

PARENTS IN PARTNERSHIP

A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools

Parents are vital partners in education. They influence their children’s attitudes about learning, and support learning at home. They are a vital link between home and school. And when they become involved in the life of the school, they make our schools even better places to learn, grow and thrive. Ontario’s new parent engagement policy recognizes that students can achieve to their highest potential when parents are welcomed and respected as partners, and given the support they need to contribute at home and at school.

How does the policy define parent engagement?

Ontario’s new parent engagement policy recognizes many different forms of parent engagement, and that each is an important contributor to student and school success. Within the policy, parent engagement includes:

- Providing a positive learning environment at home, actively working with children to support what they are learning in school, and making learning an important part of the day
- Having productive conversations with teachers so that there is clear communication between the school and the home
- Becoming involved in school activities and volunteering to help with school events, trips and other activities
- Participating in School Councils at the school level and Parent Involvement Committees at the school board level, to provide the parent perspective.

How will the policy support and increase parent engagement?

The parent engagement policy identifies four key success strategies designed to support parents as partners so that they have the opportunity – and the skills, knowledge and tools – to work together with all education partners and contribute fully to the success of Ontario students and our education system.

Strategy 1: Foster a positive, welcoming school climate in which parent perspectives are encouraged, valued and heard.

Strategy 2: Identify and remove barriers to parent engagement that may prevent some parents from fully participating in their child’s learning.

Strategy 3: Provide learning opportunities, tools and supports to help parents support student learning at home, and have productive parent-teacher conversations.

Strategy 4: Expand communication and outreach activities to increase parent engagement at home and build effective school-parent relationships.

VISION

Parent engagement has a positive impact on student achievement. We envision an inclusive education system in Ontario where students are supported and inspired to learn in a culture of high expectations in which parents:

- are welcomed, respected and valued as partners by the school community in their children’s learning and development
- have a full range of choices and opportunities to be involved and support student success
- are engaged through ongoing communication and dialogue to support a positive learning environment at home and at school
- are supported with resources and tools which enable them to participate in school life.

How will the goals of the policy be reached?

The policy identifies specific actions to be undertaken at the provincial, regional and local levels by the Ministry of Education, Schools and District School Boards. In addition, the monitoring and measurement of parent engagement will help us to gauge our success over time, identify areas for further improvement, and assist us as we continue working toward success.

How do students and parents benefit from parent engagement?

Research on parent engagement tells us that there is a direct connection between parent engagement and:

- Improved academic achievement
- More positive attitudes about school
- More success with homework
- Higher rates of high school graduation
- More consistent school attendance
- Fewer behaviour problems
- A brighter future for students at school and in later life.

How do teachers benefit?

Teachers who actively partner with parents enjoy better parent relationships, and a wide range of benefits:

- Parents are more supportive because they understand what is happening in the classroom
- Parents help to ensure homework and assignments are done
- Parents share the responsibility for student success and work with the teacher
- Parents have a more positive view of teachers, and the school
- Student attendance and classroom behaviour improve
- Student achievement improves
- Teachers have a stronger connection with parents, feel supported by parents and have higher job satisfaction.

How do schools benefit?

Schools are connected to the communities around them. Together, parents, community members and schools can create a powerful support network to provide children and youth with the services they need, develop innovative school-community programs, and enrich the life of the school. As a result:

- Families and community organizations more fully support the school
- Whole-school and individual student achievement often improve
- Graduation rates increase
- Schools are connected to businesses, agencies and services in the community
- Schools gain greater recognition for their achievements and their valued role as an important part of community life.

How does the education system benefit?

The Ministry of Education, District School Boards and schools benefit not only from the important work parents do to help their children succeed in school, but also by ensuring that parent perspectives are heard, and considered, in developing policies and programs at the provincial, regional and local levels.

We all benefit

Together, we are building possibilities for our children and transforming these possibilities into a reality.