



NCDSB **Parental Engagement**
T O O L K I T

*Inspired by the mystery of Christ, we will
guide our students on a journey of
discovery that celebrates life.*



INTRODUCTION

Parental Engagement Toolkit:

A collection of resources to support Catholic School Councils in the development and implementation of parental engagement initiatives.

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INTRODUCTION

The Northeastern Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) Parental Engagement Toolkit: a collection of resources to support Catholic School Councils in the development and implementation of parental engagement initiatives

Dear friend and partner in Catholic education,

The Catholic Parental Involvement Committee (CPIC) is a board level committee inaugurated in September, 2006, following the implementation of the Ontario Parent Involvement Policy by the Ministry of Education. Three key goals have been established by the Ministry of Education:

- Improving student achievement
- Reducing gaps in student achievement
- Increasing public confidence in public education

In addition to these goals a fourth goal consistent with our identity as a Catholic learning community is that parental engagement strengthens links between home, school, and parish.

The policy of the Ministry of Education recognizes that parents play a vital role in the education of children, the success of schools, and that parents need to be more involved to ensure their diverse voices are heard.

The CPIC of the Northeastern Catholic District School Board provides a direct link between Catholic School Councils, the Director of Education, and the Board of Trustees. The goal is to develop activities and initiatives that increase and enhance the role of parents in all schools.

Creating a culture of parental engagement is an ongoing and collaborative project between parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and Trustees. Many effective parental involvement initiatives are already underway in the schools of our District. While the toolkit contains ideas and suggestions that may be useful to various stakeholders (the section on communication, for example, is particularly relevant to Principals), the intention of this resource is to enhance the unique opportunity and mandate that Catholic School Councils have to broaden the meaningful participation of parents in the school community.

How to use this toolkit

The toolkit is divided into various stand-alone sections to help you find what you need. Some useful jumping off points in the toolkit include:

- Tools to help assess the current extent and role of parental involvement in your schools
- Planning tools such as calendar pages which detail specific opportunities for increasing parental involvement throughout the school year

- A snapshot of new approaches to involving parents through special events
- A synopsis of the relevance of parental involvement in our Catholic school context (a message from the Director of Education, Paul Toffanello)

We hope this toolkit will be a productive starting point for planning and implementing activities which reduce barriers that many parents encounter on the road to becoming fully engaged in the school community. We ask God's Blessing on your service as volunteers, and gratefully acknowledge your efforts to create a caring, welcoming and engaged school community.

In Christ,

**Rena Keenan Buhler, CPIC Chair 2006-2007
2006-2007**

Alana Loreto, CPIC member

On behalf of the rest of the Catholic Parental Involvement Committee:

Shana Bates, St. Jerome (Kirkland Lake)

Kelly Torresan, St. Joseph/ OHS (Timmins)

Miriam Hutchinson, Aileen Wright (Cochrane)

Lucy Vera, Holy Family (Englehart)

Sue Davey, E.C.C.S. (New Liskeard)

Renee Connelly, St. Pat's (Cobalt)

Janice Viskovich, Executive Assistant, NCDSB

Lynn Fecteau, Community Relations Officer, NCDSB

Colleen Landers, Chair of the Board, NCDSB

Karen Rowe, Superintendent of Education, NCDSB

Paul Toffanello, Director of Education, NCDSB

*"The child supplies the power but the
parents have to do the steering."
Dr. Benjamin Spock*



LETTER FROM DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Greetings,

It is a fact that a child's first teacher is the parent. In this acknowledgment, we humbly recognize the privilege afforded to those of us in the educational community to provide the best education possible to the children who are entrusted to us. This is not a responsibility that we take lightly, and inherent in this understanding and commitment is a firm resolve to recognize the important role that parents play in the education and growth of their children.

As such, we are determined to enhance our efforts to involve parents in our schools in as many ways as possible. Most recently, the Ministry of Education has provided funds aimed at engaging parents within the life of the school. Historically, this engagement has been determined on a school to school basis, and the efforts and assistance of parent volunteers in the schools truly has been of benefit to all. In this renewed effort, however, there is a fundamental focus on specific goals that may be achieved to enhance student achievement, reducing gaps in student achievement and increase public confidence in education. As well, our efforts at Northeastern Catholic District School Board continue to focus on the guiding principles laid out in the Catholic Graduate Expectations, and in this, we are in constant need of both support and involvement by our parent community.

This toolkit was the inspiration of the Catholic Parent Involvement Committee established by our Board last year. Under the leadership of Rena Keenan Buhler, the toolkit provides an awesome array of information and activities to be used by schools and Catholic School Councils to encourage, invite, and inform parents so that they will become more involved in their children's learning. This ongoing effort will indeed impact the achievement levels of our children, and they will also serve to enhance their self-esteem, confidence and overall growth into young adulthood.

We offer this toolkit to you as an opportunity to enrich the lives of the children in our schools through participation and planning with other parents and school staffs. Thank you for your ongoing effort and commitment in this regard.

Blessings,
Paul Toffanello

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ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS



THE GRADUATE IS EXPECTED TO BE:

A Discerning Believer Formed in the Catholic Faith Community who...

- illustrates a basic understanding of the saving story of our Christian faith;
- participates in the sacramental life of the church and demonstrates an understanding of the centrality of the Eucharist to our Catholic story;
- actively reflects on God's Word as communicated through the Hebrew and Christian scriptures;
- develops attitudes and values founded on Catholic social teaching and acts to promote social responsibility, human solidarity and the common good;
- speaks the language of life... "recognizing that life is an unearned gift and that a person entrusted with life does not own it but that one is called to protect and cherish it." (Witnesses to Faith)
- seeks intimacy with God and celebrates communion with God, others and creation through prayer and worship;
- understands that one's purpose or call in life comes from God and strives to discern and live out this call throughout life's journey;
- respects the faith traditions, world religions and the life-journeys of all people of good will;
- integrates faith with life;
- recognizes that "sin, human weakness, conflict and forgiveness are part of the human journey" and that the cross, the ultimate sign of forgiveness is at the heart of redemption. (Witnesses to Faith)

An Effective Communicator who...

- listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values;
- reads, understands and uses written materials effectively;
- presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others;
- writes and speaks fluently one or both of Canada's official languages;
- uses and integrates the Catholic faith tradition, in the critical analysis of the arts, media, technology and information systems to enhance the quality of life.

A Reflective and Creative Thinker who...

- recognizes there is more grace in our world than sin and that hope is essential in facing all challenges;
- creates, adapts, evaluates new ideas in light of the common good;
- thinks reflectively and creatively to evaluate situations and solve problems;
- makes decisions in light of gospel values with an informed moral conscience;

- adopts a holistic approach to life by integrating learning from various subject areas and experience;
- examines, evaluates and applies knowledge of interdependent systems (physical, political, ethical, socio-economic and ecological) for the development of a just and compassionate society.

