



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Your Child's Education — **Be a Part of It!**

How to get involved!



How can I help my child to be successful at school?

You can help your child reach his or her full potential at school by being actively involved in your child's learning — at home, in the school, and in the community. This means asking questions about what your child is learning, talking to your child's teachers, and showing your child how to use their learning in daily life.

Well-being is fundamental to student success. As a parent, the care and nurturing you provide helps children come to school healthy, happy and ready to learn.

What are the benefits of playing a part in my child's education?

You are an important partner in your child's education, alongside teachers, principals, support staff, administrators, and trustees. By being involved, you encourage good learning habits and support your child in making choices about his or her future. Studies show that when parents get involved in learning, students do better in school.

Are there things that I can do at home?

Yes, learning starts at home. Establishing routines, ensuring adequate sleep, helping kids to develop emotional control — these are building blocks for success in school and in life. You can support your child's lifelong learning through reading. Reading, in any language and at any age, is one of the best ways to ensure student success at school.



You can also help by talking to your child about his or her day, helping to create homework routines, and ensuring that your child is ready for school each day. Make learning fun — play board games, go to the public library, talk about current events!

What are some of the obstacles that may make getting involved difficult for parents?

Many parents face the same challenges that you do. Work and family responsibilities often conflict with school hours. Language, transportation, cultural, and financial issues can sometimes stop you from getting involved. We're here to help you! Your child's principal and teachers want to hear your ideas on how they can help you become more active in your child's education. The first step is simply contacting your child's school and asking how you can get involved.

How can I participate in my child's education?

Whether you have five minutes, a few hours, one night a month or more, you can make a difference in your child's education. This booklet offers some ideas to help you get involved. We encourage you to talk to your principal, your school council, and other parents to share your ideas. Find out what's happening in your school so you can get involved.

Where can I get more information?

Your school is the best place to get information. You can also contact the OCDSB at 613-721-1820 or visit us on the web at www.ocdsb.ca.

Just by opening this booklet you are already participating in your child's education.





Make learning fun! Using colouring books, games and acting are just a few examples!

Opportunities at Home

If you have . . .

A few
Minutes



- Help your child develop routines to be ready for school each day.
- Ensure your child starts the day with breakfast.
- Ask your child what happened today in the classroom and on the playground.
- Connect with your school principal and your child's teachers through e-mail, telephone, or in person.
- Visit your school's website and your school council's website for an update on recent and upcoming activities.
- Read your school, school council, and classroom newsletters — check your child's backpack for a printed copy or view the newsletter on the website.

A few
Hours



- Read with your child in any language to help your child to learn.
- Help your child with homework by providing a quiet place, by answering general questions, and by asking your child to explain what he or she has learned.
- Talk to your child about current affairs and encourage him or her to read local newspapers and magazines.
- Find out if you can be a volunteer or volunteer coordinator for your child's classroom or your school council.



- Clean out your cupboards and donate books or toys to the school (check with principals and teachers for a list of what is needed).
 - Visit a museum or attend a special event in the city with your child to learn more about a topic that he or she is studying at school.
 - Encourage active learning through outdoor play, board games, and helping at home.
 - Teach your child to use the internet safely and effectively.
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- Find out if your school, school council, and/or child's classroom teacher has a monthly calendar of events and post it on your fridge door for everyone to read.
 - Read the school council meeting minutes/update to find out more about current events, initiatives and/or issues.
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- Find out if you can volunteer to prepare classroom materials or other items for special school events.
 - Offer to translate documents, such as school projects and school council communications, into your first language to distribute to parents in your cultural community.
 - Offer to work with your school and school council to complete grant applications, such as the Ministry's Parents Reaching Out Grants for Schools — www.edu.gov.on.ca.
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- Support your child's interests in after-school activities in the school or outside of the school, such as music, sports, or special interest programs.
- Coach or volunteer to help with a school team, play or initiative that your child is interested in.

Inspire a love of learning — encourage your child to explore ideas.



Volunteer in the school to help with a special event or share a skill!

Opportunities in Your Child's School

If you have . . .

A few
Minutes



- Arrange a time with your child's teacher to visit the classroom and learn about your child's successes and challenges.
- Say hello to the principal and the office staff in your child's school.
- Contact your school council chair to find out how you can get involved.
- Read the bulletin boards at your school.
- Find out what parent resources are available at your school and take advantage of them.

A few
Hours



- Attend your school's Meet-the-Teacher Night and take time to visit with the teachers and members of the school administration.
- Attend Parent-Teacher Interviews to discuss your child's progress and upcoming coursework.
- Attend school assemblies, school council meetings, special events — your support is needed and welcomed.
- Get to know other parents at the school — stay in touch.



