

Eight Key Strategies and Ideas for Engaging Parents in Education

These strategies are based on the work of Dr. Joyce Epstein and modified slightly to address the needs of principals, teachers and parents in Ontario. Dr. Epstein's framework includes six key strategies.

http://www.parentinvolvement.ca/eight_strategies.htm#attending%20school%20events

Can you think of other examples at the program or tactical level that have been implemented at your school?

Eight Strategic Categories of Parental Involvement (Strategic Level)	Types of Parental Involvement Initiatives and Programs (Program or Tactical Level)
<p>Communicating</p> <p>Strategic Intent: Establish an informative two-way dialogue between home and school to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a sense of school community • Exchange information about upcoming events in the school or in a child's life • Enable parents and teachers to monitor a student's progress and reinforce key messages 	<p>Elementary and Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School newsletters • Email • Class newsletters to keep parents up to date on curriculum progress and how parents can help at home • Websites - schools, classes, departments • Use of a voicemail system to share information • School signs to announce upcoming events or accomplishments • Telephone calls to home • A class parent telephone tree • Student 'courier packs' to get information to and from home • Use of student agendas • Distinct communications initiatives to meet address the informational needs of different types of parents • Mailing items to home when necessary • Translating materials to meet the needs of parents • Handouts at curriculum nights or parent teacher interview nights <p><i>This is the most important method for engaging parents as all other types of involvement depend on a foundation of good communication - at both the elementary and secondary levels.</i></p>

<p>Helping at home</p> <p>Strategic Intent: Enable parents to provide helpful assistance to their children at home including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance and support to complete homework assignments • Guidance on course selections when required • Support to prepare for and participate on school teams, clubs and special events 	<p>Elementary and Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear school homework policy endorsed by the whole school • Homework instructions that enable parents to provide home support • Homework sign-backs • Homework assignments and due dates on a website, in a class newsletter, an email or on a voicemail recording • Tips to enable parents to help students (without doing the homework) • Information about the various extracurricular school teams, clubs and events that students might participate in <p>Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course selection information • Career planning and post secondary prerequisite information to enable informed course selections <p><i>Although it is mostly invisible as most of it occurs at home, research suggests that this is the most impactful method for parents to be actively involved in helping children succeed as students.</i></p>
<p>Attending school events</p> <p>Strategic Intent: Encourage parents to attend activities at the school to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about ways to further support the learning and development of their children • Be welcomed as important contributors to the vibrancy and effectiveness of the school community • Demonstrate an active interest in the activities of the school to their children, which reinforces the importance of the school and learning to their children 	<p>Elementary and Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a welcoming and memorable meet the teacher night • Provide advance notice for key events • Encourage all parents to attend parent teacher interviews, and reach out to those who cannot attend • Encourage both parents and students to attend events together or create events for both parents and students • Concerts • Academic nights (e.g., science, literacy or music nights) • Sporting events • Seasonal events • Leverage some events for participation first and add a component of fundraising

	<p><i>This is an important method for parents to reinforce how important the school is. Students receive the message that "I am important, and this place is important." While many secondary students won't admit it, they still appreciate it when their parents come to the school for events.</i></p>
<p>Volunteering</p> <p>Strategic Intent: Increase the capacity of the school to support student learning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing volunteers with opportunities to develop and contribute • Encouraging parents and members of the community to volunteer in a variety of activities of their choosing • Supporting volunteers with training, direction and appreciation 	<p>More Elementary than Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively welcome volunteers into the school • Recruit, provide instruction and direction and recognize volunteers for their contributions • Encourage teachers to identify key roles for volunteers to assist with key curriculum goals (e.g., literacy), class field trips or special events - parents who want to volunteer want to know how they can help • Field trip supervisors • Class readers • Math or Science helpers • Library or office assistance • Establish a joint parent/teacher leadership team to coordinate volunteering activities within the school • Hold volunteer meetings separately from the school council (many volunteers are not interested in school council issues) <p>Board Level and School Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage resources from Volunteer Canada, including the Canadian Code for Volunteering to assist in creating rewarding experiences for school volunteers
<p>Fundraising</p> <p>Strategic Intent: Enhance the financial resources of the school with additional funds to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support student learning through support for the school plan for continuous improvement • Provide additional educational resources or opportunities for teachers, students and parents 	<p>More Elementary than Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in education program (a one-time annual contribution rather than a continuous stream of piecemeal fundraising initiatives) • Magazine sales • Book fairs • Flower or tree sales • Bake sales • Organized charity events such as Jump Rope for Heart, Hoops for Heart, the Terry Fox Run

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support children and families with programs to enhance a healthy learning environment <p><i>Focus on raising money for a specific purpose, which brings meaning to a fundraising drive - and helps avoid conflicts over how to spend the money after it is raised.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot lunch programs (which can also double as a service to parents and to children within the school) • Joint community events • School events • Guest speakers (can be no charge, cost recovery, or profit making) • Fireworks displays
<p>Participating in decision making</p> <p>Strategic Intent: Stimulate a sense of partnership and ownership in decisions that support students and the school by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing parents with the timely information they need to make decisions or assist their children with decisions regarding school affairs • Establishing conditions for an effective school council • Inviting parents and the community into a dialogue on major issues or decisions facing students or the school 	<p>Elementary and Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide parents with the information they need to make informed decisions with or for their children • Create conditions for an effective school council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council training sessions ○ Planning nights ○ Guest speakers ○ Share school budget information ○ Share the school plan for continuous improvement, seek input and the support of the council ○ Encourage school council members to network with others in the board or elsewhere in the province ○ Encourage skills in teamwork ○ Establish a method for resolving conflicts ○ Build the skills of the school councils and parent leaders to reach out to other parents
<p>Leveraging community</p> <p>Strategic Intent: Mobilize community resources to enhance student learning and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help address task of teaching all students within a community environment • Foster community responsibility, participation and interaction • Embed the school as an increasingly integrated part of the community 	<p>Elementary and Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek out community resources helpful to the school to support curriculum, fundraising or to become more integrated within the community • Bring organizers of community groups and clubs and providers of learning opportunities to the school for a "community fair" event • Bring a Junior Achievers program into the school • Establish a music lesson service through the school • Encourage parents to take

	<p>advantage of community sports teams, clubs, Cubs, Scouts, Brownies, Guides, Sparks, Beavers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fill the Community Representative position on the school council• Fill the Ward Representative position on the school council• Bring local business owners into school events• Form relationships with local services, e.g. Police, Firefighters, Ambulance Services and have them speak to students before there are emergencies
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