A Self-Directed, Responsible, Life Long Learner who...

- demonstrates a confident and positive sense of self and respect for the dignity and welfare of others;
- demonstrates flexibility and adaptability;
- takes initiative and demonstrates Christian leadership;
- responds to, manages and constructively influences change in a discerning manner;
- sets appropriate goals and priorities in school, work and personal life;
- applies effective communication, decision-making, problem-solving, time and resource management skills;
- examines and reflects on one's personal values, abilities and aspirations influencing life's choices and opportunities;
- participates in leisure and fitness activities for a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

A Collaborative Contributor who...

- works effectively as an interdependent team member;
- thinks critically about the meaning and purpose of work;
- develops one's God-given potential and makes a meaningful contribution to society;
- finds meaning, dignity, fulfillment and vocation in work which contributes to the common good;
- respects the rights, responsibilities and contributions of self and others;
- exercises Christian leadership in the achievement of individual and group goals;
- achieves excellence, originality, and integrity in one's own work and supports these qualities in the work of others;
- applies skills for employability, self-employment and entrepreneurship relative to Christian vocation.

A Caring Family Member who...

- relates to family members in a loving, compassionate and respectful manner;
- recognizes human intimacy and sexuality as God given gifts, to be used as the Creator intended;
- values and honours the important role of the family in society;
- values and nurtures opportunities for family prayer;
- ministers to the family, school, parish, and wider community through service.

A Responsible Citizen who...

- acts morally and legally as a person formed in Catholic traditions;
- accepts accountability for one's own actions;
- seeks and grants forgiveness;
- promotes the sacredness of life;
- witnesses Catholic social teaching by promoting equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society;
- respects and affirms the diversity and interdependence of the world's peoples and cultures;
- respects and understands the history, cultural heritage and pluralism of today's contemporary society;
- exercises the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship;
- respects the environment and uses resources wisely;
- contributes to the common good





PRAYER RESOURCES

"What you are is God's gift to you. What you become is your gift to God."

Author Unknown

PRAYER RESOURCES

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil. Amen.

NOTRE PÈRE

Notre Père qui es aux cieux,
que ton Nom soit sanctifié, que ton règne vienne,
que ta volonté soit faite sur la terre comme au ciel.
Donne-nous aujourd'hui notre pain de ce jour.
Pardonne-nous nos offenses,
comme nous pardonnons aussi à ceux qui nous ont
offensés.
Et ne nous soumetts pas à la tentation,
mais délivre nous du mal. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR FAMILIES TO SAY AT HOME

God of love and forgiveness,
We thank you for the gift of each other.
Help our family remember the power of love, and help us
To know your peace. In all that we do we will try to support each other,
So that the bonds which hold us together
Can be strengthened.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



PRAYERS FOR PRINCIPALS TO PRAY WITH PARENTS

God, our Creator and Redeemer:

You have created us in love and saved us in mercy,

And you have established the family

With the hope that it should become a sign of Christ's love for his Church.

Show your blessings on the families gathered here in your name.

Enable those who are joined by one love

To support one another by their prayers.

Help them be responsive in the needs of others and witnesses to the

Faith in all they say and do.

We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.



We bless your name, O Lord,

For sending your own incarnate Son

To become part of a family.

We ask you, Lord,

To protect and watch over our families,

So that in the strength of your grace they may enjoy prosperity,

Possess the priceless gift of your peace,

And, ask the Church alive in the home,

Bear witness in this world to your glory.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR STUDENTS TO SAY AT HOME

God of Light and Truth, thank you for giving me

A mind that can know and a heart that can love.

Help me to keep learning every day of my life,

For all knowledge leads to you.



Let me be aware of your presence in all things and at all times.

Encourage me when work is difficult and when I am tempted to give up.

God of Light and Truth, encourage me when my brain seems slow

And the way forward is difficult.

Grant me the grace to put my mind to use exploring the world you have created,

Confident that in you there is a wisdom that is real. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR A FAMILY

O dear Jesus, I humbly implore You to grant Your special graces to our family. May our home be the shrine of peace, purity, love, labor and faith. I beg You, dear Jesus, to protect and bless all of us, absent and present, living and dead.

O Mary, loving Mother of Jesus, and our Mother, pray to Jesus for our family, for all the families of the world, to guard the cradle of the newborn, the schools of the young and their vocations.

Blessed Saint Joseph, holy guardian of Jesus and Mary, assist us by your prayers in all the necessities of life. Ask of Jesus that special grace which He granted to you, to watch over our home at the pillow of the sick and they dying, so that with Mary and with you, heaven may find our family unbroken in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Amen.



GOD HEAR MY PRAYER

God in heaven hear my prayer,

Keep me in thy loving care.

Be my guide in all I do.

Bless all those who love me too. Amen

FAMILY BLESSING

Father in Heaven, we praise You for giving us Your Son

To be our Saviour and Lord. Bless us all as we gather here today, (tonight)

And let us live happily in Your love. Hear our prayer, loving Father,

For we ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

FOR THE FAMILY

Great protector of the family, St. Gerard, we ask your prayers for all parents, that they may receive the grace to live in the love of God and bring up their children to know and love him with all their hearts.

We ask you to pray that those who take the lives of unborn innocents and attack the dignity of motherhood may come to see the error of their ways, and that all men may value the holiness of Christian family life.

God, our loving Father, your love gives life to the world. Bless and make holy all human love, especially the life-giving love of husband and wife. May your love fill the hearts and homes of all families, so that the world may enjoy the peace and happiness promised by your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.



ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Assessment tools to help plan and implement Catholic School Council activities to bridge the realities, challenges and rewards of increased parental involvement.

WHERE ARE THE PARENTS?

UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents care a great deal about their child's success in school. Yet there are many realities that impact the extent to which parents are engaged in their children's education. The list below touches on some of the most commonly described challenges that parents face in being school-involved. It is not an exhaustive list. As a Catholic School Council, you may identify other realities particular to your school or community setting. Use this tool to deepen your understanding of the challenges that many families experience on the road to greater involvement in their children's education. It will help you plan and implement Catholic School Council activities which effectively bridge the realities, challenges and rewards of increased parental involvement. Note that several additional tools in the toolkit further address some of the specific tips mentioned below.

CHALLENGE #1: CREATING A RESPONSIVE AND WELCOMING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Reality check:

- Some parents may feel intimidated.
- Some parents may not feel welcomed in the school.
- Some parents may feel that they should not interfere.

