

To: Parents at Oakwood

From: Allison Pedley

Re: Parent Council - 2006 - 2007

Date: May 23rd, 2007

The last meeting for this school year is May 30th and at that time, we will need to identify the parents who are going to specifically commit to work with the school next year.

In the past (except for this current year) there have been the following 'positions' as part of the Council:

1. Chairperson - main contact for parents and school administration, teachers and students as needed.
2. Co-Chair - a parent willing to make a two year commitment - so that there is a parent who has participated in the current year and then is the identified Chair for following year.
3. Ward Council - someone who attends meetings held with the other schools in our Ward and 'family of schools' - including parents from other primary and middle schools, our School Trustee and our Supervisor
4. Secretary/Treasurer - to make notes on meetings and to ensure funding available to School Councils is addressed and we take advantage of any opportunities.
5. A group willing and able to commit to coming to the smaller, planning and discussion meetings so the parents and school have a consistent sounding board.

Here is a synopsis of the information I sent out to all parents on our email list earlier in year on the Parent Council format used at Oakwood (and have used as the handout/speech notes at the various evening parent events)

2006 - 2007 Summary Report

School Councils are an integral part of the school and Oakwood has a strong tradition of a council involved not only in school level activities but also in Ward, TDSB related education policy and, political activities.

As part of TDSB Policy, councils must be consulted on the process and criteria for selection and placement of principals and vice-principals; the school board's code of conduct and dress code; school board policies for fund-raising by school councils and their plans for improving student achievement based on standardized test results. They also discuss any local challenges and make recommendations to the principals

In order to do this important work, at Oakwood we have two streams of meetings:

- **Parent Council meetings** which are focused around a specific topic and include time at the end of the meeting for Oakwood updates from Principle and School Council and, discussion around current issues/plans that the school needs our opinion/thoughts on, and/or that parents wish to bring forward.
- **an 'executive' group** (who meet in between the more formal Parent Council meetings) with an agenda that focuses on Oakwood specific topics and, review of issues/planning/consultation with the Principle and designates. This includes planning for the future agendas, arrangement of speakers, (or wish to bring to the school executives attention); brainstorm and develop activities and themes to take to the Parent Council.

Most years, this means we have 12 meetings in total. 6 with a broader theme plus Oakwood reports/discussion and then 6 that are Oakwood focused discussion-based.

All parents are welcome to attend both groups. The 'theme' evenings run 7 - 9 p.m. and the discussion meetings start at 5:30 and run to approximately 7:30 with refreshments provided. *(Note: I have had several requests to vary the day of the week for these meetings for next year - either always same or, rotated. TBD)*

We would also like to discuss a Communication strategy for involving parents in future meetings/activities and our participation in key school decisions.

Our first School Council meeting in the Fall focuses on **'All You Ever Wanted to Know about Oakwood'** and is presented by the School Admin with additional teachers from each area.

These are the topics planned for 2006 -2007 School Council meetings (and I've included our assessment of each post meeting):

- November 8th 7 - 9 p.m. "Survival Skills for Parents and Students" - will be presented by staff at Oakwood. It will focus on mastering skills needed for success in High School - including general curriculum review; assessment methods used within TDSB and how these are implemented at Oakwood; how to advocate for your child; self-advocacy tips for students. It will include points related to how parents and students connect with staff and how issues should be dealt with/escalated.

Assessment - should be repeated each year.

- January 11th 7 - 9 p.m. "Safe Schools" -will discuss the challenges of ensuring our school is a safe place - with perspectives from the school, the community, parents and the police.

Assessment - this topic is recommended to include each year. Could try to shorten discussion but this topic is well attended by parents each year and they have a large number of questions/concerns to air.

- February 27th 7 -9 p.m. - "Stress and Depression and Teens" - will provide a specialty speaker to address these topics and answer questions from parents.

Assessment - good topic. Consider every other year.

- April 18th 7 - 9 p.m. "Breaking Down the Barriers" speakers linked to the Oakwood School focus on this theme during April. This meeting topic was then changed to discuss staffing for next year, models for timetable changes, proposed creation of a professional learning committee at Oakwood and other current reports.

Assessment - should be part of ongoing reporting at each meeting re staffing and any changes planned. Need to tie into discussion around promoting Oakwood as school of choice for Grade 8's and transfers from other schools. Should develop a 'marketing Oakwood' strategy.

May 23rd - 7 - 9 p.m. "Risk Taking in Youth" with a speaker from "PARTY" (Prevent Alcohol and Risk Related Trauma in Youth)

For any of you also interested in becoming involved in activities related to the current funding and policy issues that Oakwood, and indeed all TDSB and Ontario schools are facing I'd recommend you check both the

TDSB website (www.tdsb.on.ca) and, People for Education (www.peopleforeducation.com) a province-wide organization working to improve public education in Ontario's English, Catholic and French schools.

For this coming year 2007 - 2008 the following are additional topics/suggestions I have received and pass on to the parents who will be planning next year's agendas for their consideration:

1. Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting at TDSB and Oakwood - possibly invite Sue Ferguson of TDSB.
Suggestions of items to be covered include:
 - status of ongoing initiatives such as the progress of the AER Committee at Oakwood
 - review of the existing Oakwood Policy on AER
 - implementation status of consistent processes for AER in each subject.
 - ensuring the exams set are read and vetted by all teachers in a subject area (and the CL/CLA) for both consistency and, to confirm the material in the exam has been covered sufficiently in class
 - Ensuring there is enough time set for exams
 - Ensuring the marking schema follows principles in Fresh AER i.e. % of total; 70/30 split, restrict use of negative marking
 - Ensuring students have alternate assignments given if they miss due dates (for good reason)
 - Measuring the success of implementation of AER at Oakwood and progress against the EQAO Math and Literacy scores.

2. How to help your child chose the right courses.

3. Maintaining good relationships between parents, teachers and students.

4. About the school, "All You Ever Wanted to Know About Oakwood" meeting should include:
 - what are the responsibilities of each of the Vice Principals
 - stats: how many kids go to university? college? drop out? - what schools do Oakwood students come from? what is the demand like?
 - how are our sports teams doing? what teams do we have?
 - report on the clubs: how many are there? what activities do they do?
 - would like a report on each academic area, including Music as a priority
 - how teachers are hired, what qualifications they have, priorities for the staffing model
 - overview of the school budget
 - a tour of the building, maybe one floor at a time per meeting
 - Oakwood's reputation in the system, among teachers, among students and families
 - what measures are being taken to ensure the highest quality academic and student experience
 - upcoming events, and how/whether parents can be involved
 - why is the late policy not enforced
 - what are the major challenges facing the school
 - what can we be most proud to know about Oakwood

5. "Teenagers and Health". Have a speaker come from Sick Kids or public health and speak on health issues/sexuality issues for teenagers.

6. More on Breaking Down the Barriers theme - discussion on sexism, racism, poverty, homophobia, classism and what are children learning at school and how can parents support

7. Students in Need - revisit issue of student poverty specifically at Oakwood and what the Parent Council and School can do. Include review of programs available through TDSB and brainstorm re community initiatives.

8. Gangs and education for parents on what/how to recognize
9. Drugs/alcohol/addictions - presented in a "Making Positive Lifestyle Choices" style (Consider a panel approach)