

25 Ideas

How to use the \$500 Parent Involvement Funding to increase the diversity of your School Council



For more information contact your school, your MLO, or OCISO at 613-725-0202, or visit www.ociso.org

OCISO has been working with schools for many years to increase the involvement of parents, especially diverse parents, in the school. We have compiled a list of suggestions for effective ways for School Councils to use the \$500 grant to increase the involvement of diverse parents in your school and School Council. These initiatives will also go along way towards increasing the participation of all parents in your School Council.

1. **Offer** childcare at your School Council meetings.

2. **Offer** pizza and a movie to the children during council meetings. They will bring their parents to you!

3. **Offer** homework club for students during your School Council meetings. Provide juice and cookies.

4. **Provide** basic info to all parents every year about School Councils:

- How to participate
- Types of issues discussed
- Benefits of participating in school councils
- Past accomplishments of school council
- "Everyone is welcome"
- Translate the handout into the main languages of your school. You won't need to change it much from year to year.
- Include with first report card, or mail to each home.

5. **Hold** your Multicultural Potluck / International Dinner / Heritage Fair at the beginning of the year (September, October, November), instead of at the end of the year. These events are often extremely successful at bringing diverse parents into the school. Having it at the beginning of the year encourages parents to begin to feel comfortable in the school early on, and you can use the event as an opportunity to outreach for your school council.

6. **Purchase** multicultural entertainment (music, dance, drumming) for your events.

7. **Have** important flyers and notices for parents translated.

8. **Offer** bus tickets to parents who need them to attend School Council meetings.

9. **Set up** a Parent Resource Room with information about the school, the education system, the school council, and parenting in many languages.

10. **Host** an Iftar (feast) during Ramadan, if your school has a high population of Muslim families. In 2007 Ramadan will be in September, so it's a nice way to attract new members to your council, as well as sharing a special time with your school families.

11. **Host** a School Council meeting out in the community (use a popular community centre or library, or the community room of an apartment building which houses many of your students). Offer refreshments, and time for new parents to ask questions.

12. **Buy** time on ethnic language radio stations such as CHIN, CKCU, and CHUO during shows that are in the major languages of your school. People listen to these shows! Use the time to advertise your school council meetings, *Meet the Teacher* night, or special events in other languages. These stations offer affordable rates for non-profit organizations such as schools and community groups.

13. **Advertise** council meetings and special events in "other-language" or ethnic newspapers such as the Capital Chinese News, EcoLatino, Muslim Voice, The Spectrum, etc.

14. **Host** events that celebrate all cultural festivals of your school community (eg. Eid, Chinese New Year, Strawberry Moon, Diwali, Hanukah, Christmas, etc) for all members of the family, from babies to grandparents. Refer to OCDSB Multifaith Calendar.

15. **Hire** interpreters to be present for Meet the Teacher Nights and Parent-Teacher Interviews (and advertise this ahead of time).

16. **Host** informal "Coffee with the Principal" mornings, once per month. Offer light refreshments and highlight a different language each month; have an interpreter present.

17. **Host** an informal "Breakfast with the School Council" when parents are dropping off their children. Offer a light breakfast and explain the School Council. Consider having interpreters present (and advertise this ahead of time).

18. **Serve** Hallal food at your School Council sponsored events (and include mention in the advertising).

19. **Have** interpreters call diverse parents in their own language to invite them to a council meeting.

20. **Include** the phrase "You are invited!" or something similar in your flier, even if the notice is in English and have it translated into other languages. Place the phrase in all languages at the top of your flier or notice.

21. **Put** multilingual posters and fliers about School Council meetings in businesses frequented by community.

- Laundromat, Hallal Meat Shops, Chinese Grocery stores, Somali restaurants, mainstream grocery store bulletin boards, library, community centres, etc.

22. **Add** a social "meet & greet" aspect to council meetings so parents can get to know each other – 15 minutes of tea and cookies and networking at the beginning of the meeting can go a long way towards helping people feel connected and included.

23. **Hold** one or two Saturday meetings per year so that parents who work "survival jobs" during the evenings can attend.

24. **Host** "Issues Nights" – Invite guest speakers to discuss topical educational or parenting issues.

- Eg. Drugs & Alcohol Prevention, Homework, Reading, Math Skills, Special Ed, ESL, How to Motivate Your Child, Parenting a Teen-ager, Helping Your Child Manage Stress, Filling Out Option Sheets, Post-school Planning, Police and Youth Issues, etc.

25. **Invite** an MLO to offer a workshop for parents about a parent's role in the education system, communicating with the school, Safe Schools, understanding report cards, etc. Offer childcare, translate the flyer.