Bridging the gap:

- Provide tangible evidence that involvement is welcomed.
- Make sure parents are welcomed to drop in at school during the day.
- If space permits, have a parent's room at school.
- Post welcome signs in all languages spoken at the school.
- Arrange for training in parent involvement for all school staff (i.e. volunteering to support emerging readers)
- As a Catholic School Council, consciously adopt the role of "parent ambassador". As Catholic School Council representatives, personally welcome all parents you encounter in the school, especially those who appear to be

withdrawn or uncomfortable. Learn their interests and abilities. Actively seek opportunities for hesitant parents to use their experiences and talents to benefit the school.

CHALLENGE #2: LACK OF TIME

Reality check:

The time crunch is felt by all partners. Educators have limited time both at school and in their personal life where they may be parents themselves. Families often have scheduling difficulties and conflicting demands on their time.

Bridging the gap:

- Provide flexible hours to participate or schedule multiple supplementary events or meetings in the community and/ or during off-hours.
- Videotape school performances and send tapes home with students for parents to view.
- Try scheduling meetings at different times of the day or week to allow all parents to take part at least occasionally.
- Occasionally make a meeting a potluck lunch or supper to meet working parents' needs.

CHALLENGE #3: ENCOURAGING PARENTS TO CONTRIBUTE

The reality check:

- Many parents are unsure about how to help their children learn.
- Some parents feel they have nothing to contribute.
- Many parents don't understand the system and may not know how to get involved.
- Parents often feel discouraged at not knowing how to help.

Bridging the gap:

- Conduct a talent survey, then think of ways to use the parents' many talents. Encourage parents to share information on careers and hobbies.

- Give parents information or materials they can use at home to support their children's learning.
- Write a parent's handbook covering the rules and procedures of the school, and where to find the answers to typical problems.
- Make needs known. Make direct contact. Personally invite participation on Catholic School Council or for special events
- Keep the parish community informed about what is happening and provide a variety of opportunities for all community members to participate.
- Communicate in varied ways (direct mail, nonprint media, etc)

CHALLENGE #4: CREATING POSITIVE AND MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES AT SCHOOL

The reality check:

- Parents whose own school experiences were unsuccessful or stressful may be uncomfortable in interactions at their child's school, and may be reluctant to return to school as parents.
- Some parents have a limited education and aren't sure they have anything of value to contribute. Other parents feel underutilized, especially in decisions affecting the academic and spiritual life of the school.

Bridging the gap:

- Extend a personal welcome to all parents
- Learn about the interests and abilities of parents in the school community and actively seek opportunities to use their experiences and talents for the benefit of the school.
- Value the parents that attend or contribute in obvious ways to the life of the school. Say thank you!

CHALLENGE #5: FACILITATING CHILDCARE AND TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

The reality check:

- Lack of any child-care or appropriate, affordable child care prevents family and community members from participating in programs held at school.
- Many parents have transportation issues (no working car of their own, no access to public transportation, or public transportation is inconvenient) that result in their inability to attend school functions.

Bridging the gap:

- Set aside a room in the school in which to provide child care during events
- Recruit student volunteers for child care or hire students to baby-sit using a small portion of Council budget
- Allow younger children to come to school and provide supervised activities for them
- Provide access to public transportation.
- Help parents set up car pools. Often parents will be more than willing to arrange car pooling for those families who may not have adequate transportation. Circulate need-a-ride/ give-a -ride sign up lists and display information about your car pooling program on bulletin boards, in the school newsletter, and in other communications.

CHALLENGE #6: SUPPORTING CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF THE FAMILIES SERVED

The reality check:

- Families with non-majority cultural or linguistic backgrounds may feel alienated from schools. Those who do speak English, but have little education, may have difficulty communicating with schools because their life experiences and perspectives are different from those of teachers.
- Recognize and appreciate the range of Christian diversity present within the Catholic school community.

Bridging the gap:

- Know the holidays and observances of the various cultural groups in the school.
- Pay particular attention to the religious holidays and observances of non-Catholic groups in your school (The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity provides a wonderful opportunity to recognize and value non-Catholic Christian denominations present in the school for example).
- Work with a knowledgeable, appropriate representative of the community to get to know the diverse cultures of the community.

CHALLENGE #7: SUPPORTING PARENTS DEALING WITH OVERWHELMING PROBLEMS

The reality check:

- Many parents without adequate resources are simply overwhelmed. Some families suffer extreme economic stress; addressing their own food, clothing, and shelter needs takes precedence over involvement in their children's school.
- Low literacy may be an issue for families.
- Many families may be unable to participate in school activities as they find it difficult to pay.

Bridging the gap:

- Call on the telephone (initiate a phone tree) instead of sending home notes
- Develop and distribute a directory of family-friendly supports and services to help parents secure the services they need in the community such as social service agencies, medical clinics, food banks, homework clubs, substance abuse counseling, legal services, literacy and job training programs, etc.
- Plan a family literacy event as part of your parent involvement program.

CHALLENGE #8: CREATING A CULTURE OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

The reality check:

- Parents need to be recognized as co-educators and collaborators in education and be involved in decision making.

Bridging the gap:

- Host a parent meeting to look at issues to gain parents' ideas, and listen to and consider their solutions. Parents could be involved in the planning stages as well as the execution of a program.
- Create in-service training opportunities and urge all staff to attend to learn about subjects such as the benefits of and barriers to parental involvement, techniques for improving communication between home and school, collaborating with family members, recruiting and working with the community, understanding today's busy lifestyles, and ways schools and teachers can meet families' social, educational, and social service needs

"There are two lasting bequests we can give our children. One is roots. The other is wings." Hodding Carter Jr.

TYPES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

ASSESSING EXISTING PARENT INVOLVEMENT

A Checklist of the Different Kinds of Involvement

Schools often judge the effectiveness of their parent involvement by the degree of fundraising activities that occur, the percentage of parent attendance at parent/teacher conferences, and the number of parents coming to school open houses. Many parents, however, do not engage with these traditional methods of parent involvement due to conflicting demands on their times, childcare, past experiences, and their own feelings of competency.

Research and best practices have shown that there are different types of parent involvement in education that occur for different families over time. Not all families can participate in the same way, so it is to be expected that there will be varying levels of involvement occurring over time. The distinct kinds of parental involvement often discussed in the literature are:

1. **Communication to and from parents.** Good communication involves the exchange of information between parents, teacher, and the school, and serves as the foundation for all other home-school activities.
2. **Parenting.** This type of parental involvement reflects the nature of parents as learners themselves. It involves promoting and supporting parenting skills and other opportunities for learning such as increasing knowledge about the school curriculum, school policies, and other aspects of school life.
3. **Student Learning.** This type of parental involvement involves parents as teachers and reflects the crucial fact that parents are the child's first and foremost teacher. Parents may be willing to assist their children in learning, but are not sure what assistance is most helpful and appropriate. Giving parents tools to assist with home-learning activities represent one important strategy. When parents connect to their children's learning, it communicates in powerful ways, that they value what their children achieve.
4. **Volunteering.** This represents the traditional role that parents have played in schools such as fund-raising for the school, attending open houses or school performances. The effective school stretches its resources by encouraging parents to volunteer. Parent volunteers have traditionally been stay-at-home mothers or fathers. Changes in demographics and the nature of work have

created other possibilities for working people to be involved in time limited ways.

