

Parent Involvement Committee

Date: Monday, April 27, 2009

Time/Place: 4 to 6 p.m.

HJA Brown Education Centre, 5650 Hurontario Street, Mississauga

Location: Trustees' Area (Mezzanine Level)

Committee Savi Khanna, School Council Chair representing Brampton, Co-chair

Members in Karen McDonald, School Council Chair representing Caledon, Co-chair

Attendance: Valerie Arnold-Judge, Trustee representing Caledon

Ashis Basu, Parent Member

Sally Drew, School Council Chair representing Mississauga

Alison Farbar, Acting Communications Officer

Jim Grieve, Director of Education

Deanna Henderson, Parent Member representing the Special Education Advisory Committee

Rabia Khedr, Parent Member

Varsha Naik, Community Liaison Co-ordinator, Communications and Strategic Partnerships

Suzanne Nurse, Trustee representing Brampton

Debanjali Paul, Parent Member

Allison Van Wagner, Trustee representing Mississauga

Input from the field

The co-chairs introduced a new agenda item called input from the field. It will appear on every agenda to provide committee members an opportunity to share relevant information.

Rabia talked about access to after school programs like *Counting on You*. She pointed out that the program is not accessible for all students because of the locations it's available at and the time it starts. Jim outlined how locations are selected and agreed that the program is very valuable. He explained that the board receives extra funding to run the program and offering it at all schools is not possible at this time.

Ashis shared that he feels turnout to secondary school teacher interviews is poor. He suggested that the committee consider strategies to encourage parents to attend the interviews.

Criminal record check process

Jim and Savi shared that they have both been in contact with Peel Regional Police regarding the criminal record check process for volunteers. Peel police is interested in working with us to make the process easier and more welcoming. They are exploring having community officers receive the criminal record check forms and verify identification at schools. Peel police will also be changing the process to allow record check forms to be submitted at various stations, rather than just the headquarters, which is the process currently.

Parent literacy conference

On April 4, the Peel board hosted the parent literacy conference at Sandalwood Heights Secondary School. A number of committee members attended. Savi and Karen spoke about their experience running the committee's booth at the conference. Some feedback they heard includes:

- Parents would like more connections with the committee
- Parents are wondering "what is the committee doing for me?"

The committee discussed the feedback and began brainstorming some ways to connect with parents more often.

Sample terms of reference and discussion

The committee is in the process of developing a terms of reference which will outline its purpose and structure, among other things. The terms of reference will be finalized and made available on www.peelschools.org in the fall.

Update on focus group research and volunteer video

During May, six focus groups on parent involvement are being conducted in English and will complete the series of focus groups, which include groups with principals and parents who speak languages other than English. By fall, the research will be available in a report which will help guide the work of the committee going forward. Preliminary key messages from the focus groups conducted to date:

1. Parents who attended the multi-language focus groups were pleased to be heard.
2. Even if parents may not seem to teachers to be involved, they are very interested in their children's education. Typically in their countries of origin, being involved in a child's education chiefly means ensuring homework is done and helping with it. Going into the school is not generally expected.
3. In many of the parents' countries of origin, school is more textbook based. Inquiry based learning is not familiar, and thus parents do not understand what the teacher is doing or what to do themselves. In some countries, homework is quite lengthy from an early age and parents expect this.
4. Parent teacher interviews do not meet the newcomer parents' need to learn about how Canadian education works and how they fit into it.
5. Principals see parent involvement as a priority and some have successfully implemented innovative ways of attracting parents and making them feel more comfortable with the school.

Remaining budget

The committee has decided to roll-over any remaining budget to the following budget year. It may be used to host a networking and information sharing event for school council members.

Next meeting

The next Parent Involvement Committee meeting will take place in the Trustees' Area at the HJA Brown Education Centre on Monday, September 21 between 4 and 6 p.m. Please let Alison Farbar know if you are unable to attend. Refreshments will be provided.