

Superior-Greenstone District School Board  
 Parental Involvement Committee  
 Friday, June 16, 2006

***"What are the top three reasons why parents are not involved in your school?" Answer Summary***

<b>Parent Council</b>	<b>Response</b>
B.A. Parker Public School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ New parents or past parents that have come to the meetings are put off by other members that have negative attitudes.</li> <li>↳ Many parents are not comfortable with the cliques that have developed with other parents. There are too many cliques, therefore if you are not in a clique, you don't feel welcome or comfortable in a situation that has the cliques.</li> <li>↳ We feel that parents fear being forced into something that they either don't want to do or don't have time to do. The discussion was the one of the parents purposely didn't come to our first meeting because she knew that she would be "forced" into doing something that she knew she couldn't commit to.</li> </ul>
Beardmore Public School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Parents just cannot be bothered, do not take an active interest in the school.</li> <li>↳ Parents feel somewhat intimidated.</li> <li>↳ Busy work schedules.</li> </ul>
Dorion Public School	<p>In initial discussions of possible responses to the above posed question, we immediately began to brainstorm about reasons why parents in general do not get involved in the school. It did not take us long to realize though, that in our school we pride ourselves on the fact that we are a "community school" and parental involvement has always been very high. We even went as far as going through the class list searching for parents who are not involved in school activities in some way. That list was almost non-existent!</p> <p>We then decided to look at the parents who do get involved on a very occasional basis and look at reasons why they wouldn't necessarily be involved more. Following is our response to the posed question (not in any specific order).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>TIME: Many parents are not available during school hours due to their jobs.</b> As we know many families are two-income families or single, working parents and are not physically able to be at the school during the school day.</li> <li>2. <b>OUTREACH: Parents are often not invited <u>individually</u> to get involved in the school.</b> Unless parents are already familiar with volunteer work within the school or other organizations, blanket calls for volunteers often are often overlooked or ignored. At Dorion Public School, unless there are time restraints or prior commitments, we were extremely hard-pressed to think of any parents who would not help when called individually.</li> <li>3. <b>TASKS: Many parents do not want to sit on a "council" or "committee" yet will help out with specific tasks when asked/invited.</b> Finding time for meetings is not at the top of everyone's priority list in their already overly-busy lives. Although, there is usually a core group of people that don't mind meeting and organizing activities. We identified the fact that most people would not mind helping with specific activities when asked. Participation in after-school, evening and weekend activities for those working parents would even be more probable if they are asked to complete a specific task or attend at a specific time instead of taking part in planning the entire activity.</li> </ol>
George O'Neill Public School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ No response.</li> </ul>
Manitouwadge Public School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ No time.</li> <li>↳ Simply choose not to become involved.</li> <li>↳ Don't care.</li> </ul>
Margaret Twomey Public School	<p><b>Parents previously obligated</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Many volunteer opportunities in our community, many parents are already involved in other activities</li> <li>↳ Parents have to prioritize the organizations they choose, school is viewed as a success so not necessarily a high priority</li> <li>↳ Parents are already stretched, overloaded with the needs of the community &amp; family</li> <li>↳ Same few always volunteer</li> </ul>

<b>Parent Council</b>	<b>Response</b>
	<p><b>Family / work obligations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Parents work schedule may not permit 'evening' activities, i.e. shift work</li> <li>↳ Some parents do not have childcare coverage</li> <li>↳ Busy with children in other events, i.e. sports</li> <li>↳ Jobs are taking up more 'free time'</li> <li>↳ Some parents take courses / education programs and so very little free time</li> </ul> <p><b>Lack of confidence / understanding of parent role in the school</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Some parents:</li> <li>↳ feel intimidated at events requiring interaction</li> <li>↳ feel they don't have anything to offer</li> <li>↳ feel teachers know best, 'teachers are the experts so we should listen to them'</li> <li>↳ if poorly educated themselves they may not understand or appreciate the need for their children to become well educated</li> <li>↳ don't understand the need for parent involvement – cannot visualize the returns or see the benefit of parent involvement</li> </ul> <p><b>Lack of communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Some children are embarrassed to have their parents involved</li> <li>↳ Information is not passed on to parents through their children, 'my kids never told me'</li> <li>↳ Schools have not maximized the opportunities to inform parents about what is 'going on at school'</li> </ul>
Marjorie Mills Public School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Willing to volunteer, but not wanting to sit on a committee.</li> <li>↳ I feel that the school is doing a great job and do not want to interfere.</li> <li>↳ I work shift work and would not be able to make the meetings.</li> <li>↳ The present school council is representing us well.</li> </ul>
Red Rock Public School	<p>In no particular order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Parents who work during the day are not available to volunteer during school hours</li> <li>↳ Many people are involved in multiple organizations and do not want to commit to any more (especially in small towns where there is a lot of overlap of personnel)</li> <li>↳ Parents may wish to come to a meeting but not necessarily join the executive, however, due to low turnout and small populations, often coming to a meeting means you are automatically handed an executive job</li> <li>↳ For some parents with younger children, child care may be an issue, or they could be invited to bring along younger siblings if possible</li> <li>↳ Parents who had a negative experience themselves at school are likely unwilling to return to schools as volunteers</li> <li>↳ Parents may be intimidated by the criminal background check process</li> <li>↳ People are just not willing to take the time to volunteer. It is easier to stay at home let someone else do it. It's a matter of personal priorities.</li> <li>↳ Perhaps they have not been specifically asked to help out for a certain job</li> <li>↳ Some people thrive on constant activity and involvement (Type A personalities), others will get involved from a sense of obligation, and others will not. No matter what initiatives there are, there will always be those who help and those who don't.</li> </ul> <p>Personally, I don't think another committee will help get parents involved. Perhaps most useful would be a list of ideas from various school councils on successful ways to encourage parental involvement that other schools could adjust to suit their individual needs.</p>
Schreiber Public School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ They trust what the schools are doing and don't feel a need to be involved, they don't want to spend their time fund raising and they are busy with other things and can't commit to the monthly meetings.</li> </ul>
Terrace Bay Public School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Time.</li> <li>↳ Commitment.</li> </ul>

