

Summary Report for CPIC(Catholic Parent Involvement Committee) Conference

November 10, 2007 at the Catholic Education Centre, 80 Sheppard Avenue East, Toronto

This report is based on observations of CPIC Reps, Presenters, Facilitators and conference attendees' evaluations and comments. The conference was well attended by 140 parents and the participation of 83 schools. This was a really good attendance, considering everyone had to give up a whole Saturday! In fact the keynote and guest key speakers even remarked about how impressed they were with the turn out, especially from parents who have students in high school.

The day consisted of four main areas - Opening ceremony and Guest Speakers, two Workshops, Exhibitors & an Open Forum/Panel Discussion. The opening ceremony which consisted of a prayer and hymn by Ralph Peter was followed by keynote speaker Bishop Boissonneau and Special guest speakers the Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education and Stu Auty , President of the Canadian Safe Schools Network (CSSN). This was followed by a brief introduction and speeches by then TCDSB Chair, Mr. Oliver Carroll followed by TCDSB Director, Mr. Kevin Kobus. This was followed by a brief introduction of CPIC Reps by CPIC Chair Mr. Arnie Amaral.

The three Guest speakers covered the key areas that are related to Parent Engagement in our schools. The highlights of their speeches as noted by Director of Communications, Mary Jo Deighan are as follows:

Bishop John A. Boissonneau, Auxillary Bishop of Toronto & Vicar of Christian Education

Key Messages:

- Overview of the rich history of Catholic Education
Opportunity to claim what "is Catholic" in our schools
The bonds between home, school and parish – to strengthen and cherish
- Truthful and successful
Build upon all the work achieved by those before us
Let us not lose sight of privileges that we have
Demonstrate zeal and courage

Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education

Key Messages:

Opening statement included:

Importance of parents being engaged and involved with their child's education
Research proves that it leads to student achievement
Commitment by the Liberal government to continue funding public education as it is today for both English and French Boards

Confirmed the priorities that were highlighted during the election campaign and the Liberal platform which included:

- Full day program for JK and SK - need to consider all aspects and the impact on school communities for implementation – e.g. need to consider capital needs
- Focus on Grades 4-8 specifically Grades 6,7 and 8
- Community Use of Schools program – their benefits to all communities and young people – keeping them active, occupied and healthy
- Summer Programs such as Focus on Youth

- Upcoming challenges
 - Collective Agreements all due – views this as an opportunity and government as facilitator to ensure Boards have resources
- A continued look at improving the funding formula C
- Concluded with -
 - Finding ways to “weather what comes our way”
 - Need to have open discussion with all partners
 - Importance of working in partnership

Mr. Stu Auty, President and founder of the Canadian Safe School Network

Key Messages:

Overview of services across Canada

Focus on: Bully Prevention, Cyber Safety, Lockdowns, Gangs, Revised Bill 212

Importance of Parental involvement

Highlighted the need for kids to learn “values”

Kids who know more than the parents

Hypothesis: If child knows more than Dad and Mom and does not have direction from “traditional authority” – parents, church – results in no values

“Gangs” – the need to feel supported, guided, influenced by the group

Learn from kids – who may have more knowledge – but still need “leadership – guidelines- parameters

Importance of consistency in the applications of rules –parameters

Bill 212 – Effective – February 1, 2008 (Bill 212, the Education Amendment Act (Progressive Discipline and School Safety) in 2007

Extension of mitigating factors and a new way of looking at suspensions

Teachers not able to suspend

Principals can suspend from 1 day – 20 days

Principals no longer able to expel students – need to go through Board

Each Board needs to adjust policies to reflect the requirements of Bill 212

Each school would be required to re-visit Code of Conducts in accordance with Bill 212

WORKSHOPS

I Engaging Parents: Improving Student Achievement Workshop conducted by presenters Maire Bracken, a founding member of the Toronto Association of Parents in Catholic Education (TAPCE), a director of the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic and Barbara McMorow who is the Professional Development Director for the Catholic Principals’ Council of Ontario. She brings over 26 years of experience as a Catholic school administrator and educator

This workshop was developed with the idea that parents would get engaged, and strengthen the voice of Catholic education in the province of Ontario, by building meaningful partnerships and alliances that cross the borders that tend to divide. The goal was to identify the Ontario “*Catholic School Graduate Expectations*” and to appreciate the mission of our Catholic schools and also to identify strategies for enhancing all types of parental engagement, which would ultimately benefit our children and lead to students achieving their full potential.