It is important to note, however, that a precondition for parent volunteers is a welcoming school.

5. **School decision making and advocacy.** Parents share their views and influence decisions on issues that affect their children. Effective schools have access to financial information and a team of administrators, teachers, and parents makes decisions within the purview of the Catholic School Council.
6. **Collaborating with community.** Community resources are promoted to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

What kind of parental involvement is happening at your school? Use the following checklist as a gap analysis for parental involvement in your school. You may choose to conduct this assessment as a Catholic School Council body or undergo a school-wide survey to get a fuller sense of the perceptions of parents in the school at large. Use the assessment tool as a template, and add your own open ended questions for even more informative feedback. Use the results to inform and focus the development and implementation of specific parental involvement activities that would enhance the various ways that parents are currently involved in your school.

*Connecting families to schools
help children succeed!*

ASSESSING EXISTING PARENT INVOLVEMENT CHECKLIST

COMMUNICATION	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES
A variety of communication tools are used on a regular basis and two-way interaction is sought through each type of medium.			
There are opportunities for parents and educators to share information such as student strengths and learning preferences.			
Clear information is provided regarding course expectations and offerings, student placement, school activities, student services, and optional programs.			
Information on school reforms, policies, discipline procedures, assessment tools, and school goals are disseminated and parents are included in related decision-making process.			
Conferences occur with parents, with follow-up as needed. Needs for the varied schedules of parents, language barriers, and the need for child care are accommodated.			
Immediate contact between parents and teachers is initiated when concerns arise.			
Student work is distributed for parental comment and review on a regular basis.			
Communication occurs with parents regarding positive student behavior and achievement, not just regarding misbehavior or failure.			
There are opportunities for parents to communicate with principals and other administrative staff.			
There are informal activities at which parents, staff, and community members can interact.			

PARENTING	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES
Information is provided on how sufficient sleep, nutritious food, limited TV, discussion at meals together, and a quiet place to study can improve academic performance.			
Parent education is offered on topics of interest and relevance to parents (homework strategies, discipline, bullying, etc.).			
Efforts are made to support and connect families together on issues/ topics of common concern (sacramental preparation, what to expect of students at various age levels, the Internet, special needs, etc.).			
Efforts are made to link parents to programs and resources within the community that provide support services to families.			
The importance of positive relationships between parents and their children are supported and communicated by the school.			
The school reaches out to all families, not just those who attend parent meetings.			
The school reveres the family and it's primary role in the partnership with Church and School.			
STUDENT LEARNING	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES
Parents are given information, orientation and/or training on how parents can foster learning at home, give appropriate assistance, monitor homework, and give feedback to teachers.			
Parents participate with teachers in helping children set academic goals each year.			
Parents are given information, orientation and/or			

training on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.			
Parents are given information, orientation and/or training on required skills in all subjects at each grade.			
Teachers have a regular schedule of interactive homework that requires children to demonstrate to and discuss with parents what they are learning in school.			
The school library has preschool and elementary books that parents can borrow to read to and discuss with their young children.			
Parental participation is sought in decision-making that affects student learning.			
Parents are informed of the expectations for students in each subject at each grade level.			
Interactive homework is regularly assigned that requires students to discuss and interact with their parents about what they are learning in class.			
Opportunities are provided for staff members to learn and share successful approaches to engaging parents in their child's education.			
VOLUNTEERING	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES
The school encourages participation by inviting parents to volunteer in a variety of school activities.			
The school encourages participation by providing clear instructions including a volunteer orientation packet.			
Parents volunteer to extend the capacities of staff by tutoring or serving as a teacher's helper in the classroom.			

Parents volunteer to extend the capacities of staff by accompanying classes on field trips.			
Parents volunteer to extend the capacities of staff by monitoring in the classrooms, cafeteria or on the playground during lunchtime.			
Parents volunteer to extend the capacities of staff by improving the school environment or equipment.			
Parents volunteer to extend the capacities of staff by welcoming and orienting new families at the beginning and during the year.			
Parents have the use of a room as a place for volunteers.			
Office staff greetings, signage near the entrances and any other interaction with parents creates a climate in which parents feel valued and welcome.			
Parents are surveyed regarding their interests, talents, and availability, then the parent resources is coordinated with those that exist within the school and among the teaching staff.			
There is a system for contacting all parents to assist as the year progresses.			
There are opportunities for those with limited time and resources to participate by addressing child care, transportation, work schedule needs, and so forth.			
Appreciation is shown for parents' participation, and their diverse contributions are valued.			
Staff members assist in creating an inviting climate and effectively utilizing volunteer resources.			

Volunteer activities are meaningful and built on volunteer interests and abilities.			
PARENTS AS DECISION MAKERS	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES
Parents participate in the review of proposed school policies and curriculum as part of Catholic School Councils or principal-appointed advisory committees.			
Parents participate on decision making and advisory committees.			
Committees meet at times convenient for parents.			
Use of technology permits parents to participate offsite.			
The school provides parents with an understandable, well-publicized process for influencing decisions, raising issues or concerns, appealing decisions, and resolving problems.			
Training is provided to staff and parents on shared decision making.			
COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES
The school utilizes community resources and partners to augment the curriculum			
The school links families to relevant community supports/ events/ programs			
The Parish-Home-School triad is strongly connected			
Information is distributed regarding cultural, recreational, academic, health, social, and other resources that serve families within the community.			

Community members are involved in school volunteer programs.			
There is collaboration with community agencies to provide family support services and adult learning opportunities, enabling parents to more fully participate in activities that support education.			

RECRUITING, RETAINING AND RECOGNIZING PARENT VOLUNTEERS

In order for parents to feel that their involvement is appreciated and welcomed, the volunteer work they do for the school must be meaningful and valuable to them. Families and schools both reap the benefits of parental involvement through volunteering. Consider the substantial financial contribution that parents make to the life of the school through their volunteer services each year. What's more, research has shown that volunteers express greater confidence in the schools where they have opportunities to participate regularly. In addition, assisting in school or program events/activities communicates to a child, "I care about what you do here." Finally, utilizing the expertise and skills of parents and family members provides much needed support to educators and administrators who are already taxed in their attempts to meet academic goals and student needs.

Use this tool to vamp up the 3R's of volunteering at your school: Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition.

RECRUITING (NEW) PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Who hasn't heard the saying "If you want something done, ask a busy person"? Traditional volunteer recruitment methods often lead back to the same people which can lead to burnout and resentment among a small core of dedicated volunteers. Consider the recruitment tips below to widen the circle of volunteers both on your Catholic School Council and at school functions.

