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SCHOOL COUNCILS' 15TH ANNIVERSARY BRINGS CALL FOR POLICY UPDATE

Parents are working hard in schools, but Ontario policy doesn't recognize their most important role.

TORONTO (October 31, 2011) – A new report from People for Education shows that Ontario needs to update its policy about school councils.

For the third year in a row the majority of councils reported that “enhancing communication between the school and parents” is their most important role. But – also for the third year in a row – the majority also reported they spend the most time on fundraising.

The [2011 Report on School Councils](#) shows improvements in councils' connections to school board Parent Involvement Committees and an increase in the use of technology to communicate with families.

“School councils across the province are doing an amazing job,” says Annie Kidder, Executive Director of People for Education. “They work tirelessly to support their schools and to build stronger school communities.”

Survey results show that, by focusing more on communicating with parents at home and community-building through social events, school councils are carving out a different role for themselves than was originally intended. The report says that this new role does not match Ontario's regulations governing school councils which state that ‘the purpose of the school council is, through the active participation of parents, to improve pupil achievement and to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents.’

According to Kidder, “Ontario has strong parent engagement policy overall and our results show that it's working, but It's time to revise regulations and policy for school councils so that they both reflect and support councils' most important role.”

The report will be up for discussion at [People for Education's 15th Annual Conference at York University on November 5th and 6th](#).

Key Findings in the 2011 report:

- The majority of school councils report that enhancing communication is their most important role, but the majority also say that they spend the most time on fundraising.
- There has been a substantial improvement in councils' relationship with their school board Parent Involvement Committees (PICs): 71% of councils report getting

information from their PIC, up from 52% last year; 79% report they are aware of the PIC, up from 67% last year; and 52% report there is mechanism for giving input to the PIC, up from 37% last year.

- 62% of councils report using email to communicate with parents, but only 5% report that all the families in the school are on the email list.
- 92% of school councils ask parents for input or feedback. When asked what they are most likely to ask parents for input about, the most frequently cited topic by far is fundraising.
- Councils report that an average of 11 parents attends each school council meeting.
- 86% of councils report they hear about education policy changes from their principals “always” or “often”, and 31% report they “never” hear about changes from the Ministry of Education.

To read the full report, visit www.peopleforeducation.ca.

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