apply for these parent-directed funds. A side benefit of any of these projects may be increased parent volunteers for other programs at the school. The BEST benefit may be increased student success. The Ontario Federation of Home and School Association (OFHSA) will be tracking successful proposals and sharing best practices. Please remember to forward a copy of your completed application form to the OFHSA office ([www.ofhsa.on.ca](http://www.ofhsa.on.ca)) and let us know how the project succeeds. Good luck!

## Sample 10

This sample can be used as part of a communication to help parents know how they can become advocates for children's education and to help their children succeed at school.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-7: Support strategies for parents and students to develop skills and knowledge that supports positive learning environment.

## How to Become an Advocate for your Child's Education and Succeed at School

### How to become an advocate for your child's education.

- Find out how the school system works.
- Know your trustee.
- Vote at trustee elections.
- Get involved in your local parent organization.
- Know your child's school.
- Attend parent-teacher interviews or student-led conferences.
- Know what stage your child should be at for their grade level.
- Know and understand your child's strengths and weaknesses in major subject areas.

### Tips for parents to help their children succeed at school.

- Read to your child at an early age.
- Check homework every night.
- Be available for your child.
- Let your child know you are listening.
- Respond in a way your child will hear.
- Create a home environment that encourages learning.
- Establish daily routines for your child.
- Show an interest in your child's schoolwork.
- Limit TV viewing and computer use for non-educational purposes.
- Volunteer at your child's school.

Adapted from: OAPCE – Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education: [www.oapce.on.ca](http://www.oapce.on.ca)

*Research has shown that positive parental aspirations for their children's educational achievement have a strong relationship with children's actual achievement.*

~ *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools* (2010) p. 8



## Sample 11

The following partial list of web links may be helpful to school administrators, teachers, parents and students with many practical suggestions that support and promote parent engagement in elementary and secondary schools. These web links have been connected to the “Strategies for Success” section of *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-7: Support strategies for parents and students to develop skills and knowledge that supports positive learning environment.

### Web Links:

Web Link	Link to Policy “Strategies for Success”	Purpose/Use
<a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123/eng">www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123/eng</a>	Strategy 3: Supports for Parents	Many samples of information will provide parents with knowledge, skills and tools to support student learning at home and at school.
<a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123/eng/howhelp/healthyschools.html">www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123/eng/howhelp/healthyschools.html</a>	Strategy 4: Parent Outreach	Outreach strategies such as local workshops, presentations and tools to share information related to healthy eating for children and teens.
<a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/pdfs/safeschools.pdf">www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/pdfs/safeschools.pdf</a>	Strategy 1: School Climate	Fact sheets for parents indicating what parents need to know about safety in Ontario schools.
<a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/index.html">www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/index.html</a>	Strategy 3: Supports for Parents	Information, which will help parents understand and prepare for full-day kindergarten.
<a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/index.html">www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/index.html</a>	Strategy 3: Supports for Parents	A complete overview of parent engagement; what it looks like in Ontario schools.
<a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/barriers.html">www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/barriers.html</a>	Strategy 2: Eliminating Barriers	These tips will help encourage parent involvement by addressing issues such as child care, language, transportation and accessibility to school events and programs.
<a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/brochure.pdf">www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/brochure.pdf</a>	Strategy 4: Parent Outreach	A guide for parents and students that suggests many ways to succeed in high school.

<a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/culture.html">www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/culture.html</a>	Strategy 1: School Climate Strategy 4: Parent Outreach	New ideas and innovative approaches to helping students graduate from high school.
<a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/teams.html">www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/teams.html</a>	Strategy 1: School Climate Strategy 4: Parent Outreach	Facts and information on School Success Teams, which is a school team that provides extra attention and support for individual students.
<a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/transition.html">www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/transition.html</a>	Strategy 1: School Climate Strategy 4: Parent Outreach	A group of orientation programs, strategies and interventions that help students as they transition from elementary to secondary school.
<a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/newcourses.html">www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/newcourses.html</a>	Strategy 1: School Climate Strategy 4: Parent Outreach	Facts and information on the new technological education courses for secondary schools.
<a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/resources.html">www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/resources.html</a>	Strategy 1: School Climate Strategy 4: Parent Outreach	Facts and information on student success resources that support the many ways to succeed in high school.
<a href="http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/SHSM.asp">www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/SHSM.asp</a>	Strategy 1: School Climate Strategy 4: Parent Outreach	Facts and information on Specialist High Skills Majors, which let students focus on a career path that matches their skills and interests.
<a href="http://www.edutopia.org">www.edutopia.org</a>	Strategy 1 : School Climate Strategy 3: Supports for Parents	The George Lucas Educational Foundation is dedicated to improving the K-12 learning process by documenting, disseminating, and advocating for innovative, replicable strategies that prepare students to thrive in their future education, careers and adult lives.
<a href="http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/fine-family-involvement-network-of-educators">www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/fine-family-involvement-network-of-educators</a>	Strategy 3: Supports for Parents Strategy 4: Parent Outreach	The Harvard Family Research Project is committed to meeting the growing demand for information on effective ways to support family involvement in children's learning and development. We promote strategies that support children's learning in school, at home, and in the community.
<a href="http://www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000/">www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000/</a>	Strategy 1: School Climate Strategy 3: Supports for Parents	Guides and resources from John Hopkins University that leads the National Network of Partnership Schools.
<a href="http://www.cpirc.org">www.cpirc.org</a>	Strategy 1: School Climate Strategy 2: Eliminating Barriers	<i>Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement</i> including: practices, challenges, redefinitions and expected results

## Sample 12

This sample can be used to help parents support their childrens' learning and well-being at the secondary level.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, 2010*:

- SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school climate where parental input is welcomed, respected and valued.
- SA-7: Support strategies for parents and students to develop skills and knowledge that support a positive learning environment.

### Tips for Parents: Secondary

- Attend orientation events with your adolescent when entering high school.
- Attend parent-teacher interviews.
- Be positive about school and its importance for future success.
- Know exactly how your child is doing in each of their courses, by asking the child and by contacting the teacher.
- When concerns arise, talk with the teacher.
- Aim for having your child attain 16 credits by age 16 – grades 9 and 10.
- Become a member of the school council.
- Visit the school and teacher websites regularly for updates and assignments.
- Meet with your child's guidance counsellor at least once a year.
- Monitor your child's attendance regularly.
- Monitor your child's computer use.
- Ask about the student success programs at your school.
- Provide a quiet place for your child to study and schedule home study.
- Listen to your child. Encourage them to talk about their day.
- Avoid judging or comparing your child's achievements.
- Encourage your child to become involved in extracurricular activities.
- Strive to see that your child has a balance between school and their part-time job.

*As members of the Catholic education community we are called to put our best energies into improving the co-operation with those in the public school system so that together we may ensure the best possible education for every student in this province.*

~ *This Moment of Promise* (2002) p. 4



## Sample 13

This sample will help parents know how to support their child in mathematics.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school climate where parental input is welcomed, respected and valued.
- SA-7: Support strategies for parents and students to develop skills and knowledge that support a positive learning environment.

## Tips for Parents to Help with Math

### 1. Be positive about math!

- Let your child know that *everyone* can learn math.
- Let your child know that *you* think math is important and fun.
- Point out the ways in which different family members use math in their jobs.
- Be positive about your own math abilities. Try to avoid saying, “I was never good at math” or “I never liked math.”
- Encourage your child to be persistent if a problem seems difficult.
- Praise your child when he or she makes an effort, and share in the excitement when he or she solves a problem or understands something for the first time.

