



Kenora Catholic District School Board
We are a Roman Catholic school system dedicated to excellence in education, the Christian formation of youth, and meaningful partnerships with family, community and Church.

MINUTES OF MEETING

December 9, 2020

MEETING DATE:	Wednesday, December 9, 2020
LOCATION OF MEETING:	Microsoft Teams
SUBJECT OF MEETING:	Catholic Parent Involvement Committee
TIME OF MEETING:	11:30 a.m. – 12:32 p.m.
NEXT MEETING:	11:30 am – February 10, 2020

ATTENDED BY:

	ATTENDANCE	PERSON	TITLE
1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kathleen Holmstrom	Chair - Pope John Paul II School Parent Representative
2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lana Goodman	St. Louis School Parent Representative
3.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gianna Poltronetti	St. John School Parent Representative
4.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Corinna Glazier	St. John School Principal, KCDSB Representative
5.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Randi Casey	Northwestern Health Unit Community Representative
6.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Derek Haime	Director of Education
7.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Paul White	Superintendent of Instructional Services
8.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hilary Aitken	Ecole Ste. Marguerite Bourgeoys, Vice Principal, KCDSB Representative
9.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Anne Sweeney	Trustee Representative
10.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paul Landry	Trustee Representative
11.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Michael Favreau	Vice Chair - Trustee
12.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Teresa Gallik	Chair - Trustee
13.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cathy McQuillan	Recording Secretary

1. **Prayer** – Derek Haime

2. **Roll Call** – Derek Haime

Chrysti Savage sent regrets. Lana Goodman attended in her place.

Paul Landry, Hilary Aitken - Regrets

3. **Introduction:** Chrysti Savage new St. Louis Parent Representative

4. **Review of September 16, 2020 Minutes** – Derek Haime

5. **CPIC Resources** – Derek Haime – Attached

6. **EDU PIC Chair Provincial Update** – Kathleen Holmstrom

- The Ministry met for the second time this year with all the PIC Chairs from across the province to discuss the different challenges and successes that have arisen due to COVID-19.



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- Attendance was a provincial wide challenge with students both in school and in virtual trying to connect with families and caregivers to help with their different needs in supporting their children.
- Encouraging and promoting daily check-ins to families to let them know we are still here to help.
- Access to internet and devices to complete work is an issue.
- The Ministry will survey regions that are still struggling to provide these supports to their students.
- The Ministry will meet with CPIC Chairs each quarter to provide update while also providing support where needed.

7. **Letter to Minister Lecce** – Ann Sweeney – Attached

8. **School Updates:** Derek Haime

- Our schools have worked very hard to overcome the challenges of this year. Derek commented how proud he is of our students, staff, and parents for all their hard work and dedication.
- St. Isidore Virtual school has come so far since starting up. They are already establishing their own identity. The students feel they are part of a school even though it is virtual.
- We cannot do Advent and Christmas celebrations as we normally do. We are having liturgies online each Monday. The students are working hard and will be presenting Christmas concerts virtually this year. Our Facebook page and school websites show all the wonderful events happening in our schools.
- Candy Cane Lane will be happening on the KCDSB Campus this year. The campus will be lit up with lights, Christmas trees will be decorated with our student's artwork, the windows of all the building will all be decorated, hot chocolate and candy canes will be provided. Families can stroll through while maintaining social distancing.



9. Once Around the Table

Gianna Poltronetti – St. John School

- St. John School started this year with six classes and by mid November they had to add a class at the intermediate level. This made changes in the classrooms from grade three to eight. The need was based on class sizes that were getting too big from new students and students returning from the virtual School.
- Breakfast Program has started again using a google form. Families have signed up and no children will be refused. The nutrition items are delivered to the classroom each morning.
- The milk and Subway program has also started up again.
- The school has been running modified intermural twice a week for grade five through eight. Activities include beanbag, smash and saucer slam.
- The students have also been enjoying snowshoeing with their classes and cross-country skiing will be starting up soon.
- The classes are taking turns to host weekly virtual assemblies each Wednesday.
- Students have self initiated a Kindness Campaign they spread messages of cheer by decorating bulletin boards.
- Our kindergarten class will be hosting the Santa Paws fundraiser for Christmas cheer.
- The Path of Light will be held next week with parents invited to walk along a path outside decorate with student artwork. Hot chocolate and candy canes will be distributed.
- Classes are also creating virtual Christmas celebrations in place of the traditional Christmas concerts. I will be available by video invite on Monday, December 21st at 6:00 pm. Gift bags will be sent home with the students to be enjoyed while watching the event.

Lana Goodman – St. Louis School

- The students have been busy making stockings and soup.
 - They have been doing various activities at the firepits outside in their cohorts. They have an upcoming pre-Christmas fire pit and pizza party.
 - They have been working with the community with wreath making and Christmas carols workshop.
 - The hot lunch program started in early November.
 - We have had a few fundraising activities including poinsettias and meat orders.
 - The virtual Christmas Concert which was recorded in individual cohorts is being shared on December 16. Parent Council usually does a cooking fundraiser at the Christmas concert so they will be continuing this tradition but sending the cookies home to be enjoyed while watching the Christmas concert at home.
 - Lana reported that St. Louis School did a really good job during the one positive Covid Case at the school. She wanted to congratulate the school for carrying on very well during that stressful time.
-



Cathy McQuillan – St. Isidore Virtual School

Reporting on behalf of Jamey Robertson, Principal of SIVS. SIVS has started their Parent Council and will have a representative at the next CPIC meeting in February.

Paul White - SIVS staff and students are showing pride with hoodies. They are becoming a part of Kenora Catholic District School Board. There is still a bit of back and forth between the virtual school and the brick and mortar schools and we are monitoring that. The principal, vice principals, and teachers are beyond exceptional with the amount of work they are putting into the virtual schools.

Teresa Gallik – On behalf of the Board of Trustees she wanted to thank all the Catholic Parents Councils in our schools for all the work they do especially during these difficult times. Keeping our schools and students safe doing things differently then before.

Randi Casey – Northwestern Health Unit – Attached

Anne Sweeney – Commented how pleased she is with all the activities going on in the schools in these difficult times. She is looking forward to seeing all the virtual Christmas concerts.

Kathleen Homstrom – Pope John Paul II School and St. Thomas Aquinas High School

PJP is still trying to engage their families in activities virtually.

