

PEOPLE FOR EDUCATION NEWSLETTER



BECAUSE EDUCATION MATTERS MOST

Volume 15 Issue 1 November 5, 2011

BEYOND FUNDRAISING

People for Education's Annual Report on School Councils

Results from People for Education's [2011 Report on School Councils](#) show improvements in school councils' connections to board Parent Involvement Committees (PICs), an increase in the use of technology to communicate with families, and a continuing disconnect between what school councils say is their most important role and what they spend the most time on. This year, 729 councils from 68 of the province's 72 school boards completed the survey.

COUNCILS SHARE THEIR GREAT IDEAS AND CONCERNS

Survey results show that school councils across the province are working tirelessly to support their local schools and communities. Many councils included great examples of strategies that work to engage parents, communicate effectively and work with their school staff.

But the results also capture some of the challenges school councils struggle with. The most frequently raised concerns include how to get more parents involved in the school council, how to balance the time spent between fundraising and other council activities and how to ensure effective communication between the education system (at both the school and board levels) and the broader parent community.

To read the full report, visit <http://tinyurl.com/p4e-SC-report>.

The 2012 school council survey will be in schools in January. Don't miss out on the opportunity to participate in this important research project.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE REPORT

- The majority of school councils say 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 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 of 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 attend each school council meeting.
- 86% of councils report they hear about education policy changes from their principals "always" or "often", but 31% report they "never" hear about changes from the Ministry of Education.
- Average attendance at school council meetings is higher in schools that use technology to communicate.

WELCOME TO THE NEW MINISTER OF EDUCATION!

Ontario has a new Minister of Education and a re-elected Liberal government.

The new Minister of Education, Laurel Broten, was formerly Minister of Children and Youth Services. Her previous experience working on changes to early childhood education (Child and Family Centres, the impact of full-day kindergarten on child care, etc.) and a new mental health strategy for children and youth will serve her well in her new position.

The minority government means that the Liberals will have to work more closely with the opposition parties. In education that might mean some changes to things like the emphasis on standardized testing, school closings in northern and rural Ontario, and special education funding and policy.

The Minister made her first speech at People for Education's 15th Annual Conference at York University on November 5th.

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From the desk of Annie Kidder



Wow, this is our first hard copy newsletter of the year. And so much has happened already! We have a new Minister of Education, a new(ish) government and lots of exciting plans in the works.

Top of mind for this school year are things like changes needed to address gaps in special education funding and policy (67 of the province's 72 boards spend more on special education than they receive from the province) and making sure the province keeps moving ahead with all the early childhood

recommendations from the Premier's Early Learning Advisor.

We're still waiting for the new Health and Physical Education (H&PE) curriculum to be fully implemented for Kindergarten to Grade 12. Right now it's only an "interim" curriculum for elementary school (*Where is that sex education consultation, anyway?*) and high schools are still waiting for their new H&PE curriculum – it's written, but not available.

"Success" is on the agenda at People for Education and we're going to be asking lots of questions about it this year: How should we define success in education and for kids? How should we measure it? How can we get beyond the current narrow focus on

standardized test scores in two subjects? We're thinking about the new fundraising guidelines too. We're worried about proposed changes that will encourage fundraising for capital projects – something that only certain kinds of communities (i.e. richer ones ☺) are able to do. We don't want to increase the gap between "have" and "have-not" schools.

And the website! Check out [our new website!](#) You can ask questions, get involved in online discussions and find out what People for Education thinks of the latest education stories.



You can follow us on Twitter
[@Anniekidder](#)

POLL REVEALS STUDENTS' AND PARENTS' OPINIONS

Over 7,000 students and 2,400 parents participated in a recent poll conducted by the Ontario Student Trustee Association, with support from People for Education.

Among the results:

- 88% of students think if students want to start a Gay Straight Alliance Club, they should be allowed to do so.
- 61% of students say it is at least sometimes acceptable for students and teachers to connect through social media (e.g. Facebook). Parents were much less likely (42%) to agree.
- 70% of students think schools should take action on cyber-bullying between students even when it occurs outside of school time, compared to 84% of parents.
- 45% of students did not feel that sex education classes adequately addressed concerns of a sexual nature that they had or expected to encounter.
- 36% of students said they would not know where to go for help if they or a friend was experiencing mental health problems, compared to 26% of parents.
- 36% of students said that at some time a fee charged for sports, teams, or extracurricular activities has prevented them from participating.