### 2. Make math part of your child’s day.

- Point out to your child the many ways in which math is used in everyday activities.
- Encourage your child to tell or show you how he or she uses math in everyday life.
- Include your child in everyday activities that

involve math; making purchases, measuring ingredients, counting out plates and utensils for dinner.

- Play games and do puzzles with your child that involve math. They may focus on direction or time, logic and reasoning, sorting or estimating.
- Do math problems with your child for fun.
- In addition to math tools, such as a ruler and a calculator, use handy household objects, such as a measuring cup and containers of various shapes and sizes, when doing math with your child.

### 3. Encourage your child to give explanations.

- When your child is trying to solve a problem, ask what he or she is thinking. If your child seems puzzled, ask him or her to tell you what does not make sense.
- Treat errors as opportunities to help your child learn something new.
- Suggest that your child acts out a problem to solve it. Have your child show how he or she reached a conclusion by drawing pictures and moving objects as well as by using words.

*Helping Your Child do Mathematics - A Guide for Parents K - 6*, pp. 6-7  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/parentGuideNum.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/parentGuideNum.pdf)



## Sample 14

This sample can be shared with parents to help them support their children's learning in the literacy program.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school climate where parental input is welcomed, respected and valued.
- SA-7: Support strategies for parents and students to develop skills and knowledge that support a positive learning environment.

## Tips for Parents to Help with Reading and Writing

### 1. Talk with your child.

Talking to your child and encouraging him or her to talk to you are extremely important. Listening and speaking are a child's introduction to language and literacy. Activities such as talking and singing will teach your child the sounds and structures of language, making it easier for him or her to learn to read and write.

Here are some things you can do to help your child build an appreciation for words and language:

- Tell family stories about yourself, your child's grandparents and other relatives.
- Encourage your child to tell you about his or her day; about activities, sports and games.
- Ask lots of questions so that your child knows you are interested in what he or she is thinking about.
- Talk with your child as much as possible about things you are doing and thinking.
- Encourage your child to tell you what he or she thinks or feels.
- Don't interrupt! Let your child find the words he or she wants to use.
- Sing songs, such as the alphabet song and recite nursery rhymes, encouraging your child to join in.
- Play rhyming and riddle games.

### 2. Make reading and writing fun.

Reading aloud to your child is the best way to get him or her interested in reading. Not only is it fun for the whole family, but it will also help your child to learn what reading is about. Encourage your child to write also. Here are some things you can do to help make reading and writing fun for your child:

- Read all kinds of materials; stories, poems, informational books, magazines, newspaper articles and comics.
- Read stories aloud with drama and excitement! Use different voices for different characters in a story. Use your child's name instead of a character's name. Make puppets and use them to act out the story.
- Re-read your child's favourite stories as many times as your child wants to hear them, and choose books and authors that your child enjoys.
- Discuss the themes of a story and ask questions about the characters. Ask questions that make your child think about what might happen next or what he or she might do in the same situation.
- Discuss the main ideas in an informational piece, such as a newspaper article.
- Encourage relatives and friends to give your child books or other reading materials as gifts.

- Take your child to the local library. Look at CD-ROMs, videos, magazines and the Internet, as well as books. Get a library card, which is free, so that he or she can borrow books.
- Subscribe to a magazine for your child. He or she will love receiving mail!
- Write notes to your child on paper or by email.
- Encourage your child to write lists and to write cards or send email messages to friends and relatives.
- Always remember to have fun. The more you enjoy yourself, the more your child will enjoy the experience.

### 3. Read every day.

Children respond well to routine, and reading is something that you and your child can look forward to every day. By taking the time to read and to talk with your child, you are showing that this is important and fun to do.

Try to read with your child as often as possible. It is the most important thing you can do to help him or her learn at school. It will also allow you to spend high-quality time together and to develop a strong and healthy relationship that is built on sharing of ideas. Here are some ideas:

- Start reading with your child when he or she is very young.
- Set aside a special time each day when you can give your full attention to reading with your child.
- Choose a comfortable spot to read, where you can be close to your child.
- Create a “reading area” together.
- Choose many different books. If your child’s first language is not English, choose books both in English and in your child’s first language. A strong basis in a child’s first language makes it easier for him or her to learn a second or third language; in this case, English.
- Vary the length of reading time depending on your child’s age, interests and grade. For young children, several short sessions of 10 minutes each may be better than one long session of 30 minutes.
- Read slowly so that your child can make a mental picture of what is happening in the story.
- Praise your child for talking about his or her ideas and asking questions.

- When you and your child are away from home, take along some books, magazines and books-on-tape for your child to read and listen to.
- Even after your child has learned how to read, keep reading to him or her.
- By reading stories that will interest your child but are above his or her reading level, you can stretch your child’s understanding and keep alive the magic of sharing books together.

### 4. Talk about books.

Talking about the books you read is just as important as reading them! Talking with your child about a story or other book helps your child understand it and connect it to his or her own experience of life. It also helps enrich your child’s vocabulary with new words and phrases. Encourage your child to read informational materials, such as children’s science magazines or websites. Talk about the materials with your child and ask plenty of questions.

Here are some ways to help your child learn the skills needed for comprehension, reasoning and critical thinking:

- Ask your child what he or she would like to read about.
- Read and talk about your own favourite books from childhood.
- Look at the cover and the title of a storybook with your child and ask your child what he or she thinks might happen in the story.
- Encourage your child to ask questions and to make comments on the pictures and the story before, during and after reading it.
- Encourage your child to think critically about all books. Does he or she agree or disagree with the author? Why? Is the information accurate or not?
- Think out loud about a book as you read and encourage your child to do the same. For example, ask “Does this make sense? Why or why not?”
- Give your child time to think about the book and then talk about it with him or her again a few days later.

### 5. Listen to your child read.

As your child learns to read, it is very important to listen to him or her read aloud. Reading to you will give your child a chance to improve his or her reading skills with practice. By doing this, he or she will build confidence. As you listen to your child, remember that your reactions are very important.

Above all, listen without interrupting. Be enthusiastic and praise your child as often as you can. If possible, be specific with your praise so that your child will know what he or she is doing well. Finally, don't forget to encourage your child to read on his or her own. Here are some tips:

- Show your child that you are enjoying the book by showing interest and asking questions.
- Be patient. Allow your child time to figure out tricky words. Show your child how he or she can learn from mistakes.
- Pick a time for reading when there will not be any interruptions.
- Make sure that your child selects books that are not too difficult. Don't worry if your child chooses books that are a little easier than the ones he or she reads at school. On the other hand, if your child chooses a book that is slightly above his or her grade level, praise your child for choosing it and be prepared to help where necessary. Your child will see that it is good to challenge oneself.
- Encourage your child to "listen" to his or her own reading. Listening will help him or her to hear mistakes and try to fix them.
- When your child is just beginning to read, you may want to "share" the reading.
- You can take turns, or try reading together.
- After reading, talk about the story to make sure that your child understood it.

