SCHOOL COUNCILS 2013-2014 YEAR IN REVIEW

DATA ANALYSIS SUMMARY OF ANNUAL REPORTS

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School Councils Report 2013-2014

Executive Summary

A total number of 177 school councils completed the annual report. This consisted of 149 elementary school councils and 28 secondary school councils (see **Table A** for response rates from each CEC area).

- In their efforts **to support parent, family and community engagement**, a large number of school councils in both panels noted that they kept parents and the community informed through flyers, school and council newsletters, electronic bulletins, emails and council meetings (see **Table 1** for other activities to support parent, family and community engagement).

- In their efforts **to support positive school climate**, a large majority of elementary school councils reported their involvement in promoting healthy living to students. The most common activity to support positive school climate by secondary school councils was to support school spirit and student social events (see **Table 2** for other activities to support positive school climate).

- School councils from both panels indicated that their main activity **to support the diverse school community** was respecting religious holidays when planning their events (see **Table 3** for other activities to support the diverse school community).

- The majority (91%) of elementary school councils indicated that they had been involved in **fundraising** this past year. In contrast, only eight (29%) secondary school councils noted that they had been involved in fundraising (see **Table 4a** for number of school councils involved in fundraising).

- **Fundraising money** was most commonly used by school councils to provide technology resources or programs to schools and to support school events (see **Table 4b** for the list of activities where funds were used).

- Many school councils in both panels noted the need for the Board to **allocate additional resources** for technology in their schools. The need for upgraded computer software and hardware as well as access to SmartBoards, tablets, and other digital devices were the areas identified by most of the school councils. As indicated in the responses, additional resources were also needed for staff professional development and for students with special needs (see **Table 5** for other areas identified as needing additional Board resources).

- In the next school year, both panels would like to receive more information regarding speakers, programs, and resources from the Board (see **Table 6** for other areas where both panels would like to receive additional support or training from the Board).

Purpose

To provide trustees, school councils, principals and senior administrators with the status of school council initiatives and a summary of the annual reports received from school councils.

Summary of School Council Annual Reports

School councils representing 177 schools completed the Annual Report and their responses are summarized in this review. Annual reports from 149 elementary school councils and 28 secondary school councils were received, representing 87% of elementary schools and 88% of secondary schools. The overall response rate is 87%.

Table A below summarizes the number of responses received from each Community Education Center (CEC) area and the respective response rates.

Table A. Response Rate from each CEC Area

CEC	Number of Schools	Response Received	Response Rate
North	49	43	88%
Central	51	46	90%
East	51	47	92%
West	53	41	77%
Total	**204**	**177**	**87%**

The following sections summarize the information provided by school councils in response to the questions asked in the annual report template.

Which of the following activities was your School Council involved in this past year?

1. Activities to Support Parent, Family and Community Engagement

In their efforts to support parent, family and community engagement, a large majority of school councils noted that they were engaged in activities such as: **keeping parents and community informed**, **hosting or supporting workshops, presentations and/or social events, recruiting more parents to their school council and requesting input from parents** (see Table 1 below for details).

Table 1	Elementary (N=149)		Secondary (N=28)	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Hosted or supported workshops, presentations, and/or social events (e.g., guest speakers, Literacy Night/ Numeracy Night, parenting classes, community breakfast, Fun Fairs, Triple P, concerts, cultural holiday celebrations)	**144**	**97%**	**25**	**89%**
Kept parents and community informed (e.g., flyers, school and council newsletters, electronic bulletins, email, council meetings)	**146**	**98%**	**26**	**93%**
Parent and SC involvement in school policies and practices (e.g., involvement in cell-phone policy, dress code, attendance policy, homework policy, student success initiatives)	97	65%	20	71%
Requested input from parents (e.g., surveys, focus groups, forums, at council meetings)	**135**	**91%**	**24**	**86%**
Recruitment of more parents for School Council (e.g., invitations to meetings)	**143**	**96%**	**26**	**93%**
Communication Improvements (e.g., with administration and staff, through council forums, use common language, gather input from parent surveys)	102	69%	19	68%
Language support for parents (e.g., translation, dual language books)	47	32%	5	18 %

  * % in each column may sum to more than 100 due to multiple responses.

Other Information/Activities:
Several school councils reported that they focused on promoting parent, family and community engagement through organized seminars on mental health (for both parents and children), invited parents to participate in the parent engagement evening and YRDSB Parent Symposium, and collaborated with local businesses to support fun fairs and to request donations.

| **2. Activities to Support Positive School Climate** |

The most common activities to support positive school climate by both elementary and secondary school councils were the **school spirit and student social events** and the **promotion of healthy living to students.** In addition**,** a large number of responding elementary school councils indicated that they supported a positive school climate through **technology resources and school programs.** Furthermore, over half (57%) of secondary school councils responding indicated that they supported positive school climate through **school safety** activities (see Table 2 below for details).