<b>Parent Council</b>	<b>Response</b>
	↳ Apathy.
Geraldton Composite High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Lack of time;</li> <li>↳ Unsure they are welcome, or are too shy;</li> <li>↳ "Council" sounds too official, and scares people off;</li> <li>↳ Don't want to commit;</li> <li>↳ Parents from towns other than Geraldton have to travel a minimum of a 1/2 hour each way;</li> <li>↳ Most do not know that they are welcome, let alone where or how to get into the school for an activity;</li> <li>↳ Activities are not geared for parental involvement;</li> <li>↳ <i>Question to ask all councils: Why are there no fathers on many councils?</i></li> </ul>
Lake Superior High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ We have posted surveys at different places in the communities of Schreiber and Terrace Bay, as well as sent out the survey with all the students for parents to fill out. Unfortunately we have received less feedback than anticipated. Top reasons for barriers that prevent our parents from being involved in School Council are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Other commitments</li> <li>↳ it is a bad night (Mondays)</li> <li>↳ not comfortable (new parents)</li> <li>↳ not aware..?!</li> <li>↳ personal conflicts with other council members</li> </ul> </li> <li>↳ Lake Superior High School Council has decided to go to 6 meetings per school year, as opposed to meeting every month, we have discussed adding a bit more of an informal and social aspect by providing a light snack and beverages for the meetings. Being small might work to our advantage, meaning that we could possibly phone parents at the beginning of the new school year and inviting them personally to come out.</li> <li>↳ It seems that the survey has had a positive effect on some parents as they mentioned the plan to come out in the new school year to participate.</li> </ul>
Manitouwadge High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ All seems to be going well with current Council so I do not feel I need to get involved.</li> <li>↳ I am too shy to speak out so would rather not.</li> <li>↳ I am so busy with my kids in all their after school activities, that I do not want to wear another hat.</li> <li>↳ I am afraid to get hooked into doing something as I have a hard time saying know.</li> <li>↳ I do not feel I am experienced enough to be on a Council.</li> <li>↳ I would like to see a brief outline of Council's roles before deciding to become involved. Just giving my input would be okay I guess.</li> <li>↳ Top reason for a lack of parental involvement:</li> <li>↳ Canadians like to think that there is a strong government looking after their interest.</li> <li>↳ For parents, the council is an extension of the government. Parents trust that the people who are interested in being there, particularly on a local level, are good people who will look out for their implied interests. So, they don't have to worry about putting forth an effort.</li> <li>↳ I'm willing to bet that if we were to present that an examination of the local budget required each family to submit an extra \$10 per month per child so that local school services could be maintained, they'd dish it out. And once we get \$10....</li> <li>↳ While this is my insight, I'm unsure of how to fix it and have more parents be involved. Perhaps a reverse-onus type of approach where, unless they get active, some form of local cost could go up, and it will come out of their pocket book. Something like what happened with the water meter situation where people pushed to prevent having to dish out \$350.</li> </ul>
Marathon High School	<p><b>As a parent to MHS what activities would you like to be involved in?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ I am open to be involved in whatever comes along. Contact me and I will let you know what I could be involved in.</li> <li>↳ Not sure</li> <li>↳ Coaching school teams</li> <li>↳ Volunteering for school events</li> </ul>