She is also attending St. Thomas Aquinas High School Parent Council meetings. The attendance of both school's Parent Council meetings has almost doubled now that they are happening virtually. Parents want to be engaged and involved in their children's school and she is hoping post-covid they can still offer virtual meetings as an alternative to parents who cannot attend the meetings in person.

In January at STAHS they will be hosting a Teams meeting for, Parenting Through a Pandemic. There will be guest speakers and our mental health team will be involved.

PJP has received a lottery licence and will be doing their Cash Draw again. The draw will be Family Day at 1:00 pm. The tickets will be printed and available in early January.

The PJP Parent council donated all the turkeys for the PJP Thanksgiving Soup Celebration.

PJP and STAHS will be doing virtual Christmas Concerts and participating in Candy Cane Lane.



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Derek Haime: Tonight, there is a special Advent evening of reflection for Board Chairs and Directors. He is looking forward to attending all the upcoming virtual events at our schools.

10. New Director for Kenora Catholic District School Board – Derek Haime

Paul White will be our new Director of Education at KCDSB.

Derek Haime spoke about raising the bar at KCDSB and how that has been, as he has learned, the way since its inception. It is not one person that raises the bar but the team. Together we have faced challenges like Covid but at the same time we have also kept learning and faith development moving forward. He knows that Director White will continue to raise the bar at Kenora Catholic.

Paul White thanked Director Haime for his kind words and thanked him for the exceptional job he has done and the great path he has left us to continue on. It does not matter what position we hold it is a team effort. He truly appreciates all the extra work the Catholic Parent Involvement Committee does in our schools. We are all in this for the kids and if he can do anything to help please give him a call. He will do his best to live up to Director Haime's standards.

Derek Haime ended the meeting by saying it has been his privilege and honour to work with this Catholic Parent Involvement Committee.

11. Next Meeting: February 10, 2021

12. Meeting Adjournment at 12:32 pm

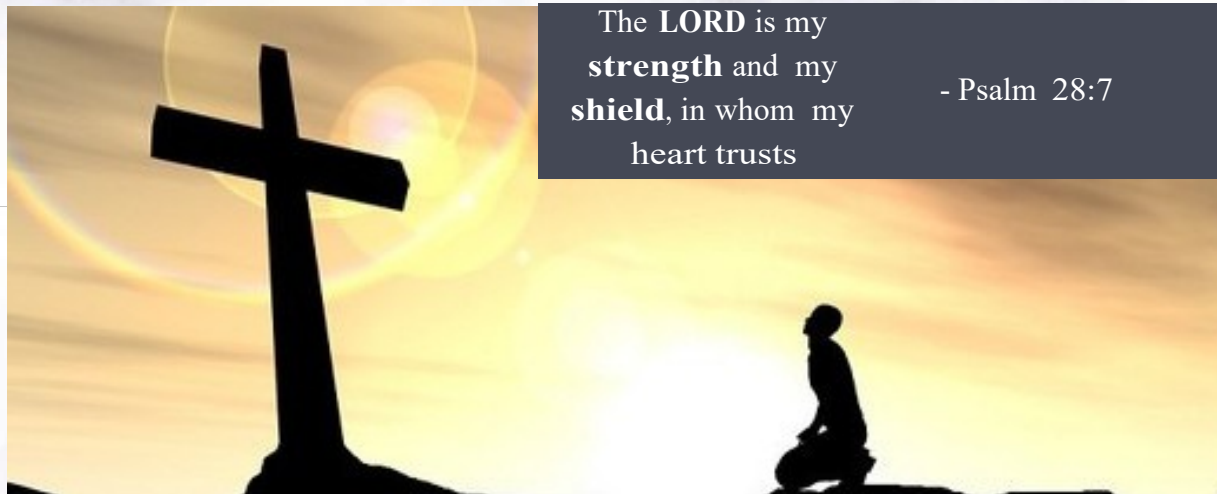
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Faith Message



The LORD is my
strength and my
shield, in whom my
heart trusts

- Psalm 28:7

We dedicate our Prayer in the memory of Mike Morais and Mary Anne Millson.

Lord,

I admit I fear the unknown. I fear how others will act during this time of uncertainty, how long this will last, and not knowing what the world will look like for my children when this is over. Father, calm my heart. Help me to trust you. Please keep my children safe. Please allow me to stay healthy so that I can take care of them. Help me to rest at night, so that I have energy and clarity of mind. Keep me focused on you, so that I can fill my children with encouragement and not panic. Help us to not grow weary of one another while we're home together for who knows how long. Show me how to make the most of this time and disciple my children with a new urgency.

St. Raphael Archangel, healer of mind, body and spirit, Pray For Us.

Amen.

Message from Our Executive Director



Returning to school this year has been anything but ordinary. We saw each school board take on the challenges of meeting the ever changing needs of their communities with in person and virtual school options.

Administrators have put in around the clock hours preparing their schools for our children ensuring that we are all safe in our school's environment, and continue to do this daily. We have seen teachers adapting to new realities in the schools delivering their courses face to face and online and have been doing a remarkable job. The commitment and dedication is clear to see as children are happy to be back at school whatever that may look like for them whether face to face or online.

On behalf of parents across Ontario we would like to express our sincerest appreciation for the extraordinary challenges that School Administrators, teachers and support staff have had to overcome. Cont'd...



WE THANK YOU WHOLEHEARTEDLY FOR YOUR DEDICATION TO OUR CHILDREN!

At the end of last month we prepared an Open letter to the Minister of Education, Honorable Stephen Lecce. We wanted to advocate once again for the challenges that continue to be faced by school boards across the province. While there have been many victories for parents as our children are adapting to school, and are trying to remain positive for our children, we continue to ensure that we voice the concerns and share direct feedback with the minister. As the number of cases continues to increase and parts of the province are rolling back to stage 2 protocols we continue to press for smaller class sizes and equitable access to virtual schools in all areas of the province. We are launching our “OAPCE Return to School” Survey and hope you can take a few minutes to provide input into your experiences. With the results we will be better able to relay your experiences directly to the Ministry of Education.

On behalf of the OAPCE Board of Directors, stay strong, seek self care, and hope to see you all virtually at our Webinar Series and AGM!

Annalisa Crudo-Perri





OAPCE NEWS



Welcome to all our new and returning OAPCE Representatives for joining OAPCE this year. We are excited and glad to have you join the OAPCE family! Please note that “Every council needs an OAPCE representative per reg 612”, if you have been appointed or elected as the OAPCE Liaison Representative please email us to ensure that you are on the email distribution list. What is your role? You are the critical piece between us and your parent community - you will receive updates and information from us and your role is to share to your parent council - where there is a regional council set up (where there are OAPCE Directors) you will participate in their meetings and events with other OAPCE representatives as well. If you have any questions please reach out to us or your school Principal and or Parent Engagement Superintendent.