### 6. Set an example for your child.

As a parent, you are your child's most important role model. Here are some reading and writing activities that you can do with your child:

- Read recipes, food labels, schedules, maps, instructions, advertisements, flyers and brochures.
- Read traffic, store, and restaurant signs.
- Read novels, newspapers and/or magazines for enjoyment.
- Look up information in phone books, cookbooks, manuals, atlases and dictionaries.
- Write shopping lists, telephone messages, reminder notes and labels.
- Write the date and time of appointments and activities on a family calendar.
- Read and write greeting cards, letters and email messages.
- Take the time to show your child that reading and writing are used in many ways every day. Make sure your child sees you reading and writing for your own purposes. Also, as you do reading and writing activities with your child, introduce new words and phrases to him or her.

*Helping Your Child With Reading and Writing - A Guide for Parents, Kindergarten to Grade 6*, Ministry of Education, The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, pp. 9-13, [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/parentGuideLit.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/parentGuideLit.pdf)



## Sample 15

This sample is designed to improve traditional parent-teacher interviews. Schools may choose to utilize a student-led conference as a way of sharing progress with parents. Others may simply include the student in the interview.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school climate where parental input is welcomed, respected and valued.
- SA-7: Support strategies for parents and students to develop skills and knowledge that support a positive learning environment.

## Tips for Successful Parent-Teacher Interviews

- If possible, both parents should attend the interview or student-led conference. See if you can arrange babysitting so that the interview time can be more focused.
- Be on time. Most interviews will be held when teachers are meeting with parents back-to-back throughout the day or evening. When one parent is delayed, it backs up the meetings of all other parents and creates more pressure for the teacher.
- If you feel there is a need, ask about extending the time of your interview beforehand or scheduling the meeting at another time, instead of running late and causing delays for other parents.
- Talk to your child about the report card. Have a good understanding of the expectations by the teacher, the curriculum, homework assignments and any other issues.
- What subjects do they enjoy? Do they prefer group work or individual tasks? Do they arrive on time? How would they like to improve? What will they do differently in the future?
- Share approaches that have worked for you when dealing with your child that the teacher might also find useful.
- Make any observations about your child that may be affecting his/her school work (such as difficulty seeing the board, distractibility, peers, attendance or requiring more sleep).
- Decide with the teacher on activities that your child can do at home as next-steps to support learning.



## Sample 16

This sample will provide an example of the process to develop a school's newsletter in order to communicate with parents and the school community.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school climate.
- SA-2: Implement strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement by students, parents and our diverse communities.
- SA-12: Communicate progress to the board and the local community including educators, students, parents and the public.

## Newsletter Process at Blythwood Junior Public School in Toronto

Blythwood Junior Public School has agreed to share the process they use to create a monthly newsletter to communicate with parents, staff and students. When principal Katharine Dingley arrived at the school, the newsletter process was already in place. Knowing how successful this venture was for the school and how important it is for parents, staff and students to be informed and showcased, Ms Dingley asked a staff member, Nick Nikita to continue in his role as the newsletter developer. The school team is comprised of dedicated professionals who know that communication with parents can be a powerful tool when done collaboratively.

### Notes from Nick Nikita, the school's newsletter developer:

At Blythwood, the process for working on a monthly newsletter is quite simple and we now have it down to a science.

- Our newsletters are produced at the end of the month for the preceding month's school activities.
- Early on we decided to focus on the immediate school community and school-based activities. We are regularly asked to promote community initiatives (i.e. after school sports programs, girl guides events, the results of the local chess club tournament, etc.) that may or may not involve some of our students. We found it to be problematic to pull information from external sources in a timely manner given the tight timelines.
- I send out an *all call* to staff, using our online school conference, approximately two weeks before publication. Included is a list of suggested articles based on the monthly calendar (special events, field trips, sports tournaments, etc.). We also welcome submissions from classroom teachers and include that in a section called, *The View from Our Classrooms*.
- Working backwards from the publication date, I usually set the submissions due date approximately 2-3 days prior (over a weekend works best for me since I can work on it at my leisure on a Saturday or Sunday).

- The school council chair is copied on the *all call* and prepares a monthly message and will include other pieces pertinent to the parent community (i.e. friendly reminders about driving and parking around the school, upcoming fundraising initiatives, etc.). A full page is set aside for the school council piece, and is formatted in much the same way as the principal's message.
- We enlist the grades 5 and 6 students to draft some of the articles, especially those linked to classroom activities, field trips and special events.
- Submissions are usually sent electronically and one cannot be too picky about formatting...in MS Word format or the text in the body of an email works for me. I begin a directory and save these files as they *come in* in preparation for layout. I also accept hard copies and will retype or scan the text, as required.
- For student work, I ask that teachers submit *clean* copies or originals (which are returned). These are scanned and inserted electronically.
- For larger pieces, we use one of our two school cameras and ask teachers to submit no more than seven to ten *good shots*. We send the cameras to sporting events with some of the participants and/or coaches, but also rely on some of our parents to take pictures and email them for publication (with an accompanying by-line in the finished piece).
- We use the general media release that allows us to use the photos and for those students who do not have a signed release on file, we do not include them in the finished piece.
- Photos are downloaded from the cameras, colour corrected, cropped and compressed (to reduce the file size).
- I designed a template in MS Word and change the colour scheme each month.
- The next step is most time-consuming - layout. I start with the principal's and school council chair's submissions and the rest falls into place where space allows.
- Once the layout is completed, I send a pdf draft to the principal and office administrator for their review. They print a single hard copy and check for spelling and grammar, content accuracy, and check the photos to ensure we have not included students who are not released. We include students' first names and last name initial only.
- The hard copy is returned to me and I make the necessary changes/edits, re-pdf and send back to the principal and office administrator along with my checked hard copy for final comparison (were revisions made?).
- The pdf is sent out via family mailing to the parent community.

Permission granted to include an excerpt of the November/December, 2010 Blythwood Junior Public School Newsletter on the following pages.



VOLUME 4  
 ISSUE 2  
 OCTOBER 2010



# Blythwood Bulletin



## IN THIS ISSUE:

## Principal's Message

Check out the ghoulish pictures from Blythwood's annual Halloween Parade  
**page 3**

Mrs. Hutchison's Grade 4 students visit with the veterans at Sunnybrook  
**page 4**

Blythwood wraps up another successful Cross Country season with a City Champion in Aidan G.  
**page 5**

October was a great month with lots of participation in extracurricular activities by all of our primary and junior students and staff. We had a huge number of students participate in the cross country running meet at Ashbridges Bay and many students advanced to the Conference meet and then on to the City Finals. Thanks to the excellent coaching of **Dave Haywood, Justin Pozin, Donna Dorland, Jennifer Gerts** and **Andrea Mozas**. A big thank you should also be given to the many parents who took the students to practice and drove them to the meets. It is a big time commitment but well worth the effort when we see our students wearing the bright green shirts and working so hard to achieve their very best. We are all very proud of our team and their efforts. We are particularly proud of Aidan G. who won the City Cross Country Grade 4 Championships, Hatley G. who came 10<sup>th</sup>, and Michael S. who came 10<sup>th</sup> and Grace R. who came 9<sup>th</sup>. Well done!

Our softball and football teams did very well despite being placed in a Division which is normally dedicated to large schools. They played well and executed their plays with great skill. Thanks again to **Chris Caulford, Dave Haywood, Frank Panos** and **Dave Stratton** for taking these teams to the tournaments and spending a lot of time on the practice field. We have since been placed back in Division 2 so hopefully we will see some teams advancing to the next rounds. Boys volleyball and girls basketball will be starting very soon followed by boys basketball and girls volleyball and ice hockey closer to the end of November.

