

OAPCE Meeting
Monday September 25th, 2017

The Director of Education Rory McGunkin spoke to the OAPCE reps to reiterate the importance parents play in our children's education. He also stressed the importance of the collaboration between the parents, parish and schools as one integrated body for the success of our children's education. Rory spoke about the Catholic School System and its many successes however he did stress there are many areas of improvement that must be implemented to ensure the Catholic School System becomes even greater. The stress will be focused on how and what must be done to ensure students that are struggling and below the required provincial levels, how they will be given the necessary tools and guidance to ensure they do succeed. Rory stressed the importance of how the system must improve to successfully guide those students and really get to the core reason of the current barriers blocking those students from succeeding.

We also met our new Parent Engagement Coordinator, Manuela Sequiera. Manuela is now our go to person should we require information or guidance on anything to do with Parent Engagement.

We participated in a variety of mini workshops which provided insight on the various rolls Parent Council and OAPCE Member play in our schools along with a review of the bylaws, fundraising and time frames of when funds raised must be used, budgets, parent engagement (some schools have incorporated a call-in teleconference so that more parents can partake in the parent council meetings, this is where Manuela would have to get involved in setting up a line so that this could be possible at our school), communication (getting information to parents in more than one language, if language is a barrier, we as a school must do better send the information in the more predominant languages to parents, or something more simple as having an information near the main office and providing the information in other languages, or assigning one parent council member to vigorously maintain the facebook page with information, again these are all things other schools are doing). Other key points discussed where when the agenda and minutes from previous meetings should be distributed to all members of the parent council committee. This information must be made available for review at least 4-7 days prior to our scheduled meetings. And then we also spoke about different pro-grants available, code of ethics and who to reach out to if we do have questions about our roles.

Communication is key to getting more Parents engaged and participating in our meetings. Some examples include having posters or a poster board available outside of the monthly newsletters. Welcome signs in different languages or the more predominant languages in the school; communication sent home should also be translated in the predominant languages spoken in the school so that parents are aware of what is happening throughout the school.

Another key note was the importance of having a parent rep for each classroom. This parent would then be responsible in forwarding all information to the parents of that classroom. They would obviously work with the parent council and principal to make sure the information distributed has been approved prior to disbursement. The suggestion presented was to have teachers ask parents at parent teacher interviews if they would be interested in that role as in most cases teacher are familiar with the parents that are eager to be involved. And then of course have the parent council have sign-up sheets as they greet parents at parent teacher interviews.

Again they reminded us that the parent council account cannot exceed a \$500.00 carry over at the end of the school year. All funds raised throughout the year must be used in that school year.

When fundraising; a very clear picture must be advertised to the parents regarding where the monies raised will be used. They stressed that we should never fundraise for the sake of fundraising or use the term "it's going back to the school". This will encourage parents to donate as they will know what and why we are fundraising. They also stressed that having too many fundraisers are too much of a burden on a lot of families, some schools have substantially cut down on how many they have per school year or have gotten rid of fundraising all together due to lack of parent volunteers.

Another hot topic was the school agenda's. They are too expensive and some schools have gotten rid of them all together or have outsourced them and purchased them from the dollar store.

APPLY for the pro-grants they are there to benefit the schools. There are many different pro-grants available.

The OAPCE Conference was held on October 13 and 14 in Maple and the focus was on "Mental Health and Well-Being: Developing Your God Given Talent", it was open to everyone, unfortunately I was not able to make the conference this year, however Gus did attend. Gus would you like to say a few words about the conference?