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News From Our Regions



Algonquin & Lakeshore

Ensuring an education that is equitable and inclusive, the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board strengthens our Catholic Educational System on the Pillars of Discipleship, Scholarship and Stewardship. Our schools and our strategic initiatives are built on the foundation of these pillars. There are 33 Elementary and 10 Secondary schools in the regions. Currently the ALCDSB is creating a plan to ensure that all OAPCE Liaison Representatives are appointed in each parent council and to create their regional council in the new year with a new OAPCE Director appointed earlier this year.

Brant Haldimand Norfolk

The first RCPIC meeting is scheduled for November 4 online. OAPCE looks forward to sharing the update at this meeting. There are 32 schools (elementary and secondary schools as well as 1 continuing education centre) in the district. OAPCE representatives are contacted through the Office of the Superintendent and look forward to exploring future parent engagement opportunities.



News From Our Regions



Dufferin Peel

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board comprises 151 schools (125 elementary 26 secondary). We connect with reps by sending updates through the CCCSC committee for distribution to all school principals and chairs. We connect with reps directly as they sign up for email directly.

CCCSC (CPIC) updates were communicated in August. They were seeking input on back to school plans and topics for “back to school webinar for parents”. Parents in DP asked for a webinar that highlighted school protocols and information about COVID-19 from Peel Health to help address parents’ anxiety about what is fact vs. myth. A webinar was held at the start of September. Over 2000 participants were online and they also had an ASL interpreter. They had over 600 questions and continue to update and post to the board website and social media accounts.

Board CCCSC Volunteer of the year awards received 30+ nominations. All were reviewed and the award winners and all nominees will be acknowledged at an online event in October for the Family of Schools. This is normally held in June.

Like some other boards, there was a delayed start for those registered for remote learning. During the delay, Secondary students were offered daily webinars. Topics included mental wellness, digital citizenship and a presentation from Peel Police with respect to internet and social media safety. When the delay continued they offered additional student webinars about study tips and tech tips. Cont'd...



News From Our Regions



Dufferin Peel cont'd...

Weekly emails sent to the parents that provide updates about information from OAPCE, the board and parent share resources.

Meetings are scheduled for the end of each month on line. Topics and presenters are being coordinated so that we don't duplicate what the CCCSC is doing. Parents were seeking information on Human Trafficking, Mental Wellness, Faith Resources to connect home, school, parish and Healthy Eating Habits (dietician)

A letter issued Sept 10th to all school principals and chairs. "Every council needs an OAPCE representative per reg 612", the letter provides information about OAPCE and directs them to sign up to identify who is the rep and to sign up for emails.

Every November, for the last 10 years, the OAPCE team has been invited to facilitate an "about your role" workshop at the annual CCCSC in-service for Catholic School Council executive members. The workshop is one part of a ½ day event. Attendance in the workshop ranges from 15-60 people depending on the year as the board promotes it as a New To Role information event. Regional council volunteers facilitate the breakout session "New to OAPCE Rep Role". Other events are pending development (such as the annual CCCSC Spring Parent Marketplace and Conference, where we normally have a promo table).



News From Our Regions



Halton

There are 54 schools in the school board. OAPCE reps are contacted through the HCDSB through the Office of the Superintendent assigned to sit on CPIC.

With the current and projected student population growth in Milton Ontario, the Ministry of Education has approved funding for the HCDSB for a new elementary and secondary school.

The HCDSB is hosting a variety of virtual information sessions for parents regarding programs and educational pathways. These include Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs as well as Grade 8 parent information nights. The HCDSB has welcomed three new Superintendents of Education. The HCDSB is committed to communication with parents and students regarding virtual learning and return to school protocols and updates through the addition of links available on the Board website. These include topics such as delivery models, health and safety protocols, cleaning protocols, school day structure, and transportation.

The HCDSB is celebrating in October Islamic History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month with a variety of in-class activities and virtual events. Cont'd...



News From Our Regions



Halton cont'd...

OAPCE will be looking to participate in CPIC meetings for the HCDSB. Updates from OAPCE provided at these meetings as well as promotion of upcoming webinar series/AGM. Commissioning ceremony of reps to be determined. Plans to promote OAPCE for 2020/2021 school year:

- a) OAPCE is standing agenda item at CPIC meetings and Council of Chairs
- b) OAPCE updates sent from Halton Director to HCDSB communications
- c) OAPCE rep commissioning ceremony and possible virtual retreats

Toronto

There are 200 schools in the TCDSB and OAPCE Representatives are elected and or appointed on every parent council - these representatives are connected directly with our Regional Council through an email distribution list. OAPCE Toronto is a standing item on every parent council agenda. Cont'd...





News From Our Regions



Toronto cont'd...

CSPC (Parent Councils) Elections have been completed at all TCDSB schools. First OAPCE Toronto meeting was held on Monday October 5th. OAPCE was pleased to host a Q and A session with the new Director of Education Brenden Browne. An email has been sent out to our new OAPCE Toronto reps that includes a warm welcome to all and provided information about meetings and the upcoming webinar series. The OAPCE Toronto team is currently exploring options to host a virtual commissioning ceremony.

OAPCE Toronto continues to advocate for the parent voice through delegations and co delegations with CPIC at most TCDSB Board meetings. OAPCE continues to offer assistance with the new by-law template. There have concerns reported to OAPCE Toronto with the launch of the virtual school and students not having teachers or classes until this past week - a lot of parents have chosen the virtual school as there are currently 28,000 enrolled in it (Elementary and Secondary).

Our next meeting is in December and continue to engage with all parents on our various social media platforms, email and virtually.



News From Our Regions



York

There are 110 schools in the York Board. There has been a delay across the Board in establishing Catholic School Councils, and will hopefully build the distribution list into November. Each parent council ensures that an OAPCE rep is appointed or elected and will be in direct contact with the OAPCE Directors representing the region.

The York Catholic District School Board welcomes interim Director of Education, Mary Battista. Ms. Battista brings with her many years of experience as a teacher, librarian, principal and superintendent.