The full report and results are available at <http://www.osta-aeco.org>.

ONTARIO KIDS GET A D- IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

62% of students' waking hours spent on sedentary activities

Each year, the Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card provides a comprehensive assessment of child and youth physical activity in Canada. This year, an [Ontario Report Card Supplement](#) gives letter grades for Ontario's students on 12 different indicators, including physical education programs, sedentary behaviour (our kids get an F here, spending a whopping 62% of their waking hours in sedentary activities), family physical activity, and provincial government strategies and investments.



The best way to ensure a healthier population is to invest in health promotion. And the most efficient health promotion happens early. And it happens in schools! In schools, we can directly reach over 2 million children and youth, five days a week, ten months a year.

If we want to get our "mark" up in next year's Report Card, a good place to start would be with our Health and Physical Education (H&PE) curriculum. Ontario has great new H&PE curriculum for kindergarten to grade 12. We have it, but it hasn't been officially implemented. So teachers are (somewhat reluctantly) using interim curriculum in elementary school and waiting for the new high school curriculum.

To read the full report, visit www.activehealthykids.ca/ontario.

Then go for a walk with your kids!

IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE!

Helping your child succeed in school is as easy as 1,2,3,4...

In August 2011, People for Education released a report, [*Doing what matters most: How parents can help their children succeed in school*](#). We reviewed 30 years of research about what has the greatest impact on student achievement, and the evidence is clear: Parents make a difference!

And it's what you do at home that counts most:

1. Have high expectations for your children. Let them know that you think it is important that they do well in school.
2. Talk about school. Talk with your children every day about their school activities and programs.
3. Help your children develop a positive attitude and good work habits. You can help your children succeed by helping shape your children's attitude, their sense of personal competence and work habits, including persistence, seeking help and planning.

4. Read together (in any language). Reading is one of the foundations of all education, and you can make a big difference by reading and talking about books and stories with your children.

Among the things that don't make a difference? Nagging about homework, making kids "sound out the words" when you're reading to them or doing that grade 6 project.

To read the full report, or to download a copy of our new parent tip sheet about this research, visit our website at <http://tinyurl.com/help-child-succeed>



A NOTE FROM THE PARENT SUPPORT COORDINATOR

Tips on parent-teacher interviews

"But really, I swear, the teacher said you don't have to go to the interviews."

Okay, the first tip is to ignore your children when they try this line on you! And I assure you that they will, probably starting somewhere around grade 7.

Parent-teacher interviews are just around the corner, and People for Education has a tip sheet - available in 15 languages - about this important part of your child's school year. The interviews are usually only 10-15 minutes long, so it is important to be prepared in order to ensure that you get the most out of the time you have with the teacher. The tip sheet covers every step, including how to prepare for the interview, possible questions to ask the teacher and what to do to follow up after the interview.

Remember, you can ask for another meeting with the teacher if you don't have enough time to get all of your questions answered, and you should ask for a meeting any time you have a question about your child's education, not just at parent-teacher interview time.

To find out more, check out our Parent-Teacher Interview tip sheet at <http://tinyurl.com/tips-P-T>.

Alas, it turns out that trading your child for the 'A' student is not an option - trust me, I tried.

PEOPLE FOR EDUCATION'S NEW WEBSITE

More information at your fingertips!

Our new website (<http://www.peopleforeducation.ca>) offers you lots of new ways to stay up-to-date with education research and news - we'll even answer your questions!

Under the NEWS tab, read "[Our news and views](#)" to find out what People for Education thinks about current education issues and news. It's shorter than a blog and updated several times per week. Are you a news junkie? Follow "[Education in the news](#)" - there are links to all the latest online television, radio and news articles. You'll also find all our [newsletters and e-newsletters](#) under NEWS.

Looking for research or one of our reports or surveys? <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/research/>

Looking to attend an education conference, workshop or webinar? They are listed under "[Events & Workshops](#)." Let us know about your education events and we'll do our best to include them.

Need an answer, fast? Check out our [FAQs](#). If you don't see your question, just submit one in the handy form pictured here. We'll get back to you quickly with an answer and post it onto the website.

Best of all, you can remain anonymous if you choose.

