

Building Relationships with and Engagement of Parents, Families and Community

As a School Council, one of our primary responsibilities is ensuring that we effectively inform, engage and communicate with the parents and families of our school community in order to build meaningful relationships. We do this in order to share how Council supports student learners, encourage parent volunteerism and participation, inform Council members of the issues and concerns facing parents, and to communicate critical school messaging and information.

Council also has a role in ensuring that school administration and staff are taking the opportunities to build relationships and engage with parents and families. Council should work with their Principal to establish effective and consistent communication and outreach strategies.

1. Communication strategies for providing information to parents, families and communities:

- Names and contact information for Council members should be made available to the school community in a variety of locations including at the school, in monthly newsletters, on website and in notices sent home with students.
- At the beginning of each year, ask your Principal to introduce Council to the students during a school assembly. Have members photos in an area designated for School Council information.
- When sending home notices from Council, consider using a consistent look, colour and/or size to help to brand your messaging and draw attention to its contents.
- Provide regular updates in the school newsletter or publications that not only inform parents and families of Council activities but that also communicate key messages that support student success.
- Use school events to promote the Council and engage parents. For example, set up an information table or hold a raffle draw during the school Open House.
- At the end of the year, share with the school community an overview of Council's initiatives, contributions and success stories.

2. Processes for consulting with students, parents, families, and community groups:

- In order to effectively consult with your school community, it is important to use a variety of techniques to inform and engage parents and families in the consultation process. Notices, newsletters, school website, message board, email, Facebook, and phone calls can be used to create awareness, provide information and encourage participation in the process.

- Provide a variety of opportunities for parents, families and community members to be involved. Meetings, questionnaires, focus groups and interviews are some examples of ways to engage parents in a consultation process.
- Keep the school community informed during the various phases of the consultation process. Effectively communicate results or outcomes.
- Providing refreshments at meetings and gatherings may help increase participation.

3. Parent, family and community involvement strategies:

- Send home reminders of School Council meetings, inform of day or time changes and invite parents to attend.
- Both the school and council can organize family events that are fun and engaging. Movie nights, yard sales, school performances, family BBQ, are a few examples of such events.
- Council should ask for parent volunteers to assist with Council initiatives, events and activities.
- Discuss with your Principal the option of having Student-Led Conferences rather than the traditional parent-teacher meeting. Traditional parent-teacher meetings can be intimidating for some parents and therefore can limit participation.
- Have students write personal invitations to their parents/guardians regarding upcoming special events, activities and school processes.
- Encourage the school to send out regular requests for volunteers for specific activities rather than general calls for volunteers.
- Council members should attend and make themselves available at all school events.