YCDSB re-entry plan has progressed well during Covid-19. “Elementary students in Kindergarten to Grade 8 will attend school five days per week, with one cohort for the full day, including lunch. Secondary students will return in an adapted model, with class cohorts of approximately 15 students, attending on alternate days. Students will include 150 minutes of in-person, face to face learning on alternate days and 150 minutes of synchronous online learning every day.” School staff have performed remarkably during this transition and we commend all teachers that are teaching both in-class and remote learning curriculum. Bravo!

Don't see your Board? Contact us on how we can share what is going on in your Region!



Partner Spotlight



CPCO - Catholic Principals' Council



@CPCOofficial

I am a Catholic Principal/Vice-Principal where we highlight the important work of Catholic Principals and Vice-Principals across Ontario.

Every second Friday, we unveil a profile of a Principal or Vice-Principal who share their personal experiences that led them to choose this vocation, the qualities that they think make a successful Catholic education leader and the things they are most grateful for in their career.

You can also connect and follow these stories on social media, under the hashtag #CatholicPVP.

If you know a Principal or Vice-Principal who you would like to nominate, or if you would like to participate yourself, please contact Marketing & Communications Manager, Hannah Yakobi, at hyakobi@cpco.on.ca.

<https://cpco.on.ca/index.php/public/ontario-catholic-schools/i-am-catholic-principalvice-principal/>



Partner Spotlight



ICE - Institute for Catholic Education



@ICEontario

The Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario (ACBO) is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Anne Jamieson as the new Executive Director of the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE).

Dr. Jamieson is a recognized leader in the Ontario education community and has served as a conference speaker, presenter and facilitator of professional development sessions across Canada in the areas of curriculum delivery for Religious Education and in faith formation.

A former teacher and university lecturer, Dr. Jamieson is also a published author, who completed her Doctor of Ministry, in the area of catechesis, through the University of Toronto.

As a woman of deep faith, she is committed to building on the legacy of the countless religious women and men who forged and fought for our publicly-funded Catholic Education system in Ontario.

We welcome Dr. Jamieson and look forward to working with her! Cont'd...

Partner Spotlight

ICE - Institute for Catholic Education cont'd...

@ICEontario

ACatholicPerspective is a publishing project of the Institute for Catholic Education, offered to encourage discussion and reflection on topics relevant to teachers, educational leaders working in Catholic schools, and members of the broader Catholic educational community, as part of the mandate to develop foundational documents in Catholic educational practice.

The monographs are intended to ensure that professional practice and dialogue remain grounded in the distinctive perspective of our Catholic faith.

The Project is comprised of four series:

- i) Identity and Mission for Catholic Schools
- ii) Curriculum and Educational Practice for Catholic Schools
- iii) Contemporary Issues and Challenges for Catholic Schools and
- iv) Renewing the Promise – Exploring Challenges and Opportunities you can find it here: <https://iceont.ca/monographs/>.

15 Do's and Don'ts for Parent Council Chairs

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15 Do's and Don'ts for Parent Council Chairs



Posted on November 7, 2018 by [Parents Engaged In Education](#)

Here are some dos and don'ts to help you get off to a rapid start and keep the momentum going all school year long.

1. **Do** learn people's names, and use them often.
Don't assume everyone knows who you are. Make an effort to introduce yourself.
2. **Do** set a good example by following school policies and procedures.
Don't take advantage of your role. You still need to follow the rules. Don't park in places where you are not supposed to. Always sign into the office and wear the proper identification where needed. Don't assume everyone knows who you are.
3. **Do** say thank you.
Don't group every thank you info one blanket statement at the end of the school year. Try to work hard throughout the school year to thank individuals by name for their contribution to the parent council.
4. **Do** respect the principal's role as the head of the school.
Don't surrender the parent council's authority to the principal. Remember to work together as partners.
5. **Do** get to know the school secretaries, custodians and other support staff.
Don't take advantage of this group. Remember they for work for the school and your children. Learn to appreciate them and treat them with respect and they can help parent council in many ways.
6. **Do** repeat traditional, successful events.
Don't ignore the value of tradition. Remember it gives your parent council an identity.
7. **Do** run efficient meetings.
Don't take advantage of people's time. Remember to have an agenda ready, prepare minutes and start on time.
8. **Do** familiarize yourself with Robert's Rule of Order.
Don't get knocked out by layers and layers of procedure. Use Robert's Rule of Order to keep your meetings running smoothly and efficiently.

9. **Do** read your parent council's by-laws.
Don't give up if there are no by-laws in place. Creating them can be one of the most important and rewarding things you accomplish for your parent council.
10. **Don't** disregard the knowledge of your past chair.
Do approach them as your mentor. They will know better than anyone the challenges you are about to face. Listen to what they have to say and don't be afraid to ask for advice.
11. **Do** seek out information. Go to parent council seminars. Reach out and network with other parent council members.
Don't assume you know it all. There are other parent councils and parent engagement groups that have a ton of great ideas and experiences you can share with your group.
12. **Don't** put all the emphasis on fundraising.
Do focus on parent engagement and involvement first. A school community that feels connected will step up to support school fundraisers when asked.
13. **Don't** be afraid to make the tough decisions.
Do accept responsibility for unpopular but wise decisions, such as cancelling an event due to lack of volunteer support.
14. **Don't** reinvent the wheel.
Do learn from the past. Go through old parent council meeting minutes. Talk to previous parent council members. Talk to teachers who have been on staff for a while.
15. **Don't** let the stress level get too high. It is OK to scale back to avoid burnout.
Do have fun! Being a parent council chair can be a very rewarding experience. No matter how big or small remember your work makes a positive difference for the school community.

Find more resources on our website

If you haven't already done so, we encourage you to surf our website. We have a great list of links to other valuable parent engagement resources on our [links](#) page. If you are looking to find more articles like this one, [check out the rest of our blog](#) or [visit our brochures page](#). We are constantly trying to add new content for parents to enjoy.

Like this article?

Be sure to share it with other parents and school councils.

7 Tasks for New Parent Council Chairs

7 Tasks for New Parent Council Chairs



Posted on October 9, 2018 by [Parents Engaged In Education](#)

Here is a checklist of tasks to keep a newly elected school council chair organized and ready to take on their new role.

Congratulations on just being elected parent council chair. You may be both enthusiastic and nervous when thinking about what have you gotten yourself into beginning this new role. This is normal, as it is a big job. Hopefully this blog will help you to get organized and make your new role more manageable. Being parent council chair can be really fun and rewarding. Before your next parent council meeting it may be helpful to you to complete the tasks below.