The staff has spent time working in grade and divisional teams to go over the EQAO results and to determine the strengths and needs for our school. Our results were well higher than the Board average but we would like to see a number of our students move from a level 3 to

### Tuesday, November 2

- Scientist in the School, Gr.2 Almon & Singh

### Wednesday, November 3

- Science Centre field trip, Gr.4 Hutchison & Caulford

### Thursday, November 4

- Scientist in the School, Gr.5 Blackmore & Nikita
- Visit to Sunnybrook Veterans, Gr.4 Hutchison

### Friday, November 5

- Prologue Performance, Robin Hood, 9:30am, gym

### Monday, November 8

- Gr.6 Grad Trip Parent Information Meeting, 7:00pm

### Wednesday, November 10

- Scientist in the School, Gr.3 Pollock & Truman
- Pizza Lunch

### Thursday, November 11

- Sunnybrook Cenotaph, Gr.4 Hutchison, Gr.5 Blackmore & Nikita, 11:30am
- Remembrance Day Observance, 1:15pm

### Monday, November 15

- Toronto Urban Studies Centre field trip, Gr.3 Caulford

### Wednesday, November 17

- Scientist in the School, Gr.4 Hutchison & Caulford
- Photo Retakes, starting 1:00pm

### Thursday, November 18

- Toronto Urban Studies Centre field trip, Gr.3 Katyal, Pollock & Truman
- Progress Reports Interviews, evening

### Friday, November 19

- PA Day
- Progress Reports Interviews, morning

### Monday, November 23

- Girls Basketball tournament, Blythwood gym
- Gr.5 Pizza Lunch (in lieu of Nov-24)

### Wednesday, November 24

- Island School overnight trip, Gr.5 Blackmore & Nikita
- Scientist in the School, Gr.6 Blackmore & Pozin
- Pizza Lunch

### Thursday, November 25

- Island School overnight trip, Gr.5 Blackmore & Nikita
- Gibson House field trip, Gr.1 Freeman & Heron

### Friday, November 26

- Island School overnight trip return (2:45pm), Gr.5 Blackmore & Nikita
- Spirit Day, Inside-out/Backwards

### Monday, November 29

- Parent Council General Meeting, 7:30pm, library

## Principal's Message

*continued from p.1*

a level 4 as we scored many students in the 3.9 range. The School Improvement team also looked at the results to help guide our focus for the school. Some of the areas we are focusing on are the gender gap in the results of reading and writing at both the grade 3 and 6 level. The girls results were much higher at both grade levels. This is of particular interest this year as both grade 3 and grade 6 have a large percentage of boys. We are making use of the *Nelson Literacy* series on a regular basis as this addresses boys in a more reader friendly manner; we are also taking advantage of the math kits which allow our boys to use manipulatives more regularly. We will also be trying to enhance our library with books that would be more appropriate for the boys in our school.

Safety continues to be an issue. Blythwood has a bus that drops off and picks up students and as of now we do not have a bus loading zone. We have been putting out pylons to help the bus drop off and pick up the students safely. Please make this work by not parking between the pylons or double parking outside of the pylons. As the cold weather begins to arrive it would be great if more families would walk to school to reduce the issues of parking in and around the snow banks. Thanks to all the parents for calling Safe arrivals and for making sure that our students arrive safely and on time for school. In case you have forgotten the number for **Safe Arrival** the number is **416-393-9104**.

Yours truly,  
*Kathy*

## Fundraiser a Success!

Thank You! Because of your support our magazine fundraiser was a great success! You helped us raise over \$3700 to benefit our school and our children.

Please check the student sales report that is sent home with the prizes to ensure that all orders and addresses were entered accurately. If you notice an error – please notify to make the correction.

Now you can support our children all year long by ordering on line! You may have ordered many subscriptions to support our campaign, but you might wish to renew other magazines, or order gift subscriptions later in the year. Now you can take advantage of great prices all year long – with the profit benefiting our children with each order! Just go to:

- <http://www.blythwoodschoo.ca/> or,
- <http://www.qsp.ca/> School Code: 9140

Many magazines will begin arriving over the next 2 months, but some subscriptions may take up to 16 weeks to start. If you have any questions, please contact 1-800-667-2536.

They offer a 100% satisfaction guarantee.

Thank you again for your support.



# The Current

## News from the

Another busy month for parent volunteers at Blythwood – thank you all for your hard work and commitment! These are some of the people that make Blythwood a great school and a wonderful community:

● **Class Parents** hosted numerous class teas and cocktail parties and helped teachers organize Halloween parties for the children;

● **Dave Hilborn** and **Nicole Noxon** have been gearing up to fight the Blythwood catchment area issue that caught us all by surprise last spring - we are concerned that many Lawrence Park area children are not automatically eligible to attend Blythwood School. This issue has attracted the interest of **Gerri Gershon**, our recently re-elected School Trustee, and she has agreed to return to one of our upcoming PSA/C meetings to help us determine a strategy going forward;

● **Donna Mackenzie**, **Jennifer Gerdts** and **Andrea Mozas** coached our children to achieve their best in the Cross Country program, with outstanding results;

● **David Cohen** spent a fruitful evening putting together our two new PSA-acquired hockey nets, to be used in gym classes;

● **Buffy O'Driscoll** delivered 8 boxes of books to the TDSB for cataloging - new additions which will be very welcome in our school library. Several

other parents, including **Linda Colpa**, **Marybeth Goodreau**, **Andrea Mozas**, **Sonia Platnick**, **Alyona Song** and **Lisa Windover** responded to our request for Library volunteers and are shelving, weeding and repairing books in an effort to keep the books organized and accessible.

● Once again, **Frank Panos** helped coach the Grade 5 and 6 football teams

Our next PSA/C General Meeting will take place the evening of November 29 – stay tuned for details. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments about the PSA or its activities.

Warm regards,  
*Susan Fisher*  
[fsfisher@rogers.com](mailto:fsfisher@rogers.com)

## Halloween Haunts at Blythwood





## Sample 17

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This sample can be used by school administrators to learn about *Epstein's Six Types of Involvement*, which includes sample practices, challenges, redefinitions and expected results.

This tool is linked to the following school actions outlined in *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, 2010:

- SA-1: Establish and sustain a positive learning culture and welcoming school climate.
- SA-2: Implement strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement by students, parents and our diverse communities.
- SA-3: Actively explore and utilize opportunities to further engage parents at school and at home to support student achievement.

## Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement

(Including: Sample Practices, Challenges, Redefinitions and Expected Results)

The six following frameworks are adapted with permission from:  
Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., et al, Partnership  
Center for the Social Organization of Schools

## EPSTEIN'S TYPE 1 PARENTING

Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

### Sample Practices

- Suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level.
- Workshops, videotapes, computerized phone messages on parenting and child rearing at each age and grade level.
- Parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g. GED, college credit, family literacy).
- Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition and other services.
- Home visits at transition points to pre-school, elementary, middle and high school. Neighbourhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families.

### Challenges

- Provide information to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building.
- Enable families to share information with schools about culture, background, children's talents and needs.
- Make sure that all information for and from families is clear, usable and linked to children's success in school.

### Redefinitions

*“Workshop” to mean more than a meeting about a topic held at the school building at a particular time.  
“Workshop” may also mean making information about a topic available in a variety of forms that can be viewed, heard, or read any where, any time, in varied forms.*

### Results for Students

- Awareness of family supervision; respect for parents.
- Positive personal qualities, habits, beliefs and values, as taught by family.
- Balance between time spent on chores, on other activities and on homework.
- Good or improved attendance.
- Awareness of importance of school.