Table 2	**Elementary (N=149)**		**Secondary (N=28)**	
	Count	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**
Environmental initiatives and "greening" (e.g., Eco-League, tree planting, beautification, outdoor classroom)	87	58%	9	32%
School safety efforts (e.g., traffic issues, yard safety and supervision, restorative approaches, anti-bullying initiatives)	116	78%	**16**	**57%**
Supporting school activities through the lens of inclusivity (e.g., field trips, refreshments)	113	76%	10	36%
School spirit and student social events (e.g., lunches/barbeques, yearbook, spirit days, assemblies, student recognition, field trips, extracurricular activities, collaborative community events)	**134**	**90%**	**21**	**75%**
Promoted healthy living to students (e.g., purchase of sports equipment, sportswear, athletic programs, Healthy Schools initiatives, hot lunch programs, healthy snacks, milk programs, Breakfast Program, guest speakers on health topics, lice screening)	**138**	**93%**	**14**	**50%**
School staff support and appreciation (e.g., appreciation events, funding for classrooms)	129	87%	11	39%
Character education (e.g., Character Matters initiative, Caught you Caring, Grow Program)	73	49%	4	14%
Improvements to school/school grounds (e.g., improved signage, carpeting, playground, outdoor benches and tables)	94	63%	6	21%
Resources and programs (e.g., Technology/computers, arts program, workshops and events)	**139**	**93%**	12	43%
Collaboration with local businesses and organizations (e.g. fundraising, Home Coming Event)	105	71%	13	46%

* % in each column may sum to more than 100 due to multiple responses.

Other information:
A number of school councils also noted that activities to support a positive school climate for students, parents and staff included events like: internet safety and awareness for children, seminars on nutrition and healthy eating, toy and food drives, character building, bullying prevention and staff recognition with the Award of Excellence.

3. Activities to Support the Diverse School Community

School councils from both panels indicated that their activities to support the diverse school community most commonly focused on **respecting religious holidays when planning events** (see Table 3 below for details).

Table 3	Elementary (n=149)		Secondary (n=28)	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Multicultural (i.e. culturally sensitive) school events	77	52%	10	36%
Reducing barriers (e.g., language, special needs, socio-economic)	89	60%	12	43%
Respecting religious holidays when planning events	**134**	**90%**	**19**	**68%**
Direct resources & funding to supporting cultural diversity	48	32%	4	14%
Efforts to ensure diverse representation on school council	96	64%	14	50%

* % in each column may sum to more than 100 due to multiple responses.

Funding and Fundraising

4a) Was your School Council involved in fundraising activities during this past year?

The majority (91%) of the elementary school councils indicated that they had been involved in fundraising this past year. Secondary councils were much less likely to indicate the same with only eight schools (29%) noting that they had been involved in fundraising (see Table 4a below for details).

Table 4a	Elementary (n=149)		Secondary (n=28)	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Yes	**136**	**91%**	**8**	**29%**
No	5	3%	19	68%
Not Answered	8	6%	1	3%

* % in each column may sum to more than 100 due to rounding.

4b) If yes, please list the activities for which the funds were used:

For this open response item, only a few secondary school councils provided a response so they were combined with the elementary school councils for the summary below. Fundraising money was most commonly used by school councils to purchase **technology resources or programs** for their schools. Almost half of responding school councils also indicated they used their funds to provide financial support for **school events** (see Table 4b below for details).

Table 4b	Count
Technology resources or programs (e.g., cost-sharing, computers, laptops, iPads, DocCam, SmartBoards)	**99**
Support for school events (e.g., transitions events, information evenings, guest speakers, fundraising , school magazines, community BBQ, Family Nights, Welcome to Kindergarten, Graduation, fun fair,)	**88**
Arts resources or programs (e.g., costumes, musical instruments, art supplies)	60
Healthy/active living resources or programs (e.g., hot meals, sports equipment, lice check , outdoor learning environment/classroom, Eco-Challenge, Healthy Eating Program, mental health workshop, water bottle filling station)	57
School site improvements (e.g., beautification, painting, furniture purchase/repair, playground equipment)	48
Literacy resources or programs (e.g., books, library resources, Home Reading Program, Forest of Reading)	42
Science/mathematics resources or programs (e.g., equipment, Scientists in the School, robotics club, math manipulatives)	29
Support field trips (e.g., transportation, ways to identify students)	26
Classroom/teacher resources (e.g., fund for teacher use, early years resources, teacher/class websites, indoor board games)	20
Supply teachers (e.g., for athletic events and competitions, release time)	7
Staff appreciation (e.g., lunch, tea, thank you gift for teachers)	6
Equity and inclusivity (e.g., subsidizing field trips for disadvantaged students, special needs supports, multicultural events, food bank, community resource fund, Angel Fund – money for families who cannot afford school related costs)	4
School safety and spirit (e.g., anti-bullying events/programs, yearbook, student recognition awards)	2
Miscellaneous (e.g., agendas for students, professional development, Grow Program, school improvement planning initiatives)	18

5. In which areas do you see the need for the Board to allocate additional resources? (e.g., ESL, special needs, technology, staff professional development)

Many school councils in both panels noted the need for additional Board funding for **technology** in their schools. A need for upgraded computer software and hardware as well as access to SmartBoards, iPods/iPads and other digital devices were identified by most school councils. Other areas needing additional resources were: **staff professional development**, **support for special needs students** and **support for English/French Language Learners** (See Table 5 below for details).