Feedback from Presenters:

Maire Bracken reported that parents were delighted that they could attend both workshops and found that the conference format a productive use of their time. Parents seemed to indicate that they would prefer longer workshops and fewer speeches. That Child minding or babysitting would be a bonus. Parents felt very welcome and valued. Concern that conference information was not shared with all parents and in some cases only with school councils. Parents in some areas feel excluded from their schools and are very limited in ways that they can volunteer. There is such a gap between schools that there is a requirement for clear, definitive guidelines that allows for the same opportunities in all schools. Lack of familiarity with CGE(Catholic Graduate Expectations). Perhaps the CPIC will review the volunteer issues and the promotion of information sessions on the CGE in all schools. Maire says she would be happy to offer her services to develop presentations and another idea would be to design a survey for all schools regarding volunteer opportunities at schools. It would not be used to target but rather to develop and improve parent engagement.

Barbara McMorrow said it was wonderful to see so many parents give of their time, energy and talents. It is through our collective efforts that Catholic education will thrive and better serve the needs of all of our students. Barbara says that she thought the day was very well coordinated. She enjoyed the opportunity to hear the Bishop and Minister of Education. It was great to have the opportunity to dialogue with parents and also always enjoy being in Maire's company who is an inspiration. Barbara thanked us for organizing the conference and for all of the work in organizing this excellent event ensuring authentic parent engagement.

Feedback from Facilitator:

Leanne Kloppenborg in her report states that the presentation included an overview of The Parent Engagement day-long workshop and focused particularly on how parents can have a positive impact on the educational experience of their children. In the group discussions, some of the barriers to parental engagement identified were language (communication) and differences in cultural background and expectation. It was particularly noteworthy the pride that was expressed in the groups in our Catholic school system, with the belief that it teaches core Christian values and that it works to form the whole child into a contributing member of society. Parents expressed the desire to know more about the history of Catholic education, particularly in Ontario, and the struggle that led to full funding for our system. There was a recognition that the struggle continues, perhaps in a different form. And, participants were very interested to know how they might attend the full workshop.

Feedback from CPIC Rep Ward 11/Parent:

Cindy Beman notes that in the Engaging Parents workshop parents shared their experiences as engaged parents and discussed ways in which they would encourage other parents to become engaged. Parents discussed what inclusion is and how it benefits parents and students. Parents talked about what makes Catholic education unique - the big question of our times - and it really is the respect and caring that is displayed among students, staff and parents. Again the need to improve communication between home and school was voiced. The main theme of Head, Heart and Hand should be the theme that carries us through every aspect of the education of our children.

Cindy Beman again reiterates that parents liked the idea that there were only 2 workshops - participants didn't have to choose and miss out on something that they really liked. The only negative comments that were that the opening remarks took too long and that parents were anxious to get started. It was a great day overall. Cindy says "Overall, the day was filled with warmth and enthusiasm. I feel proud to have played a small part in bringing these parents together to share their stories. This is just the beginning and we have taken a large step forward in the quest to improve parent involvement. Let's keep up the momentum - spread the word to everyone we meet."

II Safe, Caring & Healthy Workshop

This workshop was developed to demonstrate to parents that connections between school safety, schools that live out gospel values and healthy school communities are numerous. This workshop was developed in order to equip parents with information and tools to identify issues impacting students in their schools and help develop programs to address these issues. A framework for linking these worthwhile objectives of safe, caring and healthy schools and the concept of SCHool teams, ideally involving parents, was presented.

This workshop was developed by our TCDSB SCH Team:

Peter Barrans, *Principal, Safe Schools, TCDSB*

Peter Barrans has been teaching for 36 years with the Toronto Catholic District School Board and a teacher at Neil McNeil High School for 16 years, Co-op Itinerate teacher at the board office for 1 year, Vice Principal of Mary Ward for 2 years, Vice Principal at Francis Liebermann for 8 years, Principal of Msgr. Fraser college alternative for 3 years, Principal of Msgr. Fraser A.P.P.L.E. program for expelled students for 4 years, and now the Principal coordinator of the Safe Schools Department for almost 2 years.

