

School Council Tip Sheet

How to Recruit Parents to your School Council

Here are some strategies to encourage parent participation on School Council.

Be visible

- Set up a School Council booth or display in a visible location at school events, such as meet-the-teacher nights or open houses, and provide information and sign-up sheets.
- Ask the Principal to reinforce the important role of the School Council at events.

Try to meet new parents

- Make a presentation to new parents at Kindergarten or French Immersion registration or new parent information evenings (for Grade 9)
- Include Council information in Kindergarten registration or welcome packages for new parents
- Attend a spring Council meeting of feeder schools (Grade 5 and Grade 8) and make a presentation about intermediate or secondary School Councils
- Arrange for the School Council Chairperson to speak at community events (i.e. Rotary Club, multicultural events, fundraisers etc.).
- Encourage Council members to introduce themselves and talk about School Council whenever they meet other parents (i.e. at the bus stop, waiting for their children after school, at the school barbecue)
- Make a connection with the Student Council and share a bulletin board with them to highlight both your and their activities.

Communicate, communicate, communicate

- Request and maintain a database of parents' names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses; send out meeting notices, minutes, event announcements and updates on school issues.
- Be open and inviting – let parents know they're welcome at Council meetings.
- If your school has an outdoor sign, use it to promote Council events and meetings.
- Target specific grade levels at each meeting and send them personalized invitations.
- Encourage Council members to bring a friend or "buddy" to each meeting.
- Ask teachers to recommend parents who might be good candidates for School Council.

- Develop a School Council newsletter or create a School Council section in the Principal's newsletter and have current issues available in the school office.
- Reward and recognize volunteer efforts – let parents know their contributions are important.
- Invite community members, such as a neighbouring seniors' group, to attend particular meetings or events to build partnerships.
- Put reminders on the school announcements.
- Make Council meetings positive and productive

Make your meetings informative, well-organized and convenient for parents

- Rotate meeting nights and locations
- Ask members and potential members what is convenient for them.
- Try to set meeting dates that don't conflict with meetings or events at feeder schools, as parents may have children at the other schools.
- Set Council meeting dates (and topics, if possible) early in the year and publicize them regularly.
- Keep meetings short. Start and finish on time.
- Provide babysitting for parents with young children. Ask secondary school students to help with babysitting and offer them community service hours.
- Make sure that parents know and understand the purpose of the meetings. Have a clearly established mission, goals and objectives.
- Pursue activities and events that support student success. Don't let personal issues or the concerns of individual parents dominate the meetings.
- Run meetings efficiently.
- Develop a dynamic and proactive action plan at the beginning of the year, and follow it.
- Set up sub-committees to handle more involved issues, and have most of the discussions at that level – ask sub-committee members to come to Council with clear recommendations for action.
- Encourage more "co" roles on Council (i.e. co-chair, co-treasurers) – when one member leaves, the person in the "co" role will have the skills and experience to take over the position.
- Survey parents for topics of interest or speakers they would recommend - and invite other schools and community members to attend.
- Invite students to make presentations on specific topics.
- Keep "red tape" to a minimum. Focus more on supporting student learning and less on administrative details.
- Don't give parents "jobs" the first time they show up at a meeting, unless they ask or volunteer. Let them have time to learn about School Council.

- Share the workload. Don't force people to work on projects or committees that don't interest them; if no one wants to work on a project, consider doing something else instead.
- Make meetings fun – provide food and allow some time for socializing.

Questions?

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