Be strategic when thinking about whom to ask to be a volunteer. Ask yourself: Who is most likely to bring others? How can we reach those not easily reached by traditional methods?

Ask the question: "Who's not here?" In order to answer the question with integrity, members will have to understand and work to remove the barriers to parental involvement.

Look for skills, not names. This will help ensure that people don't get tired of making the same contributions over and over again.

Expect involvement by degrees. People may lack the confidence or feel reluctant about making a significant ongoing commitment at the very beginning. Make sure you communicate the value of even one time or time-limited volunteering and individuals are more likely to 'grow' into a larger, more prominent role.

Appeal to the natural affinity that parents have in helping their children succeed in school through their efforts.

Value your volunteers. Even the limited contributions of parents are of great value and worth. Don't complain about who's NOT there, particularly in the presence of people who ARE there! Nothing can poison a volunteer environment like not valuing the volunteers who have come to help.

Use people's time well. New volunteers may feel discouraged if a meeting is not well run, or it appears as though they are not needed.

PARENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Do some creative thinking as a Catholic School Council about how to communicate the request for parent volunteers. Build on the ideas below, or create an approach that's all your own.

- Take out an "ad" in your school newsletter:

PARENTS WANTED:

Opening for volunteers at all schools. Many opportunities are available.

Compensation: Countless rewards including:

- enhanced dialogue between parents and teachers
- improved student behaviour
- greater commitment to academic achievement.

ALL PARENTS PLEASE APPLY.

SEE (PRINCIPAL NAME) OR A CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBER FOR DETAILS.

- Got an hour or two? Our School Needs You! Please call the school to help with (list current opportunity).
- **ASK!** Personal invitations are always the most personal and effective way of increasing volunteer involvement.
- Consider appointing a Catholic School Council member to take on the role of volunteer development... someone to focus on recruiting new people to Catholic School Council and school events, and also develop a recognition program for the school.
- Take a look at the Three for Me Parent Volunteer Program highlighted within this toolkit for a unique and planned approach to promoting parent involvement.

Make School Events Fun with Incentives:

- Create a **volunteer coupon book** that is checked every time the parent visits school for a parent/teacher conference or to volunteer. When the booklet is full, the parent gets a prize (t-shirt, mug, hat, etc.).
- **Door prizes and raffles draw interest.** Seek donations from local businesses for items such as fast food and other restaurant certificates, hats, t-shirts, children's books and coffee mugs. One school raffled a limousine ride and movie tickets and drew the largest crowd ever.

HOW TO KEEP THEM COMING BACK....

RETAINING VOLUNTEERS

In a nutshell, if the volunteer experience makes the volunteers feel good, they'll want to come back again! Catholic School Council representatives are in a unique position to play the role of ambassador to new parent volunteers. Creating a positive, enthusiastic climate in which the volunteer feels their contribution is valued is what it is all about. Do this by helping volunteers to:

- Feel connected to the school community. Volunteering is a social event that builds community, spirituality and connectedness among the members, helping them to feel like they "belong".
- Know that their contribution is valued.
- Create a fun and welcome environment. Take care to ensure that new volunteers are introduced to others and given a job to do.

RECOGNITION IDEAS

It may seem obvious, but it is crucial that parent volunteers feel that their efforts are meaningful and appreciated. Here are some tips for making sure parents know their valued contributions count!

- Have an annual appreciation event (April is volunteer appreciation month!)
- Say thank you (again and again). It's easy, cheap and gets great results!
- Surprise volunteers with some gesture of appreciation they don't expect (Even a \$1 Tim Horton's gift certificate is a small, symbolic gesture for a parent deserving of a coffee break!)

- Show people that their efforts, big or small, one time, or consistent, are appreciated
- Initiate a Volunteer Wall of Fame (See Three for Me program)
- Use a volunteer suggestion box

*"Volunteers are not paid... not because
They are worthless but because
They are PRICELESS!" Susan Riner*

SAMPLE PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

"THREE FOR ME"

Is your school looking for new ways to attract volunteers to the school and promote parent involvement? Volunteers can help the school with more than just fundraising! Many hands working together will benefit the student body, the staff, and the entire school as a community rather than just a few hands that may "burn out" after a while. Consider starting a volunteer program at your school. Catholic School Council may want to decide to run the program or the school staff may decide to take it on. Whatever is decided, a specific plan regarding recruitment and retention of many volunteers will enhance and benefit all involved.

SAMPLE PROGRAM:

An example of a program that is gaining momentum in the U.S.A. is one called "**Three for Me**" (www.three4me.com). This is a volunteer/parent involvement program that was started by 2 parents (Dee Keywood and Kris Thompson). It is a new approach to parent involvement, offering many free resources to help your K-12 school help parents to get more involved with the school and the education of their children. This program is FREE! However, your school must *register first* in order to use the program's resources and name! Once you register, you have permission to use the information and helpful forms on the website.

With "Three for Me" you will find:

1. Creative ways to connect all families to their child's school and education
2. Ideas to strengthen home-school-community partnerships
3. Resources to motivate parents

"Three for Me" is a promise from parent to school and from parent to child. By signing a promise card, parents commit to volunteer three hours of their time over the year to the school on behalf of their child. Whether parents make copies for a teacher, have lunch with their child at school, read to children, help at a school event, or bake cookies, every act of service is important. If a parent works and has limited availability, the Catholic School Council can take on the role to find activities those parents can do from home to fulfill their promise.

Parents who have never volunteered at your school will take that first step into the building to help out in some way!

PURPOSE OF THE “THREE FOR ME” PROGRAM:

- To promote a promise from parent to child of at least three school-volunteer hours of their time.
- To open the doors to the school so that parents feel welcome and needed.
- To promote further involvement in schools.
- To facilitate increased parent involvement and communication between child & family, family & school, and family & community

SAMPLE VOLUNTEER SIGN UP FORM

CARING IS AT THE CORE OF VOLUNTEERING!

Please take the time to complete this form and return to your child's teacher A.S.A.P.!

I CAN VOLUNTEER...

Name: _____

Child's name: **(list all children at the school)** _____

Grade: _____ Teacher: _____

Please **place a check mark next to all of the** statements **that pertain to you.**

- Yes, I can volunteer, I have checked off the events/committees that I am interested in the possible list of committees and events found on the next page.
- Yes, I want to volunteer but **need more information** on the committees below that I have marked "Info." Please call me at ph#: _____.
- Yes, I want to donate my talents/skills in the following areas:

_____ (ex.: guest speaker in class, construct sets for school plays...)
- The best way to contact me is by telephone: _____
- The best way to contact me is by e-mail: _____
- I acknowledge that my contact information will be used by the Catholic School Council or a designated parent volunteer for the purposes of facilitating volunteer opportunities.

