

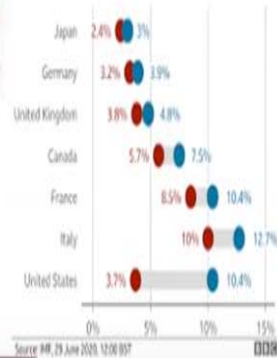


Parent Caregiver Engagement: Imagining the Possibilities



World economies struggling with rising unemployment

Yearly unemployment rate change, 2019-2020



Current Reality

- Health Crisis
- Racial Crisis
- Full community, school closure/ limited or no access to family, neighbours schools, staff, principals,
- Virtual Learning
- Emerging knowledge and understanding of virtual engagement platforms (e.g., ZOOM)
- Digital Divide
- Increased food insecurity



"In any situation you have the right, power and ability to not only choose your experience, but also decide whether you are going to be a voice or an echo"?

(Adapted from Iyanla Vanzant/)



Critical Questions for a Critical Moment

- How might this time of global upheaval, massive uncertainty, and racial reckoning influence who we choose to be and how we choose to live and lead?
- How will it influence the how and why of schooling in ways that will both challenge and perpetuate historical barriers to educational access and opportunity?
- How might we seize this opportunity to resist traditional educational conversations about parent engagement, legitimize marginalized knowledges and voices, and imagine future possibilities?

Taken from Edcan Article; Opportunity or Opportunism?



What needs to happen if we were to seize this opportunity to resist traditional education conversation about parent engagement, legitimize marginalized knowing and voices and imagine future possibilities?



**EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL
WEAPON WHICH YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE
THE WORLD** - NELSON MANDELA



Parental Rights in Special Education

Paste
Clipboard

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What needs to
be done to help
the school and
community
work together
to support
the needs of
all students?

6

What needs to
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7

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8

Disrupting Traditional Practices

Parent/Caregiver Responsibility in Education

The diagram features a central image of a parent and child. Five ovals are connected to this central image by lines, each containing a responsibility:

- Ensure child (16 under) attends school
- Remain Engaged
- Develop an understanding of the system
- Educate your child about race/racism and its impact
- Ensure child (16 under) attends school

tdsb.on.ca

PARENTS' RIGHTS In Education

INFORM • EQUIP • EMPOWER



School Centric Engagement





Ownership of School and Classroom

- Sustained belief that parents/caregivers are visitors to the school, classroom and education
- An archaic design and structure of school for staff and students...leaving parents/caregivers as an afterthought
- Principals and teachers as experts in all things...all areas
- Social capital of parents/caregiver not reflected in school and classrooms
- Classrooms are teachers and students...



Marginalization of Racialized Parents/Caregivers

- Acknowledge that caregiver engagement continues to exclude (intentional or unintentional) the lived realities and experiences of racialized, Black and Indigenous people's,
- Racialized, particularly Black and Indigenous parents/caregivers are blamed and shamed for student academic disparities, positioned as disinterested in the school system, their contributions dismissed as deficits
- Labelled with the “hard to reach syndrome”,



School Councils
are Reserved for
Some
Parent/Caregivers



School Council Disruption Steps-Reflection & Inquiry



How has council been operating:

- Inclusive & Equitable
- Welcoming Space-all identities/voices
- Representative and reflective of school community
- Transparent practices
- Accountable to parent/caregiver community



School Council Disruption **Steps-Developing Genuine Interest in Learning & Understanding the Racialized Experience**



Organize

Organize workshops, speaker sessions, read and learn circles, conversation circles to explore the racialized experiences

Survey

Survey council members to identify knowledge and needs around understanding racialized

Reach out

Reach out to parents whose race, class, language, nationality, education, abilities, gender, and backgrounds are different than your own.



School Council Disruption Steps-Communication



Use

the TDSB School Council E-mail account to try and connect with parents/caregivers,

Use

School Messenger as a tool to inform, update and share relevant information with parents/caregivers e.g. access to food, virtual resources, mental health supports etc.,

Use

Council ZOOM Account to organize small conversations on various topics to support parents/caregivers. Assign council member to monitor chats etc.

Ensure

Ensure that you access the TDSB interpretation/translation service via the Principal to support meetings & communications.





School Council Disruption Steps-**Meetings**

Survey

council and parents/caregivers to identify appropriate meeting frequencies, days/times,

Keep

agenda items short and relevant to needs and desires across the school community;

Share

the agenda in advance through preferred methods.

Allow

parents to send in or share items, or always having an “any other business” section may be helpful.

Pay Attention

who speaks the most in meetings and who does not – deliberately structure meetings to ensure equitable participation
Set up rules like, “after speaking once, allow three more people to speak before contributing again”

School Council Disruption **Steps-Group Dynamics**



- Try to avoid using one person or the same group of people from speaking and leading. Recognize that the diversity of voices is important.
- Pay attention to how race, class, language, ability, nationality, and education are represented in meetings and decision-making
- Consider who is here? Who is missing? Which voices are heard? Which are silent or silenced? What do needs to change?
- DON'T Exclude or ostracize people for raising concerns. Take time to listen and reflect on the concerns before responding.

Keep in Mind:

You can record sessions (with permission) and make them accessible to parents and community members who could not attend,



School Council Disruption **Steps-Fundraising**

- Not a requirement of the school council.
- Limit number of fundraisers,
- Choose events that come from and reflect the ideas, traditions, cultures, and strengths of families represented in the school, even if they are a small demographic within the school community.
- Fundraise to support parents/caregivers needs at: <https://tdsb.schoolcashionline.com/Fee/Details/457/153/false/true>
- Donate to TFSS to Student Nutrition Programs at: <https://tfss.ca/>
- Review the TDSBs fundraising guidelines at <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Community/How-to-Get-Involved/School-Councils/Fundraising>

School Council Disruption Steps-Bylaws



Create bylaws



Revise bylaws to include
virtual engagement and
communication



Share bylaws with all
council members and
parent/cargivers

We do not have an
engagement gap,
we have a
relationship gap

Maya Angelou-
"I've learned that
people will forget
what you said,
people will forget
what you did, but
people will never
forget how you
made them feel".

School Council pursue authentic engagement by providing space for all parents to be authentic self; ensuring equity and inclusion; disrupting practices that support racism, classism, and other –isms, whether intentional or unintentional”. (© Teaching for Change 2017)

Pay attention to language like:

- This is how we have always done it
- I took the leadership role because no one wanted it
- I have done everything but “they” are not coming
- We are informal because no one ever comes...
- Use tools such as the **school council e-mail, zoom account** and **School Messenger** to reach out, to bring people together, facilitate conversations, nurture relationships, provide spaces for racialized and multi-lingual parents/guardians to gather

Imagine Future Possibilities of Engagement



Let go and be open
to the possibility
that there is
something greater
waiting" (Iyanla Vanzant)

Imagine Future Possibilities of Council Engagement

1. Trust each other enough to speak our truths knowing that we will be able to handle it,
2. It is not what we hear, it is where we listen from within ourselves that gives meaning to the message,
3. Trust that we will not be stuck in what we know, understanding that the only thing we know is what we have already seen.



Imagine Future Possibilities of Engagement

“Looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future.”

Paulo Freire



