



# School Council Tip Sheet

## *Increase Diversity of Your Council*

Each year School Councils receive \$500 from the Ontario Ministry of Education to be spent at their discretion on activities that support and enhance parent involvement and communication in their school community. Some examples of activities include: workshops, guest speakers, translations, school barbeques or other social events, and resources including newsletters or books.

Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO), a partner of the District, has been working for many years to increase the involvement of all parents in the school. They have compiled a list of 25 suggestions for effective ways to use the \$500 grant to increase involvement throughout your whole school community.

1. Offer child care at your School Council meetings.
2. Offer pizza and a movie to the children during meetings. They will bring their parents to you!
3. Offer homework club for students during meetings.
4. Provide basic information to all parents every year about School Councils including: how to participate, types of issues discussed, past accomplishments, and benefits of participating in School Councils.
5. Hold a school community event such as a multicultural potluck/international dinner or heritage fair at the beginning of the year instead of the end. This encourages parents to feel comfortable in the school early on.
6. Purchase multicultural entertainment for your events.
7. Have important flyers and notices translated.
8. Offer bus tickets to parents who need them to attend meetings.
9. Set up a parent resource room with information in many languages about the school, the education system, the School Council, and parenting.
10. Host an Iftar (feast) after sundown during Ramadan if your school has a large population of Muslim families.
11. Host a council meeting out in the community at a popular community centre or library.
12. Buy time on ethnic language radio stations during shows that are the main languages of your school. Use the time to advertise school council meetings, meet the teacher night, or special events in other languages.

13. Advertise school council meetings and special events in “other language” newspapers, such as Capital Chinese News, EcoLatino, Muslim Voice, etc.
14. Host events that celebrate all cultural festivals of your school community. Refer to the OCDSB Multi-faith Calendar.
15. Hire interpreters to be present for meet the teacher nights and parent teacher interviews (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.
17. Host an informal “Breakfast with the School Council” when parents are dropping their children off. Offer a light breakfast and explain the School Council.
18. Serve Halal food at your School Council sponsored events (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 to your flyer, 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 flyer or notice.
21. Put multilingual posters and flyers about School Council meetings in businesses frequented by the community (laundromat, library, community centre, etc.).
22. Add a social “meet and greet” aspect to School Council meetings so parents can get to know each other — 15 minutes of tea 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 parents who work during the evenings can attend.
24. Invite a Multicultural Liaison Officer (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 and translate the flyer.
25. Host “Issues Nights” — Invite guest speakers to discuss topical educational or parenting issues (e.g. drug and alcohol prevention, homework, reading, parenting a teenager, etc.).

## Questions?

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