### Results for Parents

- Understanding of and confidence about parenting, child and adolescent development and changes in home conditions for learning as children proceed through school.
- Awareness of own and others' challenges in parenting.
- Feeling of support from school and other parents.

### Results for Teachers

- Understanding families' backgrounds, cultures, concerns, goals, needs and views of their children.
- Respect for families' strengths and efforts.
- Understanding of student diversity.
- Awareness of own skills to share information on child development.

## EPSTEIN'S TYPE 2 COMMUNICATING

Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

### Sample Practices

- Conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed.
- Language translators to assist families as needed.
- Weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for review and comments.
- Parent/student pickup of report card, with conferences on improving grades.
- Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters and other communications.
- Clear information on choosing schools or courses, programs and activities within school.
- Clear information on all school policies, programs, reforms and transitions.

### Challenges

- Review the readability, clarity, form and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications.
- Consider parents who do not speak English well, do not read well or need large type.
- Review the quality of major communications (newsletters, report cards, conference schedules, and so on).
- Establish clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.

### Redefinitions

*"Communications about school programs and student progress" to mean two-way, three-way and many-way channels of communication that connect schools, families, students and the community.*

### Results for Students

- Awareness of own progress and of actions needed to maintain or improve grades.
- Understanding of school policies on behaviour, attendance and other areas of student conduct.
- Informed decisions about courses and programs.
- Awareness of own role in partnerships, serving as courier and communicator.

### Results for Parents

- Understanding school programs and policies.
- Monitoring and awareness of child's progress.
- Responding effectively to students' problems.
- Interactions with teachers and ease of communication with school and teachers.

### Results for Teachers

- Increased diversity and use of communications with families and awareness of own ability to communicate clearly.
- Appreciation for and use of parent network for communications.
- Increased ability to elicit and understand family views on children's programs and progress.

**EPSTEIN’S TYPE 3  
VOLUNTEERING**

Recruit and organize parent help and support.

**Sample Practices**

- School and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students and other parents.
- Parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, resources for families.
- Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times and locations of volunteers.
- Class parent, telephone tree or other structures to provide all families with needed information.
- Parent patrols or other activities to aid safety and operation of school programs.

**Challenges**

- Recruit volunteers widely so that all families know that their time and talents are welcome.
- Make flexible schedules for volunteers, assemblies and events to enable parents who work to participate.
- Organize volunteer work; provide training; match time and talent with school, teacher, and student needs; and recognize efforts so that participants are productive.

**Redefinitions**

*“Volunteer” to mean anyone who supports school goals and children’s learning or development in any way, at any place, and at any time - not just during the school day and at the school building.*

**Results for Students**

- Skill in communicating with adults.
- Increased learning of skills that receive tutoring or targeted attention from volunteers.
- Awareness of many skills, talents, occupations and contributions of parent and other volunteers.

**Results for Parents**

- Understanding teacher’s job, increased comfort in school and carry-over of school activities at home.
- Self-confidence about ability to work in school and with children or to take steps to improve own education.
- Awareness that families are welcome and valued at school.
- Gains in specific skills of volunteer work.

**Results for Teachers**

- Readiness to involve families in new ways, including those who do not volunteer at school.
- Awareness of parents’ talents and interests in school and children.
- Greater individual attention to students, with help from volunteers.

**EPSTEIN’S TYPE 4  
LEARNING AT HOME**

Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning.

**Sample Practices**

- Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade.
- Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.
- Information on how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments.
- Regular schedule of homework that requires students to discuss and interact with families on what they are learning in class.
- Calendars with activities for parents and students at home.
- Family math, science and reading activities at school.
- Summer learning packets or activities.
- Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work.

**Challenges**

- Design and organize a regular schedule of interactive homework (e.g. weekly or bimonthly) that gives students responsibility for discussing important things they are learning and helps families stay aware of the content of their children’s classwork.
- Coordinate family linked homework activities, if students have several teachers.
- Involve families and their children in all-important curriculum-related decisions.

**Redefinitions**

- *“Homework” to mean not only work done alone, but also interactive activities shared with others at home or in the community, linking schoolwork to real life.*
- *“Help” at home to mean encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, guiding, monitoring, and discussing - not “teaching” school subjects.*

**Results for Students**

- Gains in skills, abilities and test scores linked to homework and classwork.
- Homework completion.
- Positive attitude toward schoolwork.
- View of parents as more similar to teacher and of home as more similar to school.
- Self-concept of ability as learner.

**Results for Parents**

- Know how to support, encourage and help a student at home each year.
- Discussions of school, classwork and homework.
- Understanding of instructional program each year and of what the child is learning in all subject areas.
- Appreciation of teaching skills.
- Awareness of child as a learner.

**Results for Teachers**

- Better design of homework assignments.
- Respect for family time.
- Recognition of equal helpfulness of single-parent, dual-income and less formally educated families in motivating and reinforcing student learning.
- Satisfaction with family involvement and support.

## EPSTEIN'S TYPE 5 DECISION MAKING

Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

### Sample Practices

- Active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees (e.g. curriculum, safety, personnel) for parent leadership and participation.
- Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements.
- District-level councils and committees for family and community involvement.
- Information on school or local elections for school representatives.
- Networks to link all families with parent representatives.

### Challenges

- Include parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and other groups in the school.
- Offer training to enable leaders to serve as representatives of other families, with input from and return of information to all parents.
- Include students (along with parents) in decision-making groups.

### Redefinitions

- *“Decision making” to mean a process of partnership, of shared views and actions toward shared goals, not just a power struggle between conflicting ideas.*
- *Parent “leader” to mean a real representative, with opportunities and support to hear from and communicate with other families.*

### Results for Students

- Awareness of representation of families in school decisions.
- Understanding that student rights are protected.
- Specific benefits linked to policies enacted by parent organizations and experienced by students.

### Results for Parents

- Input into policies that affect child’s education.
- Feeling of ownership of school.
- Awareness of parents’ voices in school decisions.
- Shared experiences and connections with other families.
- Awareness of school, district, and state policies.

### Results for Teachers

- Awareness of parent perspectives as a factor in policy development and decisions.
- View of equal status of family representatives on committees and in leadership roles.

**EPSTEIN’S TYPE 6  
COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY**

Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

**Sample Practices**

- Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support and other programs or services.
- Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students.
- Service integration through partnerships involving school; civic, counselling, cultural, health, recreation and other agencies and organizations; and businesses.
- Service to the community by students, families and schools (e.g. recycling, art, music, drama and other activities for seniors or others).
- Participation of alumni in school programs for students.

**Challenges**

- Solve turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff and locations for collaborative activities.
- Inform families of community programs for students, such as mentoring, tutoring, business partnerships.
- Assure equity of opportunities for students and families to participate in community programs or to obtain services.
- Match community contributions with school goals, integrate child and family services with education.

**Redefinitions**

- *“Community” to mean not only the neighbourhoods where students’ homes and schools are located but also any neighbourhoods that influence their learning and development.*
- *“Community” rated not only by low or high social or economic qualities, but by strengths and talents to support students, families and schools.*
- *“Community” means all who are interested in and affected by the quality of education, not just those with children in the schools.*

**Results for Students**

- Increased skills and talents through enriched curricular and extracurricular experiences.
- Awareness of careers and of options for future education and work.
- Specific benefits linked to programs, services, resources and opportunities that connect students with community.