This is a list of possible committees and events taking place at school. The success of these depends upon the work of committed volunteers. Please place check mark next to the areas that interest you.

Committees and Events

- listening to students read
- reading to students
- library helpers
- classroom teacher assistance
- field trip volunteers
- graduation
- counting money (milk, etc.)
- fundraisers
- coaching/training teams
- book fairs
- education week activities
- art clubs
- Jump Rope for Heart
- spring play
- September Open House
- showcase evening
- special lunch days
- Development & Peace
- piano playing/music for masses
- volunteer recruitment, recognition
- Other talents/skills (example: crafts or professional skills). Please specify:

- liaison between school/church
- guest speaker
- beautification of school grounds
- bulletin boards
- dinner & dance night
- fall fair
- pizza days
- yearbook
- media relations (for special events)
- literacy week activities
- staff appreciation
- props/costumes for plays
- special lunch days
__subs __hot dog
- school BBQ
- school health fair
- nutrition program
- Advent activities
- Lenten activities

CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCILS REACHING OUT

FIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE PARENTS

1) THE BULLETIN BOARD

Bulletin boards are most effective when they are visible, well-maintained and up-to-date. Often, a single member of Catholic School Council or parent can volunteer to ensure that bulletin board items are refreshed regularly.

Items might include:

- A meeting schedule for the year
- Notices of upcoming meetings including an agenda
- Minutes of past meetings
- Tips or FAQ (frequently asked questions) for parents on a variety of topics.
- Coming events

2) NEWSLETTERS AND WEBSITES

- Consider creating a Catholic School Council newsletter which is sent home on a periodic basis, such as fall, winter, and spring.
- Ensure that Catholic School Council activities and announcements are included on a regular basis in the school newsletter.
- Consider requesting that an article by a Council member be included in each issue to maintain consistent visibility.
- Similarly, ensure that information about Catholic School Council is available on the school website, and that information is updated regularly.

3) CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL DISPLAY

Consider setting up a visible display at a school event such as a Showcase Evening and have some Catholic School Council members there to answer questions along with a sign up sheet that will enable parents to volunteer for school activities.

4) INCREASE VISIBILITY OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Ensure that Catholic School Council members are visible at key events such as information nights, school concerts and graduation ceremonies. When participating in school events, consider the use of a name tag or similar device to ensure that parents identify you as a Catholic School Council Member.

5) PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT CHECKLIST

A checklist is included in this toolkit. It is a great idea to complete this checklist at the first Catholic School Council meeting of the year and to make an action plan to engage more parents throughout the school year.

"Kids spell love 'I-I-M-E'." John Crudele

COME ON IN! CREATING A WELCOMING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

SAMPLE STRATEGIES THAT LAY OUT THE WELCOME MAT

A significant aspect of parental involvement includes ways that schools stretch their resources by encouraging parents to volunteer. It is important to note, however, that a precondition for parent volunteers is a welcoming school. This tool describes sample strategies that Catholic School Council members and Principals can use to “lay out the welcome mat” and encourage parental involvement through volunteering.

- Prepare welcome packages for new parents. The packages could include school brochures, handbooks, calendar of events, maps, and recent newsletters, Curriculum Handbooks for Parents, school agenda books and Catholic School Council information.
- Give new parents a guided tour of the school, highlighting the classrooms and areas where the children will spend time.
- Ensure that parents know where the Principal’s office is located and when he/she is available for consultations.
- Introduce parents to staff who will be part of their child’s learning team.
- Let parents know different ways they can participate in the school community such as: volunteering during school time or at home, sharing information about special interests, unique experiences, travel or careers, or facilitating older students’ work experiences.
- Inform parents of community agencies and groups that provide different types of support and information.
- Host parent workshops throughout the school year. Topics could include strengthening literacy, decision making, self-advocacy, and study or friendship skills. Survey parents via the first newsletter to determine areas of interest and need.
- Have a welcome package prepared for new students. It could include information such as a map of the school, names of the staff and positions, an inscribed pencil or a ‘Welcome to our School’ certificate signed by the Principal.

- Recruit a buddy for new students on the day they arrive. This buddy can show the student around the school, introduce him or her to other students, answer questions, and help the student feel accepted and welcomed.
- Use 'Comment Catchers' when parents or other members of the public are visiting the school. Attach a sheet of chart paper near the front entry. Place coloured felt pens nearby for visitors to write comments about the school. Students love reading these! (Example chart header: 'What's great at Sacred Heart School...')
- Use a suggestion box to solicit feedback and ideas from parents on an ongoing basis.
- Make the front entry of the school inviting and student-focused by displaying student work, staff photos and names, and student art.
- Have a prominent notice board to advertise upcoming events and to recognize student and staff accomplishments, and volunteer contributions.



PROMOTE PARENTAL
INVOLVEMENT

*Strategies and ideas to
promote involvement*

STRATEGIES AND IDEAS: A VARIETY OF EVENTS TO PROMOTE INVOLVEMENT

Different activities and events promote, involve and engage parents in different ways. Use this tool as an idea generator in discussions with your Catholic School Council. As part of a comprehensive parental involvement plan, you might choose to undertake one activity in each of the five key parental involvement areas.

ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE REGULAR, TWO-WAY & MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION

The school information package: Create a welcoming information package for parents new to the school. Include information about the school and its programs, the Catholic School Councils and its meetings, key dates and school events, and opportunities for various kinds of parental involvement.

ACTIVITIES THAT INVITE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT THROUGH STRENGTHENED PARENTING

Bagels and Boobos: Invite parents and family members to a breakfast of bagels and conversation about raising children.

Plan a spirit-filled workshop for parents with gospel readings, yoga, exercise, a native drum circle.

The Showcase Event: Use a special showcase event to highlight school programs and activities, provide parent education or offer the opportunity to meet other parents. Some of the many showcase ideas you could consider:

- Feature a school activity such as the school choir or band, a drama group, science experiments or technology displays.
- Provide a brief information session by the Catholic School Council on a topic or issue of current interest to the school community.
- Consider providing a speaker to present information on a topic of interest to parents such as homework strategies, supporting your child in French Immersion, discipline or health related topics.

Host “Student as Teachers” nights where students teach family members or community members about special projects, computer use, etc.

Parent support groups: Develop parent support groups around topics or issues: special needs students, discipline, what to expect from students at various age levels, technology, the Internet, how to protect children. Be sure to provide child care.

Plan a workshop that honours Native spirituality with Catholic teaching and rituals. Invite an experienced elder to share teachings about some of the rituals associated with Native spirituality and the ways in which these teachings and rituals are a true and powerful path to the Infinite spirit which can challenge and enhance our Catholic Christianity.

Parent University: Invite parents/families to an evening or Saturday morning of workshops on parenting, homework helps, French Immersion programming, moving to middle or high school, and so on.