- Find out how you can volunteer in the school — reading to students, participating in field trips, special events, holiday celebrations, helping with crafts, library improvements, or any administrative duties.
 - Find out if you can volunteer to be a guest speaker or a parent tutor/mentor — your help is appreciated.
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- Attend a school council meeting at your school (usually one evening a month).
 - Volunteer to be a member of your school council or help with a special project, such as special event planning, and more — your talents are needed.
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- Attend school special events, parent workshops, and other activities in your child's school — your attendance makes a difference.
 - Volunteer to organize a school social event or fundraiser.
 - Offer to translate at school council meetings to encourage parents in your cultural community to participate.
 - Find out if you can work with your school and school council to prepare a welcome handbook for families new to the school.
 - Offer to update the school council website.
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- Find out if you can volunteer to coach a team or club at your school.
- Find out if you can volunteer to run a lunch hour club to teach or share a special skill with students.

Find out what volunteer opportunities are available at the school. Identify the one(s) that best suit your skills and schedule.



Interact with community members at one of eight Parenting and Family Literacy Centres in the OCDSB!

Opportunities in Your Community

If you have . . .

A few
Minutes



- Walk with your child through your community to school.
- If available, visit your neighbourhood association's website.
- Find out what is happening in your neighbourhood — read your community newspaper.

A few
Hours



- Find out if you can volunteer to distribute school newsletters and flyers in your school neighbourhood.
- Volunteer to contact local businesses or organizations to support activities in your child's school or arrange for guest speakers.
- Visit your local public library.



- Find out if your school hosts an Open House for area school students and parents to visit the school 'in action' and attend or offer to help.
 - In consultation with your school and school council, distribute invitations for special events to local schools and the community.
 - Make connections in your community — find opportunities for community members and the school to work together.
 - Encourage your child to attend or volunteer at community events.
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- Offer to provide transportation for other parents to get to meetings.
 - Organize a car pool.
 - Attend an Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC) meeting to find out what other schools are doing to increase parental involvement — www.ocasc.ca.
 - Offer to write articles about your school's activities for your local newspaper.
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- Attend school board and/or committee meetings at the OCDSB, 133 Greenbank Road.
 - Talk to your school and school council about organizing tours of the school for parents new to the area.
 - In consultation with your school and school council, offer to complete grant applications for schoolyard greening projects, such as the City of Ottawa's Tree Planting Grants — www.ottawa.ca.
 - Work with a community organization to host a special event.
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- Coach a local team or club.
- Participate in 'greening' your schoolyard, planting trees, gardening, maintaining play equipment and/or outdoor rinks (in conjunction with our Facilities Department).

Students must complete 40 hours of community service. Encourage them to start early and take them with you in the community when you volunteer!



How to Talk to Your Child About School

Talking about school is an easy way for parents to be engaged in their child's learning. Many parents simply ask 'how was school?'' but this general question may be difficult for some children to answer. To help children share more information about their school day, parents can:

- Learn about their child's life at school. The more details you know about your child's school experience, including specific people and events, the more valuable your questions will be;
- If you visit your child's classroom, make note of new things you might want to discuss with your them later;
- Teachers use reflective questions to talk with students. You can also try this at home. Reflective questions can help reduce "yes" or "no" responses and can open up the conversation with your child;
- Some children may feel more comfortable if you're not face-to-face, like the car. In this way, your child won't feel put on the spot; and
- Lead by example by telling your child about your day.

Some example questions are:

- How was art class today?
- Tell me more about...
- How did your science experiment turn out?
- What parts of your day went well, helped you learn...?
- Did you read any new books at the library today?
- What was interesting?
- Who did you sit next to on the bus today?



How to Talk to Your Child's Teacher

A positive relationship between parents and teachers contributes to a positive learning environment for students, both at home and in school. Clear communication by both parents and teachers is a key factor for making this relationship work. Parents can build a positive relationship with their child's teacher by:

- Approaching your child's teacher with respect. Creating a problem-solving partnership, instead of confronting a teacher immediately with what's wrong builds trust in the relationship;
- Find the right time to speak with the teacher. What may be convenient for you may not be convenient for the teacher. Find out if your child's teacher prefers communicating via email, telephone, or meetings;
- Prepare a list of questions and have specific examples ready to find solutions or create strategies specific to the issue at hand; and
- Ask the teacher what you can do to help to define your role in the partnership between home and school.

Sample Questions

- How can I help my child with homework? What resources are available?
- What do I need to know about EQAO testing?
- How can I help my child choose courses?
- How can I help my child deal with bullying?
- Where can I learn more about special education supports?

As a parent, you can make a difference in how your child learns.

By getting involved in your child's education, you will build important relationships with the people and resources in your community. More importantly, you will inspire your child to learn and build the confidence and self-esteem that he or she needs to be successful.

There are so many ways you can participate. Find the ways that work for you.



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