**Results for Parents**

- Knowledge and use of local resources by family and child to increase skills and talents or to obtain needed services.
- Interactions with other families in community activities.
- Awareness of school’s role in the community and of community’s contributions to the school.

**Results for Teachers**

- Awareness of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction.
- Openness to and skill in using mentors, business partners, community volunteers and others to assist students and augment teaching practices.
- Knowledgeable, helpful referrals of children and families to needed services.





# PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

The following case studies are just a few of many examples of schools that have set goals with their staff and school community.

Here are some quick tips on how a school administrator can use these case studies:

- as professional reading material for your staff;
- to use as an example with your school council;
- for discussion at a staff meeting;
- to promote good practice;
- to generate ideas on how to address similar issues in your school;
- to encourage promising practise in your school;
- to select effective strategies for implementation; and/or
- to encourage collaboration.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Principal: Debra Cooper  
 Phone: 519-945-2346  
 Email: [debra\\_cooper@gecdsb.on.ca](mailto:debra_cooper@gecdsb.on.ca)  
 Website: [www.mycoronation.com](http://www.mycoronation.com)

Mailing Address:  
 Coronation Public School  
 5400 Coronation Blvd.  
 Windsor, ON  
 N8T 1B1

## Coronation Public School

*Greater Essex County District School Board*

Windsor, Ontario



### About the school ...

Coronation Public School is a compensatory school, JK–8, for nearly 270 students in the city of Windsor. Approximately two-thirds of the student body are English language learners. Many Coronation teachers have additional qualifications in reading, special education and/or physical education. They have found this combination has not only equipped them for differentiated instruction, but it has also been helpful for developing literacy and numeracy instruction using a kinesthetic approach. The school population has been organized into primary and junior-intermediate wings, an organization that encourages dialogue and planning among colleagues. Proximity also maximizes opportunities to group students based on learning needs.

### Approach and philosophy ...

*Explicit alignment.* The school is deliberate about working with both the board and ministry to maximize student learning. The board's program department plays a vital role in the school's success; the literacy/numeracy support teacher, for example, works closely with school staff to support teaching and learning goals. Recent documents published by The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat have helped to provide the foundation for the school portfolio that guides the implementation of strategies for improvement. The portfolio highlights a 100-minute literacy block along with formal and informal divisional meetings used for planning.

*Collaborating for student success.* To support student learning, the school created networks with their feeder/secondary

school cluster, including parents, community and business partners. Within the school, teachers collaborate to solve problems and enrich instruction. The literacy/numeracy support teacher works at the school two days a week as mentor, coach and active team member.

*Parent engagement.* The school council is actively engaged in supporting student achievement. These include highly successful Basketball/Literacy Nights that involve fathers in reading activities with their children and a well-attended Mother-Daughter Manicure/Literacy Night just before Mother's Day. Teachers plan Literacy Assemblies that involve student performances, such as Reader's Theatre and Jazz Poetry Café. Loving Literacy Evenings also bring parents to school to read dual language books with children, thus engaging parents while valuing the multicultural nature of the community.

### High-yield strategies ...

*Professional learning.* Professional learning communities meet once a month, follow a template, and list readings and website materials for discussion. Initially principal-led, teachers now take ownership in discussing next steps for their school. Dialogue extends well beyond formal sessions to daily interactions and hallway discussions about students and learning.

*Coaching and action research.* Teachers engage in action research, often in partnership with support staff attached to the school (e.g., literacy/numeracy support teacher, child and youth worker). For example, Grade 6 teachers observed that girls were more confident in their reading skills and tended to guide class discussions, while boys began to disengage. To engage the boys, classes were divided by gender, one group getting character development instruction with the child and youth worker while the other group had literacy lessons. Teachers found that the boys became more engaged in lessons and in conversations that were more concrete, physical or mechanical in nature. A survey will be re-administered at year's end to assess effectiveness and plan next steps.

*The Writers' Block.* Although evidence of writing is everywhere in the school, a unique feature is the long hallway of K–8

student writing named “The Writers’ Block.” Students read each other’s writing, see their own writing displayed and are exposed to a wide variety of text forms as the display changes. To enable students to become successful writers, oral language is linked to writing, while teachers model extensively and provide anchor charts for different text forms.

### Success after struggle ...

*Alignment and coherence.* To increase student success in an inner city context, the professional dialogue must extend to community partners. Teachers informally go to the on-site parenting centre to talk to parents. As a result, the Kindergarten teacher knows ahead of time which children are coming to her class, and the transition from centre to school is a smooth continuum of learning.

*Research.* To achieve success with students, staff members had to be open to new strategies, criticisms and suggestions. They committed to a journey that required time, energy and readiness to change. For instance, not only do staff read every Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat monograph but they also analyze and reflect on the content (e.g., use of exemplars, student-led conferences, teachers’ feedback and many other practices). The school portfolio, citing example after example of research to practice, is a record of the school’s learning journey.

*Inclusion.* Student success hinges on the teamwork of child, parent and school, but parent involvement can be especially challenging in a multicultural, multilingual inner city community. The entire staff focuses on making parents comfortable and on drawing them into the school community. The early literacy centre is the first step in encouraging parent participation. Dual language books at literacy evenings reduce the language barrier, assuring parents that they have a voice and are valued in the school.

Results recently achieved on provincial assessments speak to the high quality of the learning environment in this diverse, inner city school. Scores in Grade 3 mathematics

“We want parent engagement, NOT just parent involvement!” *Principal*

### Moving into the future ...

- teacher moderation
- increase student feedback and begin use of portfolios to assist student self-assessment
- increase parental involvement
- lesson study
- use of school portfolio to help solidify what we are doing as a school

and writing, and Grade 6 writing were all above the provincial standard in 2006–07, with Grade 6 reading and mathematics close to that mark. This is remarkable given that scores in only two assessment areas were near the provincial standard two years before.

### What we would like to learn with and from others ...

- ◆ ideas for literacy nights; bringing parents in, modelling lessons, showing activities parents can do (e.g., play-dough spelling, watching and discussing movies)
- ◆ how to improve parent engagement (e.g., for our Learning Partnership initiative starting at the Kindergarten level next fall)
- ◆ how to continue the journey of vision to practice

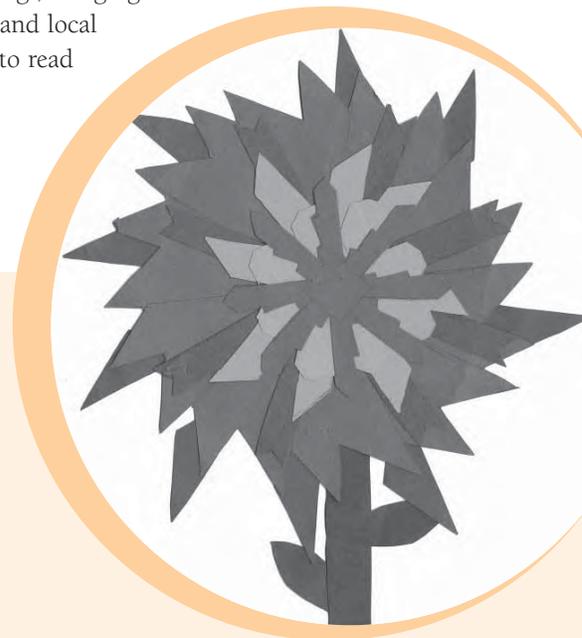
### Networking for learning ...

