

Parent eBulletin – *Bringing School Home* November 2011



QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

How can I support my child and get involved in their education?

Parents play a key role in their children's education – in fact, they are their children's very first teachers. There are many valuable ways for parents to participate in their child's schooling. Here are a few excellent opportunities to get involved, from the classroom to the school level and beyond:

- helping with homework
- asking your children about their learning
- communicating with your children's teachers
- volunteering at the school
- lending a hand on school trips
- serving on your School Council or Board Parent Involvement Committee
- participating on a provincial education committee

Why is parental involvement important?

Parents are strong role models in their children's lives. As such, parents' attitudes toward learning can influence and shape how their children view education, as well as their own capacity to learn. According to parent involvement expert Dr. Joyce L. Epstein, student achievement is greatly improved when schools, families, and communities work together to support young people in their academic endeavours. Research has shown that partnerships between these key groups can result in successes which benefit everyone involved – a true win-win-win for students, parents, and communities!



By becoming involved, parents demonstrate that they value education, care about their children's progress, and are committed to providing support when needed. These powerful messages help prepare children for a lifetime of learning in which "home" and "school" are not separate, but rather two unique environments within which to develop, learn, and grow.

What are School Councils?

Comprised mostly of parents, School Councils are a vital link between schools and their surrounding communities. Each School Council functions as an advisory board and provides input to school administrators about a variety of school-based topics and issues. Key excerpts of SCDSB policy relating to School Councils are posted on the [SCDSB website](#).

Who participates on School Councils?

Although membership may vary slightly from school to school, all School Councils consist of a majority of parents, as well as the school principal or vice-principal, a teacher, a non-teaching school employee, and a student. Some Councils also include one or more community representatives.

New School Council members are recruited and elected on an annual basis. For more information about School Councils and how you can be involved, talk to your school principal or download the Ministry of Education's "[School Councils: A Guide for Members](#)."

What is the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)?



The Ministry of Education has mandated every school board in Ontario to have a Parent Involvement Committee (PIC). At the Simcoe County District School Board, the PIC acts as the steering committee for School Council Chairs meetings, enhances School Council and school communication with parents, and strengthens the parent voice at the board level. The PIC also reviews grant applications for Ministry funding related to parental involvement.

Detailed information about the SCDSB's Parent Involvement Committee is available on our [website](#).

Who is involved in the PIC?

The PIC is comprised of 12 parent representatives, as well as trustee and administrative representatives. The majority of PIC members must be parents and only the parent members have voting privileges.

In the spring of each year, any School Council Member has the opportunity to apply for an existing vacancy on the PIC in the next school year. Applications are accepted from each SCDSB region and are drawn to fill the projected vacancies. Parent representatives may serve on the PIC for a maximum of two years with the option of reappointment to a maximum of four years.

How do I communicate effectively with my child's teacher?

A positive parent-teacher relationship will help to bring out the best in your child – and you are an essential partner in education. Parents who understand how education is delivered in classrooms and by the school board are better equipped to help their kids be happy and successful in school. Here are some tips to help you communicate with your child's teacher to ensure a healthy relationship all parties involved:

- Talk with the teacher early in the year. Share information that will help them get to know your child, including their interests and learning style. Always let them know about an illness, family issue or other changes affecting a student – this directly affects how your child reacts in the classroom.
- If you have major concerns, don't wait until the parent-teacher interview to raise them. Consult the teacher



when problems may be brewing rather than waiting for them to explode. Arrange a mutually agreeable time to meet or speak.

- Keep track of your child's workload and homework through school notes, blogs or agendas – ensure your child is doing what is expected of him/her.
- Take up concerns with the teacher first. If you aren't satisfied after that meeting, reassess the situation and then speak with the principal if necessary.
- When a teacher tells you something about your child's progress or behaviour that you'd rather not hear, you may find yourself becoming defensive – it's human instinct. However, you have to be able to discuss an issue before you and the teacher can prepare a plan to deal with the situation.