New Parent Council Chair Checklist

1. Reach out to the outgoing parent council executive. Try and setup sometime to transfer both knowledge and any documents you may need going forward.
2. Find out if there is any immediate business you should know about and that needs to be addressed in a timely fashion.
3. Meet with the Principal. Keep it informal and try to get a sense of how the principal sees the parent councils role in the school. You will want to lay the groundwork for working in partnership with school administration.
4. Start connecting with parents. If your schedule allows, greeting parents before and after school is a great way to let them know you are looking forward to working with them.
5. Connect with your new school/parent council members. Try and schedule a social night before your next parent meeting so that you can all get to know each other.
6. Create a work space at home for your new role. Consider using a portable container or crate to create an on-the-go parent council office so you can use it wherever you are.
7. Take some time to look at the school year ahead. It is a great idea to jot down some key tasks and key events on your calendar and bring them to your next parent council meeting.

Additional Resources for Parent Council Chairs

- [What Roles and Responsibilities Make Up a Good School Council Chair](#)
- [7 Techniques to Prevent School Council Burnout](#)
- [Parent Council Monthly](#)
- [10 Ice Breakers for Parent Council Meetings](#)

Remember to share

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6 Things for New Parent Council Chairs to Remember

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6 Things for New Parent Council Chairs to Remember



Posted on October 3, 2018 by Adrian Marmara

Being elected new Parent Council Chair can be overwhelming to start. Here are a couple of items to remember when settling in your new role.

- **Remember to Breathe**
Do not get overwhelmed. Try not to worry too much about every little thing. It is okay to make a few mistakes. You are only human, no one is expecting you to be perfect.
- **Remember to Communicate**
Communication is key in this role. Be mindful of communicating in ways that will present you as a person who is approachable, proactive and reachable.
- **Remember to Stay Organized**
Whether you use binders, notebooks, Google Drive or some other system, make sure you have a system in place that works for you. Set some time aside each week to organize and keep up with things.
- **Remember to Not be Afraid to Accept All Help**
Get out of the mindset that people have to commit to a certain level of volunteering. If someone wants to help, let them. Be resourceful and find a way to let them help in a way that works for them.
- **Remember to Talk to Teachers**
Find out what the teachers on staff would like from your group. You might be surprised by their insight and suggestions.
- **Remember to Setup a Meeting with the Principal**
Setup a meeting with the Principal and get a feel for how your principal prefers to communicate, whether it be email, text, phone or in-person be willing to adapt.

Remember to share

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Why Join Your School's Parent Council?

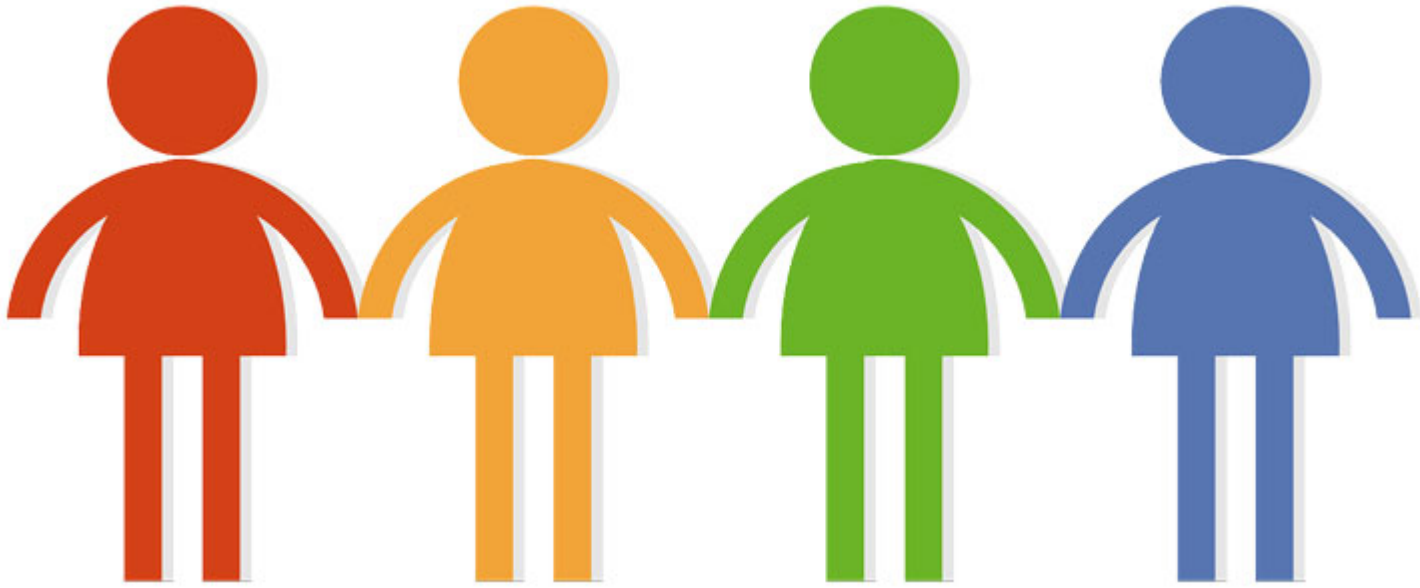
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Why Join Your School's Parent Council?



Posted on August 16, 2017 by [Adrian Marmara](#)

Make a difference in your child's education!

Children Benefit

Yes we have heard many times that children perform better when parents are engaged in education both at home and at school. And yes we have heard that parental involvement boosts student achievement.

By joining your school's parent council, you are providing a positive example. Your child will see first hand the importance you place on education.

Schools Benefit

Parent councils provide support for administration and teachers. School parent councils strive to create a positive and caring atmosphere in the school.

School parent councils address important issues that are important to parents and school administrators. They advocate for funding and issues that affect various aspects of education and student well being.

Make Connections

School parent council involvement helps you stay connected with the school and allows you to gain a broader perspective of how you can play a supportive role. You also network and make connections with other parents, business partners in your community and agencies that share a common goal of student achievement. Working in partnership together helps build a stronger foundation for students to grow and thrive.

It is good for you

Volunteering with your school parent council allows you to contribute your skills and knowledge. Not only will it benefit your child(ren) but your school community as well. School parent councils can help you gain experience and expertise as leadership volunteer, build your resume and make lasting relationships.