To support, validate and extend staff professional growth and learning there are opportunities to:

- ◆ visit other schools and host school visits
- ◆ share effective practices as administrators within the family of schools
- ◆ participate in board PD sessions
- ◆ connect with feeder schools and the receiving secondary school for dialogue, discussion and shared student events

To build community support and connect families with community partners, the school participates with community agents in:

- ◆ Hands Up Program, Healthy Schools, Anti-bullying, Coronation Clothes Closet, Helping Hands Hoopla (planters created for seniors)
- ◆ presentations of music, arts, dance to community groups; celebrations of diversity
- ◆ Read-a-thon (e.g., bringing in fire, police and local business staff to read to children)



## CONTACT INFORMATION

Principal: Michelle Anderson  
 Phone: 905-457-5535  
 Email: michelle.anderson@peelsb.com  
 Website: www.peel.on.ca  
 (access through board website)

Mailing Address:  
 Sir John A. Macdonald Middle School  
 250 Centre Street North  
 Brampton, ON  
 L6V 2R4

## Sir John A. Macdonald Middle School

*Peel District School Board*

Brampton, Ontario



### About the school ...

Sir John A. Macdonald is a middle school (Grades 6 to 8) in Brampton with approximately 420 students from a culturally diverse community of hardworking families. Staff members are committed to providing each student with a quality education that promotes the development of academic and social skills focusing on respect, effort and responsibility. They share the belief that a caring, supportive school environment with high standards for achievement promotes individual growth – academically, physically, socially and emotionally. The school values the role that parents play in their children's education and encourages open communication to ensure the best possible learning opportunities for students. The principal makes certain that the culture of the school reflects the school community.

Next year, extended French immersion will be offered, adding approximately 100 students to the school. In addition, a pilot program in science and technology will begin in the fall of 2008.

### School approach and philosophy ...

*Collaboration and mutual respect.* With a high level of collaboration among teachers, parents and students, teachers recognize that team work benefits student learning. The school is inclusive, with all students mainstreamed whenever possible, and with great success. Character education is emphasized; staff members view justice as

restorative rather than punitive. Parents are invited to grade-level assemblies to help celebrate student success in showing effort, respect and responsibility.

*Shared and distributed leadership.* Leadership is distributed among administrators, teachers and students. In fostering leadership among teachers, the principal provides opportunities for professional growth. Every staff member willingly plans within grade-level and cross-grade teams. Teachers scaffold students' work toward independent learning to foster leadership as well as learning. Members of staff are willing to open their beliefs and thinking to discussion and inquiry.

*A good school working in a good board.* As part of its School Success Plan, Peel District Board developed a living document of transformational practices K–12 to share with schools across the district. The plan has been fully implemented at Sir John A. Macdonald. Action teams for Literacy, Numeracy and School Climate each set their own goals for student learning and achievement. Teachers, seeing the need for a data-driven, school-wide focus on vocabulary building, worked with the resource teacher/consultant to develop such a focus. Intentional teaching of other transformational practices, such as graphic organizers, and a focus on differentiating instruction, can be seen throughout the school. In every classroom, students with special needs are fully integrated. Staff members analyze EQAO data to identify an area of greatest need, and then put in place instructional strategies to address it. Teachers plan how they will move students along the continuum of learning and devise meaningful, concrete activities to engage them. Lessons are designed to reflect the big ideas of the curriculum and the needs of students.

### High-yield strategies ...

Sir John A. Macdonald has a diverse staff working with a diverse student population. Teachers have reflected on the need to access the thinking of every child and use groupings within the classroom and beyond to meet student needs. Among the instructional strategies in their repertoire are:

*Team planning and sharing ideas.* Teachers are comfortable “jumping into each other’s classrooms”, often to share ideas or look at new displays. Sometimes teachers bring students to see the work of another class, to encourage teaching and mentoring among students. Collaboration also moves beyond the school to meetings with the local secondary and junior schools. Common themes are sharing EQAO results and looking at Grade 6 and Grade 10 literacy tests, identifying areas of greatest need and deciding how to address such needs.

*Being members of a global community.* Teachers treat students as independent thinkers and learners, with a focus on global education. Students are encouraged to think of others and often collaborate on fundraising projects, for example, donating money raised at the end of a math unit and collaborating with police officers assigned to the school for a one-week project to raise money for cancer research.

*The gradual release of responsibility.* Students are seriously engaged in their own learning. Using exemplars as models, students design student-friendly rubrics and also develop their own proposals for work within teacher-set parameters.

### Success after struggle ...

*Student self-confidence.* Seeing many students stressed and under pressure, staff looked for ways to help them become confident learners. As staff members began working together, taking risks in a comfortable culture, they realized that they had become models for students; students began to blossom. Good news phone calls are now made regularly; parents no longer wait for report cards to find out about a problem. Staff members work with parents to create practical strategies to help their children improve.

*Focus on inferring.* Using EQAO data, staff identified inferring as an area of greatest need. One strategy to develop inferring skills was improving teachers’ and students’ ability to ask good questions. That became a school-wide focus with anchor charts displayed in every room.

### Moving into the future ...

- build on the positive school culture (e.g., school-wide emphasis on character and global education)
- expand knowledge and implementation of differentiated instruction
- continue to examine data to inform teaching practice
- expand use of technology to address learning styles of students (e.g., SMARTBoards, assistive technology, WebQuests)
- continue cross-panel discussions to facilitate effective transitions

*Climate of respect.* Staff struggled to meet the academic needs of all students. A climate of respect and collaboration allows staff to share resources, work across grades and plan cross-curricularly. Learning benefits to students are evident.

All Grade 6 provincial assessment areas have shown steady and impressive improvement since 2004–05. In reading, whereas 43 per cent of students had met the provincial standard, the percentage in 2006–07 rose to 64. In writing, it went from 41 to 71 per cent, and in mathematics it went from 27 to a remarkable 70 per cent.

### What we would like to learn with and from others ...

- ◆ how to build on the current level of engagement with parents from all parts of the community
- ◆ learn more about school-wide character development and how to embed it in daily practice
- ◆ use media literacy to teach with a global perspective

### Networking for learning ...

- ◆ The school works with police in the community.
- ◆ Teachers work regularly with secondary and junior feeder schools.
- ◆ The school community takes part in all family of schools activities; the principal works collaboratively with the secondary school (e.g., around the Grade 10 literacy test).

“Learning is complicated for kids . . . we’d like it to be easy, but it isn’t always.” *Parent*



# St. Nicholas Catholic Elementary School

Waterloo, Ontario



## About the school ...

St. Nicholas Catholic Elementary School serves about 600 students in a growing suburban area of Waterloo. The school, which is projected to continue growing, offers a JK–8 program and hosts a day care facility. The community is cosmopolitan and economically stable. Parents have high expectations for their children, share the staff's mission for the school, and work to support student learning and achievement. The school and community border on a large conservation area providing a natural outdoor environment.

## Approach and philosophy ...

A key element in this school's success is the shared commitment to and belief in every child's ability to learn and reach their full potential. Respect for each other permeates the school, in which all staff, parents, and students collectively share responsibility for supporting every child. The school has a clear, articulated direction and focus and high teacher engagement in continuous improvement for themselves and for students.