ACTIVITIES THAT INVITE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT THROUGH STUDENT LEARNING

Parent Education/Parent Workshops: Parents welcome sound information on a variety of topics related to parenting and their children's schooling. Information sessions on topics such as the parent/teacher interview, working successfully with teachers, school volunteering, internet safety, drug and alcohol issues or successful homework hints. Get creative with delivering these workshops by planning an activity for students (e.g. a school skating party) while holding an information session for parents.

Organize special interest groups for parents of special need students, gifted students, and others. Bring in speakers who can offer information and help with their unique needs. Offer childcare during these sessions.

Portfolio Pizza Night: Hold a pizza supper with a focus on writing portfolios early in the school year. Share information about writing portfolios with a list of things parents can do to help. Celebrate student work by displaying it and having them share with their parents. This is a good activity for elementary, middle and high school.

Especially for Parents of High School students:

Hold **observation days for parents**. Set aside a day for each high school class and invite parents to spend all or part of the day. Begin with breakfast with the Principal, Counselors, and students. Invite parents to attend classes, have lunch and attend information sessions targeted to the classes needs.

Postsecondary Education Resource Room. Create a special room, place in the school library or counselors' area for students and parents that contain materials on

postsecondary education. Make sure parents are aware of this resource by advertising in the school paper, making announcements at Catholic School Council meetings and at open houses.

Develop an **information session** for parents and students about preparation for college or university.

Ready for Work: Hold a conversation in your school with students, educators, parents, and local business leaders about student preparation for college and the workforce, skills considered essential for new employees, and what makes an individual an attractive candidate for employment.

ACTIVITIES THAT INVITE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

Create a friendly atmosphere: Schools can be surprisingly intimidating places for many parents. Many people may have experienced a very different school setting, and may therefore be unfamiliar with the school environment. These tips can help you create a school climate that ensures parents feel comfortable and welcomed.

- **Set aside a place for parents** with comfortable chairs, a coffee pot, reading material and bulletin board for announcements.
- **Create a book swap for parents.** Put a box or basket in the office or parent center labeled "Parent and Teacher Book Swap." Encourage parents to share books they've read with others. Start by leaving several good books and magazines with good information for parents.
- Create a **lending library** including booklets and information for parents. Include a copy of your school improvement plan, Catholic School Council minutes and policies, school report cards, and other good information for parents.
- Make a **computer available** to parents who don't have access at home. Use one that has been donated or is no longer used in the classroom.
- Organize **volunteer greeters** at the front door to welcome students and parents at the beginning of the day.
- **Welcome visitors** to your school with a friendly sign that says something like, "Welcome! For the Safety of our Students and Staff we ask All Visitors to Register at the Front Desk."

- **The Volunteer training program:** Offering a school volunteer training program can go a long way in building parent confidence and involvement. Sessions might be considered, for example, to provide coaching on being a reading buddy, or a library assistant.
- **The Welcome Back to School event:** To re-engage parents early in the school year, and welcome new parents to the school, host a “Welcome Back to School” event which might combine a BBQ or similar social event with a meet the teacher opportunity.
- **School lunch day:** Designate one day a month as a special time to invite parents or family members to join their students for lunch.
- **Utilize parents’ skills and gifts:** Ask parents to share experiences and information from their work or culture; demonstrate specific skills from work or hobbies; talk about how school work relates to the world of work such as how a carpenter needs geometry or how a salesman needs writing skills.
- **Be friendly:** Smile and call parents by name when possible. Parents like to know someone knows their child and they like to be recognized and called by name. Some parents say the most important thing teachers and principals can do to make them feel welcome in the school is smile, be friendly, and respect them and their children.
- **Host a multicultural dinner:** Hold an international dinner with explanations of foods from around the world.

ACTIVITIES THAT INVITE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT THROUGH SCHOOL DECISION MAKING AND ADVOCACY

Focus on Catholic School Council recruitment:

- **The Meet and Greet program:** Work with the principal to find opportunities for Council members to meet new parents when they first register at the school. This might include general information nights or more focused information sessions, geared, for example, to the particular information needs of parents with children in Kindergarten, grade six, grade eight, or grade twelve.
- **Bring a Friend Program:** Encourage Council members to invite and bring a new parent to each Council meeting. This welcoming practice can dramatically improve parent attendance and provide a mentoring opportunity to prospective Council Representatives.

- **The Welcoming Council:** Make newcomers feel welcome at Council meetings. Take time for introductions at the beginning of every meeting. Ask newcomers to talk about their children and the grades they are attending. At the end of the meeting, the Chair or other Council member should make a special effort to speak with newcomers, thanking them for their attendance, asking them if they need assistance or information, and welcoming them to attend the next meeting. Parents who don't feel welcome are much less likely to return.
- **Coffee with the Principal:** Invite parents and family members to have coffee and donuts with the Principal on a regular basis. Offer information about school goals and the focus and progress on school improvement plans and answer questions.

ACTIVITIES THAT INVITE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT THROUGH COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY

- **The School Fair:** Consider organizing a career, health, or community services fair. Participants may include parents and representatives from outside groups in the community. A fair provides an excellent opportunity for community involvement, and demonstrates the school's commitment to supporting families.
- **Arrange for adult education, Literacy, or French as a second language class** at your school. Advertise them to your families. Work with your Early Years Centre, Native Friendship Centre to inform families and offer childcare.



SCHOOL CALENDAR

The attached calendar has been designed to help you see and plan several months ahead "at a glance" with an awareness of significant dates and events on the liturgical, Board and regular calendars.

SCHOOL CALENDAR - AT A GLANCE

SEPTEMBER '07

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Liturgical events: Feast of St. Jerome, Feast of the Birth of Mary						1
2	3 Labour Day	4 "Back to School"	5	6	7	8 Feast of the Birth of Mary
9 Grandparents Day	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28 Professional Activity Day	29
30 Feast of St. Jerome	Parental involvement opportunities at our school this month:					

SCHOOL CALENDAR - AT A GLANCE

OCTOBER '07

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 Feast of the Guardian Angels	3	4	5 World Teacher Day	6
7	8 Thanksgiving Day	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31 Halloween	Liturgical events: Month of the Rosary, Feast of the Guardian Angels		

Parental involvement opportunities at our school this month:

SCHOOL CALENDAR - AT A GLANCE

NOVEMBER '07

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Liturgical events: Feast of All Saints, All Souls Day, Feast of Christ the King				1 Feast of All Saints	2 All Souls Day	3
4 Daylight Savings Time	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 Remembrance Day	12 Professional Activity Day	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20 International Children's Day	21	22	23	24
25 Feast of Christ the King	26	27	28	29	30	

Parental involvement opportunities at our school this month:

SCHOOL CALENDAR - AT A GLANCE

DECEMBER '07

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Liturgical events: Advent, Christmas, St. Nicholas, Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Feast of Mary						1
2 Advent begins	3	4	5	6	7 Professional Activity Day	8 Feast of the Immaculate Conception
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24 Christmas Eve HOLIDAY	25 Christmas Day HOLIDAY	26 Boxing Day HOLIDAY	27 HOLIDAY	28 HOLIDAY	29
30 Feast of the Holy Family	31 New Year's Eve HOLIDAY Feast of Mary	Parental involvement opportunities at our school this month:				

SCHOOL CALENDAR - AT A GLANCE

JANUARY '08

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 New Year's Day HOLIDAY	2 HOLIDAY	3 HOLIDAY	4 HOLIDAY	5
6 Feast of the Epiphany	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 Feast of the Baptism of the Lord	14	15	16	17	18 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins	19
20	21	22	23	24	25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity ends	26
27 Family Literacy Day	28 Exams for O'Gorman High School	29 Exams for O'Gorman High School	30 Exams for O'Gorman High School	31 Exams for O'Gorman High School		

Parental involvement opportunities at our school this month:

SCHOOL CALENDAR - AT A GLANCE

FEBRUARY '08

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Liturgical events: Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Ash Wednesday, Lent					1 Professional Activity Day	2 Feast of the Presentation of the Lord
3	4	5	6 Ash Wednesday	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 Valentine's Day	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	
30	Parental involvement opportunities at our school this month:					

SCHOOL CALENDAR - AT A GLANCE

MARCH '08

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Liturgical events: Lent, Holy Week, Palm Sunday, Easter, Feast of St. Joseph, Feast of St. Patrick, Feast of the Annunciation						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8 Daylight Savings Time
9	10 March Break	11 March Break	12 March Break	13 March Break	14 March Break	15 Feast of St. Joseph
16 Palm Sunday	17 St. Patrick Day	18	19	20	21 Good Friday	22
23 Easter	24 Easter Monday	25	26	27	28	29
30	31 Feast of the Annunciation	Parental involvement opportunities at our school this month:				

SCHOOL CALENDAR - AT A GLANCE

APRIL '08

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
Liturgical events: World Day of Prayer for Vocations						
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
World Day for Vocations	Professional Activity Day					
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			
National Volunteer Week begins	Catholic Education Week	Catholic Education Week	Catholic Education Week			

Parental involvement opportunities at our school this month:

SCHOOL CALENDAR - AT A GLANCE

MAY '08

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Liturgical events: Month of Mary, Feast of St. Joseph the Worker (May 1 st), Feast of Pentecost, Feast of Sacred Heart of Jesus				1 Catholic Education Week	2 Catholic Education Week	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 Mother's Day Feast of Pentecost	12	13	14	15	16 Board Designated Holiday	17 World Catholic Education Day
18 Feast of the Holy Trinity	19 Victoria Day	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30 Feast of Sacred Heart of Jesus	31

Parental involvement opportunities at our school this month:

SCHOOL CALENDAR - AT A GLANCE

JUNE '08

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 Father's Day	16	17	18	19 Exams for O'Gorman High School	20 Exams for O'Gorman High School	21 National Aboriginal Awareness Day
22	23 Exams for O'Gorman High School	24 Exams for O'Gorman High School	25 Exams for O'Gorman High School	26 Exams for O'Gorman High School	27 Professional Activity Day	28
29 Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul	30 Board Designated Holiday	Liturgical events: Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul Liturgical events in July and August: Feast of the Blessed Kateri (Lily of the Mohawks) - July 14 th , Feast of the Transfiguration - August 6 th , Feast of Mary's Assumption into Heaven - August 15 th				

Parental involvement opportunities at our school this month:



PLANNING &
ASSESSING

*Creating a parental involvement
action plan specific to your
school community*

READY, SET, ACTION!

CREATING A PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN

Taking steps towards a more inclusive and involved school community need not be complicated. Start with a plan to increase parental involvement in your school. Some important steps in creating this plan include:

- Reflect and challenge attitudes, assumptions, and realities that may hinder parental involvement
- Get a sense of the stakeholders in your community and determine what assets they might bring to the table.
- Physically walk through the school to get a sense of the culture and climate which will help you provide input as to how to enhance the environment and how best to articulate our Catholic beliefs and values to all parents.
- Engage in an honest assessment in where you are now with regard to involving parents in the school
- Choose an activity or two to explicitly involve parents. (see action planning tool below)
- Use the template on page 60 to develop your Catholic School Council action plan.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

What are your parental involvement goals?	What is acceptable evidence of achieving these goals?	What activities will you plan to reach your goals?	What role will partners play (Parish, CPIC, and community) in helping meet this goal?
What hurdles may be in your way?	How will you navigate them?	Who will help you?	What will they do? What is their role?

HOW ARE WE DOING?

QUESTIONS TO ASSESS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT EFFORTS

- Have the goals and objectives, in terms of involving families and community members in the school improvement goals, been met? Explain your answer with details.

- How are parents and community members contributing to decisions about student learning?

- Are school events, workshops, or training sessions well attended? Why or why not? What are we going to do about the 'why nots'?

- In what ways have language and culture, reflective of the community, been integrated into the school, events, and curriculum?

- How are community resources used? Are the parent liaisons with strong ties to the community engaged?

- Is the school warm and inviting? Is there a physical place for parents?

- How are people reacting to communication efforts? Are family and community members asked for ways to improve communication? If yes, how is some or all of their advice incorporated? Are suggestions made by family and community members shared with school staff?

- How are successes and challenges shared with the school community?

- What parental involvement activity had the most meaning for parents this school year?

- What other parental involvement activities would parents like to see take place at the school?



REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Ellis, Debbie and Kendra Hughes. "Partnership By Design: Cultivating Effective and Meaningful School-Family-Community Partnerships" [Online] Available at <http://www.nwrel.org/partnerships/cloak/booklet-one.pdf> October, 2002

Michigan Department of Education. "Parent Engagement Information and Tools: Moving Beyond Parent Involvement to Parent Engagement" [Online] Available http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Parent_Involvement_Part_1_12-16-04_111426_7.pdf . 2004

Ministry of Education, Ontario. "Involving Parents In The School: Tips For Catholic School Councils" [Online] Available <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/> . 2007

The Ontario Rural Council, 2002 Valuing the Rural Volunteer Toolkit.

USEFUL LINKS

Catholic Principals Council of Ontario

<http://www.cpco.on.ca/links/Education.aspx>

Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education

<http://www.oapce.on.ca/>

Ministry of Education Report of the Interim Parental Involvement Advisory Board

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/parentinvolvement.pdf>

People for Education

<http://www.peopleforeducation.com/>

Canadian Parent For French

<http://www.cpf.ca/>

Parental Involvement Checklist

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/checklist>



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