Anthony Petitti, *Program Coordinator, TCDSB, Health/Physical/Outdoor Education* Anthony Petitti has been an employee of TCDSB for over 25 years, as teacher, vice-principal and principal in the elementary panel. For the past 5 years, he has been the Program Coordinator for Health, Physical and Outdoor Education with out board.

Paul Crawford: *Superintendent of Education for the TCDSB*

Paul Crawford has been an employee with the TCDSB for 35 years and is currently a superintendent of Education for a group of schools and in addition has the Safe School responsibility for the system. He has been a principal in four schools and has taught every grade from grade 3 to the former grade 13.

Parent Workshop Feedback:

Cindy Beman, CPIC Rep Ward 11 reported that in this workshop, participants were divided into groups to discuss the experiences in our schools with regards to the three topics (Safe, Caring & Healthy) and how we can improve on them. It was clear that the three cannot be separated completely and that they are all intertwined in some way. It was great to hear all the wonderful things that are happening at the schools. It was observed that most parents felt that there was a need to improve communication between home and school.

Priority Issues Identified by Parents who attended the Safe, Caring and Healthy Workshop

A. Safe Schools

Parents have requested the following:

1. Increased communication between parents – schools – community e.g., programs, issues, newsletters, homework hotlines, web-sites
2. Investigation of school access issues e.g., buzzer system, cameras, monitoring
3. A board-wide dress code policy (K-12)
4. Increased school yard supervision e.g., recess, before and after school
5. Investigation of physical plant deficits e.g., overcrowding, grounds

B. Caring Schools

Parents have requested the following:

1. Use of students as leaders (esp. Gr. 7 & 8) e.g., school council, community involvement
2. Programs to bring parents and students together
3. Increased partnerships between parents and educators e.g., safety plan, learning plan
4. Programs to support appreciation of diversity

3. Healthy Schools

Parents have requested the following:

1. Physical Education specialists at each elementary school
2. Nutrition programs in schools
3. Physical Education classes not to be used as punishment/reward

* Report submitted by safe schools department team members November 2007.

Exhibitors

Terry Pastore reported that all the exhibitors that had booked a spot for the conference showed up except for one. They were all set up on the 3rd Floor - CTC Room. The lunch hour was set aside for visits to the exhibitors as there was one hour allocated for both activities. It seemed inadequate for the Exhibitors as they would have preferred more time for visits.

These were the exhibitors at the conference:

Ontario Ministry of Education
Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)
Ontario Association of Parents for Catholic Education (OAPCE)
Toronto Association of Parent for Catholic Education (TAPCE)
Greater Toronto Catholic Parents Network (GTCPN)
People for Education
Ontario Catholic Principal's Council (OCPC)
Association of Bright Children (ABC)
Catholic Children's Aid Society (CCAS)

Feedback from Exhibitors was that they were happy with the space they were provided with, however there was concern that they should have been more visible to the conference attendees as they were out of sight on the third floor. Secondly, Terry reported that approximately only 50% of participants came up to the Exhibitors at lunch time, Exhibitors would have been happier with more. There were other Exhibitors on the list whom Terry says should have been contacted. Perhaps next year!

Evaluation Highlights of Conference:

- Everyone felt the conference was well organized and promoted
- everyone loved the Keynotes/speakers but overwhelming response that speeches were quite long and would have preferred more time for the workshops
- 85% thought registration was very good - excellent
- people enjoyed the Safe, Caring Schools Workshop
- Parents would have preferred that the parent engagement workshop offered more info for the "how to" of Parent Engagement in their schools rather than a snapshot workshop
- 35% of people left before the open forum session, however feedback from those who attended was good
- 50% of the respondents thought the online registration was very good-excellent!

In conclusion, we may say that overall response was very positive and as a CSAC Chair put it across very nicely to Emma Pagliaroli – **“you've arranged for the band now teach us the dance steps!”**. And as Mannie Mifsud says in his wrap up remarks “We have to make sure that parents are engaged across the table and not just looking at power point presentations!”. It is up to each CPIC Rep now to build on the momentum we achieved at the conference and get our CSACs and parents in our Wards engaged in their school communities!

Thanks everyone for your valuable support and input!

Respectfully submitted on November 7, 2007
Sylvia Menezes, CPIC Rep Ward 12
CPIC Conference Coordinator

(Attachments are Evaluation Report – Mary Ann Virelli , CPIC Secretary and Ward 6 Rep & Bragging Banner collated by Emma Pagliaroli, Ward 5 CPIC Rep)