

## **Making your School Council Meaningful - Parent Engagement vs Parent Involvement**

Are your parents really engaged in their children's learning? Or are they involved in the school's parent agenda? Many School Councils are busy with the work of involving parents in fundraising events and not so much with improving student achievement.

What's the difference between engagement and involvement? Involvement is serving the school's agenda (field trips, fundraising), where engagement brings the parent knowledge base to the table (partners in decision making). If you want to attract parents to your School Council, your council needs to be a resource that supports families and welcomes them to the table.

How do we do this? School Council planning should incorporate the two arms of your mandate: improving student achievement, and enhancing the accountability of the system to parents. Evaluate the needs of your school using the School Improvement Plan (SIP), staff & family input, and feedback from School Committees. Research has shown, time after time, that what parents do at home is what improves student achievement. Choose activities that support student achievement by building parent capacity and representing parent knowledge on the required School Committees.

Building a relationship, where parents are seen as partners in education, can be a challenging task. Work with your Principal to bring parents to the table for meaningful discussions about school planning. Moving from involvement to engagement will strengthen relationships between staff and parents as your School Council focuses on student achievement and system accountability. Participation on your School Council should increase when your community sees the value of your efforts.

Supporting families and building partner relationships within your school community IS fulfilling the School Council mandate. Striving for authentic parent engagement over simple involvement will make your council more meaningful within your school community.

Try incorporating some of these ideas into your School Council meeting schedule to develop deeper parent engagement.

- Invite a teacher to speak at your School Council meeting about education initiatives being used in the classroom
- Invite your school Social Worker to speak about the Mental Health issues most commonly faced at your school
- Invite your Guidance Counsellor to give a parent presentation on course selection
- Have a meeting where the Principal unpacks the Student Census data for parents
- Host a Math Night for families
- Host a multi-cultural Pot Luck
- Ask the Principal to explain the school budget
- Invite parents to a School Improvement Plan (SIP) session
- Host a family nutrition event
- Invite your Public Health Nurse to present – variety of free sessions

### **Parent Engagement Resources**

PIAC

<http://torontopiac.com/index.html>

PIAC School Council Toolkit

[http://torontopiac.com/uploads/3/4/8/1/34816230/school\\_council\\_toolkit\\_200418.pdf](http://torontopiac.com/uploads/3/4/8/1/34816230/school_council_toolkit_200418.pdf)

TDSB Policy Consultations

<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Policies-Procedures-Forms/Policy-Consultations>

TDSB Parent & Community Engagement Office (PCEO)

<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Community/How-to-Get-Involved>

Vice Principal Interview Process-Parent Involvement

[Latha.John@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:Latha.John@tdsb.on.ca)

TDSB Parent & Community Involvement Policy

<http://ppf.tdsb.on.ca/uploads/files/live/97/188.pdf>

Ontario Parent Engagement Policy

<https://uploads.strikinglycdn.com/files/b06923d2-82d5-40c3-bf5e-f7f979646274/Parents%20in%20Partnership%20-%20PE%20Policy%20for%20Ontario%20Schools.pdf>

School Improvement Planning

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/sihande.pdf>

Debbie Pushor

<https://www.edcan.ca/experts/debbie-pushor/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dLBObKnMd4>

CODE - The Council of Ontario Directors of Education

Parent Engagement Toolkits

[http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/parent\\_engagement.html](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/parent_engagement.html)

People for Education – Parent Inclusion Manual

<https://peopleforeducation.ca/our-work/the-parent-inclusion-manual/>

Toronto Public Health Nurse Liaison

<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-programs-advice/liaison-public-health-nurse/>