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10 Ways to Increase Involvement on Your School Council's Facebook Page

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10 Ways to Increase Involvement on Your School Council's Facebook Page



Posted on November 13, 2017 by Adrian Marmara

Here is some advice on how to build involvement and increase engagement on your school council's Facebook page.

1. **Add videos and photos when possible**

A 30 second to 1 min video from your last school event will tell a much better story than a couple of lines of text. Be sure to always include an image when possible.

2. **Add eye catching images**

Nothing catches the eye more than an attractive image. Try using a free graphic design tool like Canva to make plain photos standout. Canva is a browser based graphic design tool loaded with enough easy-to-use features and functionality that anyone can use.

3. **Having two administrators on your page is key**

You need a backup in case someone gets sick, moves away, or has to give up her duties for whatever reason.

4. **Be careful how you respond to negative comments**

If someone complains about a group event, for example, politely explain your point of view (and listen to theirs). Use the opportunity to turn a negative into a positive. Ask questions, such as what didn't you like about the event? And ask

for opinions, what would you like to see happen differently at next years event? Using this strategy will help to get out the correct information or to clear up any misunderstandings. Remember you want to show people that you hear their concerns and that you're open to feedback.

5. **Post school and parenting tips regularly**

Not only do they provide helpful info to your school community; they also help parents feel more connected to your group, which will make them more likely to get involved on your page. It is also a good opportunity to ask parents for feedback. Have they tried this tip before? What did and did not work for them?

6. **Friend parents you know personally, then tag them when you post to your group page.**

Those posts will show up in their notifications, and they may be compelled to share with others who might then join your Facebook community.

7. **Ask people to get involved on your Facebook page.**

Remind your school community at school council meetings, at school council events, in emails and in other correspondence. Let them know that this engagement tool is available to them.

8. **Ask for input, and use it when you can.**

People like sharing their opinions—and they want to see them translated into action.

9. **Take advantage of Facebook's event calendar**

Take the time to post upcoming school events using the Facebook calendar and invite your group to participate. Facebook events are the perfect way to get users' attention and keep it.

10. **Post your parent council meeting agenda in advance**

Let your school community know what is going to be discussed at your next parent meeting. Posting your meeting agenda will help keep parents informed and will encourage meeting attendance.

Keeping up your school council's Facebook page doesn't have to be hard.

Following the above tips should put you in the right direction to increasing involvement on your school council's Facebook page. Still looking for more tips on making your school council's page even better? We suggest reading our 7 things to avoid doing on your school council's Facebook page blog.

If you are still searching for more information and can't find it in one of our blogs/articles be sure to reach out to other parent council members via our parent engagement forum.

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6 Common School Council Myths

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6 Common School Council Myths



Posted on March 8, 2018 by Parents Engaged In Education

Often it can be difficult to attract parents to join your school council. There are a lot of preconceived ideas about exactly what the council needs and the commitment required from volunteers.

Below are some common myths, and responses, about school councils which will be helpful to address these concerns and encourage parents to participate.

Common school council myths

1. **Myth: The School Council is really for stay at home parents.**

The School Council is for all interested parents!! Today, school councils work best with a diverse group of volunteers who represent all facets of the community. Whether a member is a homemaker, lawyer, accountant, designer or factory worker, the experience and input they bring to the council is vital to working to improve the educational experience of all students at the school.

2. **Myth: The School Council has all the help they need.**

Sometimes people feel better about not volunteering by telling themselves that the council has all the help they need. In fact, the more parents/volunteers the better. In fact, most councils are in great need for parents to volunteer, if not at meetings than assisting with events and fundraising initiatives.

3. **Myth: Volunteering for the School Council takes too much time.**

If a parent can give a couple of hours a month to attend meetings, or a few hours each school year to help at an event. Any time that you can give is appreciated by the council and will help them achieve their goals.

4. **Myth: School Council members need to be at the school during the day.**

There are some volunteer positions which may take some time during the day, for instance if volunteer works on the nutrition program or supervises a field trip. However, members who are part of the council attend meetings in the evening or help out at events which take place outside school hours.

5. **Myth: The School Council has the same members year after year and they are all friends.**

School Councils are more successful when they recruit new members on an ongoing basis to bring new ideas to their group. Making new members feel welcome and encouraging them to have a voice at the table will help the council meet it's goals. The Welcome Mat is out — all volunteers welcome!!!

6. **Myth: The School Council, from the last school year, has already planned their activities and events for this year.**

Every year is a new opportunity to plan exciting events and activities for the students and to develop new ideas on how the council can support them to reach their goals. There may be events which were very successful the previous year or a fundraising initiative that would be beneficial to continue i.e. fundraising for a new playground, however, the new council will have the opportunity to vote on the events and strategies for the upcoming school year.

Shatter those school council myths!

Get the word out to your school community on what great work your council is doing. Don't forget to acknowledge your triumphs and pitfalls. Remember to recognize those who have helped, no matter how great or little every bit counts. Always

communicate and advertise all the work that your council does! These two items will help to dispel the many school council myths above.

Still have more questions?

If your parent council needs help or are looking for some guidance in tackling some of these obstacles, there are lots of resources on the Parents Engaged in Education website. If you can't find the information in one of our blogs/articles be sure to reach out to other parents and parent council members via our parent engagement forum.

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January – School Councils Let's Shake Things Up!

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January – School Councils Let's Shake Things Up!



Posted on January 7, 2020 by [Theresa Pastore](#)

January is a great time to “shake things up” for your school council. With the holidays behind us and an exciting next half of the school year ahead, this month is an opportunity to celebrate the work that has been accomplished so far and plan for the next few months.

Here are some ideas to consider as you look at how to “shake things up”.

Rev Up Technology Use

- Use a platform like Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams allows members to participate even if they are unable to attend in person. This will help increase the number of parents who can be involved in council meetings and council work. In addition it will make people feel more involved in the operations of the council.
- Consider your social media plan and look for ways to increase your presence. January is a great time to attract more parents in your school community to follow you on social media. Remember to keep them up to date with the exciting things your council is working on. Social media is a great way to educate parents on the value of engaging with their child and school.

Change Up Your Major School Event

- Try something new this year. Often, we get stuck in a rut because it's easier to just repeat the same event each year. January is an excellent time to look at the possibility of doing something different this year.
- Take the time to talk to other school councils to explore new ideas. Find out what has worked as well as what has not. It is also a good time to consider partnering with a nearby school. Partnering is a great way to offer an event that both school communities will benefit from.