Staff members embrace new research and high-yield strategies and are willing to move quickly to classroom application. Divisions meet to collaborate and be on the same page through formal, scheduled meetings and daily, on-the-fly chats. Staff review and analyse data frequently to cross-reference individual, class, school, board, and provincial results and trends, and to raise critical questions about instruction.

Teachers meet students where they are academically and credit this for eliminating a large measure of frustration and behavioural issues.

Above all, the school exemplifies how communication among teachers, parents, and children is critical to building a caring, inclusive, safe, and mutually supportive school community.

## EQAO scores ...

Three years ago, three of the six assessment areas in the school were above the provincial standard. These three assessment areas have continued to rise above the provincial standard. The other three assessment areas in the school are now also above the provincial standard.

## Raising the bar and closing the gap ...

Staff members credit a number of strategies for the improvement in student achievement at St. Nicholas. To build better methods for instruction and assessment, teacher learning communities begin with a common focus for the school and agree upon non-negotiables for student experience and learning in every classroom. Instructional challenges and successes are shared by teams; individual and group expertise are exploited for problem-solving.

Teachers ensure consistency of instruction across the school and encourage students to take risks through higher-order questioning, open-ended, real-life applications, and discussions of alternate solutions. Weekly class meetings address issues and build a socially and emotionally safe learning environment. Teachers are explicit about expectations, provide models and feedback, and honour all attempts by students to share and contribute to learning. Struggling students have their particular needs met through a variety of program and learning supports.

There is a balance of large and small group, paired and individual instruction, with children frequently regrouped into clusters for teaching blocks. Such clustering is especially beneficial in JK/SK where teachers observe all children and discuss and share how to improve learning opportunities.

The emphasis on assessment and tracking has resulted in a forensic examination of data to better meet student needs with the most appropriate instruction. Student accountability starts at Kindergarten and continues through the grades. With a strategy of *assess, assess, assess*, teachers undertake pre- and post-analyses of blocks of instruction. Collaboratively, they compare student work to assess growth and discuss how they can adapt or change instruction.

Teachers listen to and take suggestions from parents and provide them with a number of practical supports for reinforcing and extending learning at home, including student/teacher-made games and the Borrow the Book Club, a read-at-home program with information and suggestions on specific reading strategies, and techniques consistent with those used at school.

### The role of the district school board ...

St. Nicholas Catholic Elementary School is part of the Waterloo Catholic District School Board and values opportunities to participate in and volunteer for board-sponsored initiatives and pilot programs. The board sets system performance benchmarks and assessment requirements that the school integrates and builds upon to support students. The board also endorses a balanced literacy framework and provides schools with detailed data in electronic format for discussion at the system, family of schools, school, and class levels.

The anti-bullying program, Imagine, is a three-way community partnership, collaboratively supported and delivered by the Waterloo Catholic District School Board, the Waterloo Region District School Board, and the Region of Waterloo. The program, which addresses bullying as well

as student confidence and safety, is applauded by parents who see visible indicators of the program's success within the school.

### What the school has to share with other educators ...

- Using assessment data to regularly and specifically inform instruction
- Engaging and supporting parents to actively contribute to their child's success
- Student engagement through purposeful and creative unit planning
- Integrating special needs students fully into the whole spectrum of school life
- Improving student learning through focus and alignment
- Setting the stage – Kindergarten effective practices
- Developing and enhancing sophisticated and authentic student language that links to powerful and rich conceptual understanding
- School improvement planning processes and content: principal practice to guide, infuse, and implement the mission into every aspect of school, to make thoughtful, deliberate decisions

### What we would like to learn ...

- Sustainability and momentum – how to keep it going and how to keep it fresh
- Principal transitions and entries – what provides stability and support for continuous improvement and commitment
- Introducing new staff to the school – getting buy-in without overwhelming
- Parent expectations as the bar is raised from good to great
- Support for teachers along the continuum

“It’s exciting to see kids moving along the tracking wall.” Teacher  
 “The school is not just educating kids, they’re educating the families.” Parent

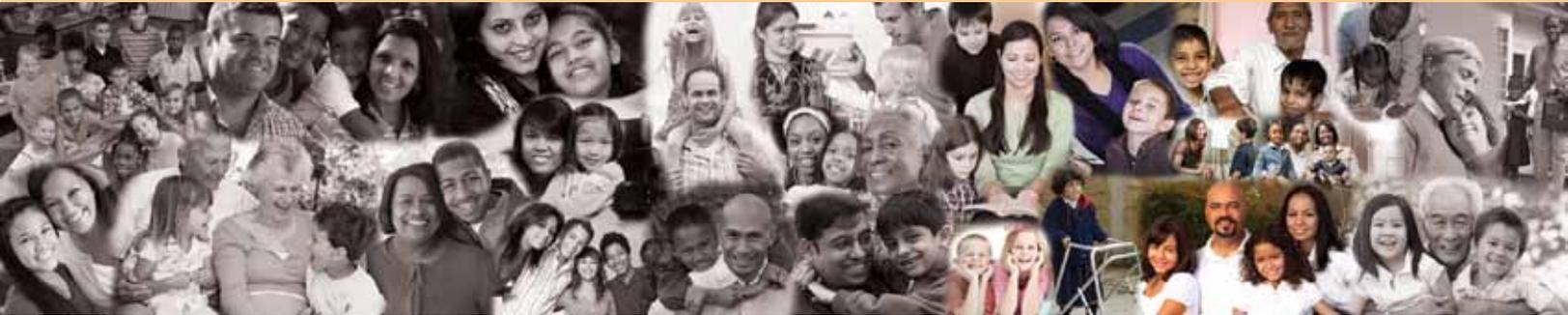
### Moving into the future ...

- Foster opportunities for positive parent engagement in order to support student learning
- Strengthen our professional learning community by establishing divisional approaches to common assessment and instructional practices
- Continue to develop a community based on mutual respect and acceptance of differences and diversity as we follow faith-based teachings





# Section 5



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## Section 6



# LINKS TO RESOURCES



## Links to Resources

### **Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario (2010)**

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/Caring\\_Safe\\_School.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/Caring_Safe_School.pdf)

### **Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario School: Guidelines for Policy Development, Implementation (2009)**

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf)

### **Leadership Framework for Catholic Principals and Vice-Principals (2010)**

[www.cpco.on.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment/CatholicFrameworks/PVP.pdf](http://www.cpco.on.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment/CatholicFrameworks/PVP.pdf)

### **Leadership Framework for Principals and Vice-Principals (2010)**

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/PVPLeadershipFramework.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/PVPLeadershipFramework.pdf)

### **Ontario Regulation 612/00**

[www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca)

### **Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario School (2010)**

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/PE\\_Policy2010.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/PE_Policy2010.pdf)

### **Parent Voice in Education Project**

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/parentVoice.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/parentVoice.pdf)

### **Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education (2008)**

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/energize/energize.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/energize/energize.pdf)

### **Realizing the Promise of Diversity... Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009)**

<http://cal2.edu.gov.on.ca/april2009/EquityEducationStrategy.pdf>

### **School Effectiveness Framework (2010)**

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/Framework\\_english.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/Framework_english.pdf)

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### **Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)**

[www.adfo.org](http://www.adfo.org)

### **The Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)**

[www.cpco.on.ca](http://www.cpco.on.ca)

### **Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)**

[www.principals.on.ca](http://www.principals.on.ca)

[www.adfo.org](http://www.adfo.org)

[www.cpc.on.ca](http://www.cpc.on.ca)

[www.principals.on.ca](http://www.principals.on.ca)