Many of the answers to FAQs also include links to discussions going on in [the online community](#). So if you want to find out even more, you can read the discussion and even post a follow-up question or comment! It's a terrific way to share information and talk to other parents, teachers, and community members. We hope to see you online soon!

The website was generously funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

A screenshot of a red-themed web form. At the top, it says "Got a question? Ask us." Below this is a large white text input area. Underneath the text area are four input fields: "name", "email", "confirm email", and "select a category" (with a dropdown arrow). At the bottom right of the form is a red "Submit" button.

notes from around the province



CONSULTATION ON PIC GUIDELINES

Members of Parent Involvement Committees (PICs) are being invited

to use the Ontario government's drafted PIC Handbook and provide feedback. The deadline for feedback is November 30th, so if you haven't filled in a survey form yet, get on it!

To access the survey form, go to <http://tinyurl.com/PIC-feedback>.

21st CENTURY CLASSROOM VIDEO CONTEST

This 4th annual contest challenges K-12 teachers from publicly funded schools to create and upload a 3-5 minute video showcasing their best practices teaching with technology to engage students and enhance learning outcomes.

To find out more about the contest, go to <http://mindsharelearning.ca/videochallenge/>.

FALL BACK IN LOVE WITH LEARNING

Jon Lau, an Ontario teacher, is shaking things up by learning one new skill every week for 52 weeks. According to his blog, "Each challenge has to be something I have never done and it has to take me in a direction where I have never been."

So far, he has tried method acting, joining Scientology, professional wrestling and knitting, among others (the footage of his zero gravity yoga and poetry slam skills are not to be missed).

To follow Jon's inspired and inspiring adventures, go to <http://explorecuriosity.tumblr.com>.

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 16-18, Richmond Hill
Quest conference: Building Equitable, Inclusive and Engaging Schools. Presented by York Region DSB. For more information, visit www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca.

November 21-22, Toronto
Children's Mental Health Ontario Conference: Partnering for a Better Child and Youth Mental Health System. Presented by Children's Mental Health Ontario. For more information, visit www.kidsmentalhealth.ca.

November 23, Toronto
Planning for a Positive Transition to High School for Children with Learning Disabilities. Presented by Integra. For more information, visit www.integra.on.ca.

November 28-29, Montreal
International Conference on School Health. Presented by the Canadian Association for School Health. For more information, contact info@cash-aces.ca.

WANT TO BE IN THE LOOP?

For a full listing of education conferences, consultations, webinars and more, check out the new "Events & workshops" feature on our website at <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/events-workshops>.

GOT NEWS?

Do you have news or an event that you'd like to share? Send an email to lindsay@peopleforeducation.ca.

HAS YOUR PRINCIPAL FILLED OUT THE ANNUAL SCHOOL SURVEY?

It just takes 20 minutes and the results affect resources and programs for kids

Ask your principal if he or she has received the People for Education Annual School Survey.

For the last 15 years, People for Education has been conducting this important research. Every year, over 1,000 school principals participate in the survey, and the data goes into People for Education's Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools. The surveys are available online too. Just go to <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/research/school-surveys/>.

HELP! WE'VE GOT HOMEWORK!

Students will struggle with homework on occasion, and parents may struggle to help them. The good news is that there is free help available in the community and online.

There is a free online tutoring service for high school students at the Independent Learning Centre (<http://www.ilc.org/aat/chat.php>). Certified teachers are available on the website Sunday through Thursday, and the Centre also offers an essay-feedback service.

Many schools, public libraries and community centres have homework clubs after school. Some school boards offer online lessons and learning activities for different grade levels. Many high schools also have peer tutors—students who have completed the course and can help with subjects like math and science. Students can also ask friends or older siblings for help.



People for Education is an independent research and advocacy organization that works to support public education in Ontario's English, French and Catholic schools.

Here's how you can reach us:

mail: 641 Bloor St. W., Toronto, ON M6G 1L1 • phone: 416-534-0100/1-888-534-3944
fax: 416-536-0100 • email: info@peopleforeducation.ca • web: www.peopleforeducation.ca
You can also find us on [Facebook](#) or [Flickr](#)!

Contributing writers: Annie Kidder, Gay Stephenson, Jacqui Strachan • Editor: Lindsay Cornish

Printed on recycled paper



This newsletter is funded in part with the generous support of