Reward Your Team

- Your volunteers have worked hard these past few months. January is a great time to boost their spirits by recognizing their valuable contribution to the council and school. It costs less than \$20.00 to purchase blank certificates which you can design yourself for each volunteer personally. A Certificate of Appreciation combined with a cost effective frame will do wonders to inspire your group! It is also a wonderful way to re-energize them for the second half of the school year.

Hold an "open to all" Roundtable Meeting

- Host an open meeting. Invite all parents to provide input on what they would like to see take place in the upcoming months. Use this time to ask for parents feedback on information they would like to receive from the council. This is a great way to increase parent involvement and to plan for the next several months. Remember when sending notice and or invitations to parents to stress that this is not a forum for individual or staff related issues to be voiced. Rather remind them that this is an opportunity to contribute to making the educational experience of every student better. It is also a meaningful opportunity to increase involvement of all parents in their children's education, mental health and school.

Change Up Your Meetings

- After a few months of meetings it is easy to just continue on the same path for the rest of the year. Use this time to shake things up! Changing things up will not only keep current members interested in attending meetings, it will also attract new people to consider taking part in upcoming sessions. Consider changing meetings to alternate dates and times that might allow more parents to participate. Have a guest speaker at each meeting. Many are available at no cost (for instance school board staff, public health, local service providers, school bus companies might offer a presentation on safety etc.).
- Consider adding a social element to meetings. Adding a social element will help members get to know each other better.

The most important thing to remember in January is that even the smallest accomplishment made thus far is a benefit to the students and school. Even councils with just a couple of members can make a difference.

If you haven't already done so, we encourage you to surf our website. We have a great list of links to other valuable parent engagement resources on our [links](#) page. If you are looking to find more articles like this one, [check out the rest of our blog](#) or [visit our brochures page](#). We are constantly trying to add new content for parents to enjoy.

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10 School Council Tips to Kick Off January

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10 School Council Tips to Kick Off January



Posted on January 6, 2020 by Theresa Pastore

Here are 10 quick tips that may help councils get ready for the second half of the school year. January is the perfect time to regroup and get focused.

1. Host a parent "Welcome to 2020" coffee and donuts (or healthy snacks) opportunity for parents and volunteers. This is a great opportunity to increase participation in future meetings/work of the council and to appreciate the work of your volunteers. Use this time to solicit ideas for future activities of the Council and engage new volunteers.
2. Review the School and Council calendar and create a communication plan to promote events to encourage increased participation.
3. Review Council budget to be sure you are adhering to the draft approved budget established at the beginning of the school year. Make any necessary changes based on the fundraising completed in the first half of the term.
4. Meet with Sub-Committee Chairs for updates. Take time to discuss their plans for each committee. This will ensure everyone is working towards the same goal.
5. Thank your volunteers by creating certificates or cards of appreciation.

6. Meet with the Principal and discuss council work to date and get input on priorities for the balance of the school year.
7. Plan for upcoming meetings. Guest speakers, presentations, communication plan to promote meetings etc.
8. January is the perfect time to consider Succession Planning for Executives. It is the time to ask council members if they might be interested in moving into an Executive position next year and begin mentoring them to help prepare them to be successful next year.
9. Pump up your Social Media! Now is the time to map out a plan for the next few months. Use the time to increase participation in meetings and provide parents with great information/resources.
10. Remember to balance your volunteer work and your personal commitments. BURN OUT is real! Be realistic about how much time and effort you can contribute and still enjoy the work you are doing.

Find more resources on our website

If you haven't already done so, we encourage you to surf our website. We have a great list of links to other valuable parent engagement resources on our links page. If you are looking to find more articles like this one, check out the rest of our blog or visit our brochures page. We are constantly trying to add new content for parents to enjoy.

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Dedicated to Excellence in Catholic Education

November 12, 2020

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
Ontario Ministry of Education
438 University Ave.
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Dear Minister Lecce:

We are writing this letter as fellow elected officials with over 100 years of combined experience in educational governance and leadership.

Like you, we are proud of Ontario's four publicly funded education systems. Together we represent one of the best education systems in the world. Andreas Schleicher, Director, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Directorate for Education and Skills wrote last week, "So the high performers Singapore and Canada also come out on top in global competence (as well as academic achievement). What is more interesting is that Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) high performer Canada does even better on global competence than the high performance of its students in reading, math and science predicts." We all know that Ontario and Alberta regularly complete for the title of top educational jurisdiction in Canada by these and other measures. We are writing this letter to recommend how we can keep and even improve upon this high standard.

As you well know, it is and will continue to be very difficult for our board, and I am sure every board to sustain the current three modes of learning indefinitely. At the Kenora Catholic District School Board we have face to face learning, our virtual schools, and many teachers are live-streaming classes due to frequent absences of students in their classrooms and classes. Reasons for this include severe teacher shortages, insufficient funding and the impact on staff and leader well-being as we try to support these three modes while parents are continuously requesting mode changes. Student and staff health and safety are the top priority, and this cannot be maintained indefinitely under the current conditions. Certainly, my trustee colleagues across the province and I are not aware of any other jurisdiction trying to maintain 2 or 3 modes of learning.

Many of our virtual school students are not attending at all or are only attending sporadically. Many of these students were already counted as being among our most vulnerable. Face to face learning has always been and will always be the best option for the vast majority of students. We recognize that virtual schools were a good option in early September, but given that Ontario schools have proven to be very safe spaces in every way, including with respect to COVID, we hope you will

support our efforts to get all of our students back to face to face school, especially our most vulnerable who are suffering disproportionately. This being said, we will continue to leverage the benefits of technology to enhance face-to-face learning, including having students engage when they cannot get to school due to illness or inclement weather for example.