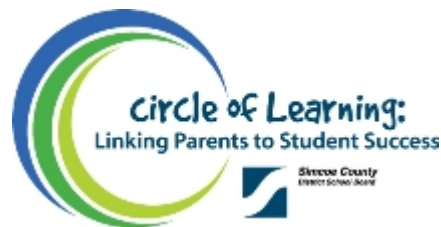
How else can parents support learning?

While parent involvement on committees such as School Councils and the PIC is invaluable, there are also many other ways parents can support and encourage their children's learning. Here are a few ideas:

- Lead by example: be a lifelong learner yourself!
- Look for ways to "bring the lesson home" by tying in school lessons with everyday experiences
- Instil confidence in your child that she is capable of learning
- Encourage your child to seek help when he doesn't understand something
- Share suggestions and input with your School Council, school principal and child's teacher
- Talk to your school principal or vice-principal if you'd like to find out about other opportunities that may exist at your child's school.

Are there any upcoming events that can help me learn how to become more engaged in my child's education?

Yes! The SCDSB's Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) is hosting a **free** conference for all parents and guardians to help strengthen home-school connections and engage parents in their child's education. Parents and guardians are invited to attend the fourth annual parent conference *Circle of Learning: Linking Parents to Student Success* on **Saturday, April 21, 2012**. The event has been running since 2009, with more than 100 parents enjoying a fun, information-filled event each year.



This event is organized by the PIC to support parent involvement in education. It is funded through the Ministry of Education's base grants for Parent Engagement.

This year's conference will take place at the SCDSB Education Centre, which is located at 1170 Hwy 26 in Midhurst across from Simcoe County Museum.

Click [here](#) for the conference information page. Information on the workshop topics, a listing of keynote speakers and the agenda will be updated here as they become available in the coming months. To be notified by email when new information is posted and registration is open, email webadmin@scdsb.on.ca with the subject line "Circle of Learning".

Links

We invite you to visit www.scdsb.on.ca often for news, facts, school information, Board highlights and hundreds of other pages about Simcoe County's public education system. This month we are featuring our [Community Use of Facilities](#) information.



The Simcoe County District School Board endorses and encourages the community's participation in the use of its facilities and resources. This initiative supports access to school space outside of school hours for not-for-profit community groups.

Here are additional resources for parental involvement:

- **Ministry of Education's website on Parent Engagement** - <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/getinvolved.html>
- **Homework Help: TVO's Independent Learning Centre and the Ontario Ministry of Education created this site to offer math help for students in Grades 7, 8, 9 and 10** - <https://homeworkhelp.ilc.org/index.php>
- **SCDSB Policy - Homework: Activities to Support Student Learning** - <http://scdsb.on.ca/media/files/board-highlights/policies/Policy%20No.%204106%20-%20Homework.pdf>
- **Planning Parent Engagement: A Guidebook for Parents and Schools** - http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/Parent_Engagement/PA%20Downloads/CODE%20Parent%20Engagement%20Guidebook.pdf/
- **Resources and Links of Interest from the October 25, 2011 SCDSB School Councils Meeting** - <http://scdsb.on.ca/parents-corner/school-councils/>
- **SCDSB Student Agenda 2010-2011 information** - <http://scdsb.on.ca/media/files/parent-corner/Student-Agenda-Insert.pdf>

Quote of the Month

“When we look closely at patterns of success for our students, there is ample evidence that achievement and positive school adjustment come from the support and guidance of parents and those who guide the learning and attitudes of our young people . . . The success of our students is the core goal. The support of parents and the community is a very significant asset needed to achieve that success.”

~ *Council of Ontario Directors of Education*

Next Issue

The next issue of *Bringing School Home* will feature information on financial literacy.

We want your feedback on the Parent eBulletin! Please click [here](#) to access a short survey on the value of this publication, and share your suggestions and feedback for future issues.

About the SCDSB

The Simcoe County District School Board is deeply committed to ensuring all learners have the opportunity to realize their dreams within a vibrant and successful public education system. We are very proud of our 50,000 students who are learning and achieving in more than 100 schools and seven adult learning centres throughout our urban and rural communities. Working with school communities, our dedicated and skilled staff members provide quality programs to help students develop lifelong learning skills in safe, caring environments. Our schools are located in the Huronia and Georgian Bay regions of south-central Ontario.