Table 5	Count
Technology (e.g., computers, SmartBoards, laptops/netbooks, iPods/iPads, webcasts)	**83**
Staff professional development (e.g., special needs training, mental health support training, lunch room attendant training, math and technology, first aid, anti-bullying & initiatives)	**51**
Support for special needs students (e.g., staff training, assistive technology, other resources and more materials)	**45**
Support for English/French Language Learners (e.g., staff training, assistive technology, other resources)	28
Support for parents and the community (e.g., support for newcomers, access to community resources, parent engagement, multicultural outreach programs, translation and language barrier support)	16
Maintenance of school building and grounds (e.g., playground, air conditioning, facilities for wheel chair accessibility, outdoor greening , security camera, parking lot, signs)	13
Arts programs and resources (e.g., musical instruments, craft supplies)	10
Classroom materials/supports (e.g., fund for teacher use, general resources, text books, classroom equipment, supply teachers, agendas, teacher websites)	8
Field trips (e.g., buses, identification of students while on trip, more trips for sports, nature and science, outside of the classroom)	6
Healthy living/physical activity (e.g., sports equipment, play equipment, physical education, outdoor activities)	5
Literacy programs and resources (e.g., library resources, books)	5
School staffing (e.g., supply teachers for sports teams/events, community liaison staff, educational assistants, caretakers)	3
Miscellaneous (e.g., school safety, bully prevention, transitions, character matters, mental health resources, guidance counseling, school specific programs, extracurricular activities, ongoing support for YRDSB initiatives, future school development)	18

Building System Capacity

> **6. Identify below what additional support or training your council would like to receive in the next school year?**

The most common additional support or training selected by schools was the **provision of information regarding speakers, programs, and resources** from the Board. Some elementary school councils indicated that they would also like to receive **additional funding** for resources and programs. Some secondary school councils indicated that they would like to receive **training/information and strategies to increase the effectiveness of school councils and guidance on how to recruit new school council members** (see Table 6 below for details).

Table 6	Elementary (n=149)		Secondary (n=28)	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Collaboration (e.g., opportunity to collaborate, network or share and interact with other SC; building community partnerships)	86	58%	14	50%
Opportunity (& financial support) to attend school council, Board forums, conferences, workshops on topics of interest	85	57%	14	50%
Training/Information & strategies for increasing effectiveness of school councils (e.g., training on how to support SIP goals & priorities; in what and how SC should be involved; helping SC understand school programs)	84	56%	**15**	**54%**
Provide information regarding speakers, programs & resources available (e.g., anti-bullying; internet safety; Character Matters, restorative approaches)	**120**	**81%**	**20**	**71%**
Guidance on how to recruit new school council members (e.g., parents; teachers; volunteer trainers)	87	58%	**15**	**54%**
Guidance on how to involve parents of various religious, language and cultural backgrounds (e.g., translations of documents; interpreters, ESL challenges; multicultural sensitivity training, access to Board webpage for all updates)	82	55%	9	32%
Training in fundraising and planning fundraisers (e.g., how to negotiate, with whom, where and when; ideas for fundraising; do's and don'ts; continued development & clarity around fundraising)	57	38%	5	18%
Guidance on how to increase parent volunteer involvement (e.g., more volunteer recognition events, training for parent volunteers to support early literacy, help with PRO grant proposals)	87	58%	11	39%
Additional funding (e.g., IT resources-laptops; hardware; software; resources for libraries; textbooks; tools for teachers to implement Living School initiatives; resources for parenting programs)	**102**	**69%**	10	36%
EcoSchool initiatives (e.g., Ontario EcoSchools Program certification, tips on supporting environmental programs in the school)	70	47%	10	36%

* % in each column may sum to more than 100 due to multiple responses.

Other suggestions/issues regarding additional support or training from the Board

The need for additional support or training by School councils was varied. Several school councils suggested that additional support was needed to improve communication between parents and council members. They recommended having easy online access to school council information and the ability for parents to contact the school council directly without having to first contact the school office.

School councils from smaller and/or newer schools also required additional financial support for their playground equipment. In addition, several school councils requested having clearer guidelines on what can be funded by the Board, and what the school council can fund.

Additional resources to support participation for not just some, but every student in programs and workshops to develop literacy and numeracy skills outside the classroom was also requested.