We do appreciate the difficult job you have and as fellow elected officials, we know how frustrating it is to receive a letter highlighting issues with no hint of suggested solutions. To this end, we have assembled a list of key supports that would allow boards to maintain the three modes of learning for as long as necessary. The following are the top areas of need with possible solutions:

1. Personnel shortages - teachers, supply teachers, French teachers, administration, custodial services, bus drivers. Without qualified staff, teachers, in particular, boards cannot maintain 2 or 3 modes of learning and will soon be forced to provide only one mode. We recommend that you help us reassure parents that our schools are a safe place for students even during COVID and take steps to reduce the number of parents choosing virtual schools for their children with an aim to eliminate this altogether. We are sure you are well aware of the research, which indicates that online learning greatly exacerbates existing inequities. This is a financial issue, but ultimately, without an expanded pool of teacher candidates, no additional finances will solve the problem. In many schools and boards, the payback for lost planning time is accumulating at an alarming rate. One simple mechanism to resolve this mounting problem is to permit early dismissal in elementary schools by approximately 40-50 minutes, which can then be used as teacher planning time. We trustees appreciate the recent decision to revoke Regulation 274, and this will certainly help. As well, we recommend that the 50-day restriction on retired teachers and administrators be lifted and that second-year teacher candidates be granted temporary permission to teach. We realize and appreciate that you continue to advocate for this.
2. Constant movement requests by parents for students to move from one mode of delivery to another based on events outside the control of boards such as increases in COVID-19 numbers, health concerns, family situations, student needs are disruptive to the learning environment of in-person classes and are impacting the ability of principals to focus on the health and safety of students and staff. It is recommended that this option be discontinued until there is further stability in the province.
3. Funding shortfalls – There has been inadequate funding to school boards to manage all requirements of the three modes of learning. Additional funding is required to reimburse boards for expenditures for replacement staff, for additional staff to reduce class sizes, for human resources staff who are managing an ever increasing number of staff on disability, for PPE and cleaning supplies that have had to be purchased by boards, and many other expenses. We do have a small reserve to access, unlike some boards but if this continues as it has it is probable that we will have to spend well in excess of 2% to offset growing costs. Finally, boards have seen a reduction in their enrolments as some students have moved to Home Schooling or are not attending school of any sort at all. However, a reduction of funding will result in reductions in staff and the inevitable reorganizations of classes. We are asking that boards be funded at a minimum level based on their spring projected enrolment. It should also be said that close to 80% of board budgets are spent on salaries, and we have maintained and have even had to increase staffing levels to be able to operate in three modalities.

4. Virtual Learning – As the number of families selecting virtual learning continues to grow, Boards are incurring increasing costs to provide students with technology/devices and, in remote/rural areas of the province, temporary internet service as the number of students selecting virtual learning continues to grow. Boards are also incurring increased expenditures on licenses for online curriculum resources. As well, boards are finding that their IT support staff is stretched beyond reasonable limits as more staff and students require technical support. A longer-term issue is the loss of board owned devices as students have graduated, moved away, or have just lost or damaged them beyond repair. Boards will need to replenish their stock of school equipment before students return to school on a permanent basis. We recommend that additional funds be provided from the second half of the federal funding now rather than waiting until January. As you are aware, access to fast, reliable internet is a particular challenge here in the north, which only makes it even more difficult for a board like ours. We do appreciate the continued efforts that are occurring on this front.
5. Busing – Boards continue to experience driver shortages, costs related to bus cleaning and expenses due to additional runs to increase distancing on buses, health concerns of parents and students regarding bussing services. Additional funding is required, especially given the vast distances we transport our students in the north.
6. Timelines, reports and process expectations have made sense in non-pandemic years however, these expectations are distracting principals and senior administration from their top priority of keeping schools open to support learning and health and safety. We appreciate the steps you have taken and will undoubtedly continue to take as long as COVID-19 is an issue.

We urge you to enable a return to face-to-face at school learning for all virtual school students as soon as possible. We all know students learn best at school, particularly in Ontario schools, the envy of the world. We have better learned during the pandemic, especially that technology can enhance this face-to-face learning, but it can never replace it. As always, we will continue to support you, your Ministry and most importantly, our students and families to keep providing not only a world-class, but the world's best education system.

Yours in Catholic education,



Teresa Gallik
Chair, The Kenora Catholic District School Board

cc. Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association
Hon. Greg Rickford, MPP Kenora – Rainy River
Ministry of Education Thunder Bay Regional Office
Kenora Catholic DSB Trustees
Kenora Catholic DSB OECTA and OPSEU Unions
Kenora Catholic DSB Catholic School Councils
Kenora Catholic DSB Special Education Advisory Committee

COVID-safe Holidays

The Northwestern Health Unit has a [Safe Holidays page](#) with information for families, business and schools. Here is some advice for families:

- Only get within 2 metres of those you live with. Most dining tables do not allow for 2 metres between others.
- Do not gather with groups of people, instead host an online video party.
- Try playing online games with friends and family rather than hosting your traditional game night.
- If getting together, plan for outdoor activities where you can keep distance between people.
- Look after one another! Dropping off food or gifts outside for friends and family is a safe way to show Christmas spirit.
- Do not leave your house if you are unwell. Complete an online self-assessment to see if you should be tested for COVID-19.
- We recommend against all non-essential travel, including travelling outside of northwestern Ontario to see family for Christmas.
- Avoid hosting visitors in your household, especially anyone that has travelled here from outside of northwestern Ontario.

Most of all, be safe and healthy. Make smart decisions so we can prevent the spread of COVID-19 this holiday season.

Increasing opportunity for physical activity outdoors

COVID-19 has increased screen time and reduced opportunity for students to be active. There is an increased risk of transmission of COVID-19 during vigorous physical activity indoors. The Northwestern Health Unit is working with school boards to increase student opportunity for outdoor physical activity by providing funding for outdoor equipment that can be used during gym class, recess or intramurals/clubs. School boards are utilizing funds for items such as snowshoes and one-person sleds.

Compass Survey at Secondary Schools – secondary

The COMPASS study is a nine-year, secondary school study from the University of Waterloo about youth health behaviours such as healthy eating, physical activity, substance use, school connectedness and bullying. This year, the survey will be completed online and questions have been added to assess the effects of COVID-19. Parents will receive information consent letters prior to survey taking place. Individual school results are shared with principals, and regional results are shared with the health unit. You can [view reports](#) on past years results on our website.

Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program for K-8 is back!

We are excited to share that this program for all K-8 schools in the region, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers, will begin again in January, 2021! The program offers two servings of fresh fruit or vegetables to every elementary school student per week. The goal is to increase consumption, awareness of, and provide resources about fruits and vegetables for students and their families. Product will be served in individual portions to be consistent with COVID-19 prevention measures.

Immunizations Update

Staying up to date on immunizations is important. We haven't been able to go into schools this year, but we are looking at ways to get students immunized in the New Year. You can check online to see if your student is due for any shots using [Immunization Connect Ontario \(ICON\)](#). If your student is needing an immunization, please connect with your local health unit office.

Dental health services update

We haven't been able to go into schools to provide screening or preventive services this year. However, students who are in pain due to dental needs should contact us. We may be able to help families in need access care. Call our dental health team at 1-855-407-6453.