<b>Parent Council</b>	<b>Response</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Volunteer in all or most activities</li> <li>↳ Activities helping with school</li> <li>↳ Volunteering when available</li> </ul> <p><b>Would you like to join the MHS Community Council? (Yes/No      Be active/ just attend meetings)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ No – just attend meetings</li> <li>↳ Yes – be active and attend meetings</li> <li>↳ Yes – be active and attend meetings</li> <li>↳ Yes – just attend meetings</li> <li>↳ Yes</li> <li>↳ No</li> <li>↳ Yes – be as active as possible</li> <li>↳ Yes</li> <li>↳ I am interested in attending meetings but at this time am not willing to hold an executive position</li> <li>↳ Yes</li> <li>↳ Yes</li> </ul> <p><b>What barriers do you feel could prevent you from being involved in Marathon High School?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ Feelings of intimidation (some schools are not friendly or inviting)</li> <li>↳ Not wanting to be pressured into becoming overly involved (executive positions, etc.)</li> <li>↳ Parents not understanding that they are able to attend meetings only and do not necessarily have to participate in activities or take a executive position</li> <li>↳ Fear of attracting attention to your child</li> <li>↳ Lack of information on Community Councils therefore parents do not know what is being asked of them</li> <li>↳ Shift work, watching hockey</li> <li>↳ Work, housework, other activities</li> <li>↳ Communications not getting to me</li> <li>↳ I spend half my time in Sudbury</li> <li>↳ Too busy</li> <li>↳ Work may interfere</li> </ul>
Nipigon-Red Rock District High School	<p>The top three reasons parents are not coming into the high school?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They have never been asked</li> <li>2. They have never been asked</li> <li>3. They have never been asked</li> </ol> <p>In my view, parents do not come into the high school because a culture has developed over time in which parents do not feel any sense of ownership, are not encouraged to get involved and take the default position. I believe this situation is systemic and it will take a significant shift in attitude from the whole school community to turn it around.</p> <p>The problem:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. parents do not feel welcome at the school</li> <li>2. the high school community has not conducted outreach to make parents feel more welcome</li> </ol>

<i>Parent Council</i>	<i>Response</i>
	<p>3. high school age students are often not receptive to parents being involved in their school life</p> <p>This is not a comment on one board or another. I believe it is a chronic situation across small boards in north-western Ontario, where I have been involved. This is in contrast to the elementary school participation by parents in the same boards where, as a parent, I felt welcome, needed, useful and appreciated. The elementary schools were happy to receive parents to assist in class, volunteer to lead special activities or accompany students on school trips. Elementary students are generally happy to see their parents involved in school activities, making it a symbiotic relationship, as each partner benefits from the role played by the others. As my oldest child approached high school, I had a strong sense that it would be difficult to retain that close working relationship with the high school administration and staff (at a Keewatin Patricia board high school). I became involved at Nip-Rock because I wanted to continue to be part of my children's educational experience and have gained a real sense of satisfaction in the process.</p> <p><u>Parents do not feel welcome at the school</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• entering high school, there are fewer obvious opportunities to get involved (science fairs, etc.)</li> <li>• administration and staff could adopt a welcoming role as ambassadors to make parents feel more welcome</li> <li>• parents have numerous skills to offer, but may need to be asked</li> <li>• follow-up with parents when they have offered a service</li> <li>• better communication might be more effective at reaching parents instead of flyers sent home with the students</li> <li>• ask parents to help coach or lead a school club</li> <li>• make it easy for parents to contact the admin staff and teachers</li> <li>• many parents may not know the proper sequence in dealing with issues at the school</li> </ul> <p><u>The high school community has not conducted outreach to make parents feel more welcome</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent /teacher interviews have been held at awkward times and are too rushed</li> <li>• take every opportunity to recognize the school council at school functions (i.e. school council chair could present and award at grad)</li> <li>• school community could go to the community on some occasions rather than expecting the parents to come to the school</li> <li>• open the school up to the community (meeting rooms, gym, auditorium)</li> <li>• host a "school community celebration night" with refreshments, displays, presentations</li> </ul> <p><u>High school age students are often not receptive to parents being involved in their school life</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• this is a myth; it sounds good, but doesn't stand up to the test of time</li> <li>• parental involvement is arguably <b>the</b> most important factor in determining a student's performance at school - advertise this fact</li> </ul> <p><u>Other thoughts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• empower school councils to make some decisions rather than being advisory only</li> </ul> <p>Parental Involvement Committees are a positive step, but unless there is a shift to a more receptive posture on the part of school administration and teachers, committees will not be effective. This is not a negative statement on the educational staff at our high schools. I support their efforts wholly and recognize how difficult their job can be. I have worked to maintain a positive relationship with teachers and administration and have been rewarded with many excellent experiences. What I am suggesting is that the "school community" take an active role in cultivating a new relationship with parents to attract them and make them want to be part of a dynamic and positive educational</p>

<b><i>Parent Council</i></b>	<b><i>Response</i></b>
	experience.