

Board Development Topic: Student and Family Engagement at the Early Years Level

Date of Board Meeting:

November 16, 2023

Strategic Priority:

- High Quality Teaching and Learning
- Engagement of All Students, Families, and Communities
- Effective Policy and Procedures
- Healthy, Sustainable Physical & Social Environments

Quality Indicator(s):

QI 1.1 Facilitating environments where students feel a sense of belonging and have high levels of intellectual engagement.

QI 7.2 Keeping the Board informed about Division operations, challenges, and celebrations.

Presented by:

Kerrilyn Trost, Instructional Consultant

Information for the Board (10 fast facts):

1. **Family engagement** is intended to create respectful, reciprocal relationships with families to promote authentic shared responsibilities for children's learning and development. Families are invited into the classroom to participate as members of the learning community and are **acknowledged as the first and continuing educators of children.** (MOE, 2012)
2. The **diversity** of families is valued and is used as a resource for building partnerships.
3. Family engagement involves continuous **communication** between educators and families, where both parties share insights, concerns, and information about the child's progress. Edsby and Seesaw are both used as online communication platforms.
4. Engaging families also extends into the larger **community.** Schools can involve families in school events, workshops, and activities to create a sense of belonging or help families in making connections with community supports such as Children's Therapies, or the Family Resource Centre which offers a variety of programs for families.
5. **Practices that make a difference** in family engagement –
 - High Impact: Parent training events, goal-setting talks, regular personalized communication
 - Low Impact: Fundraising, parent volunteering, generic school newsletters (Harvard Family Research Project Webinar Series, 2011)

6. **A year at a glance in the Good Spirit School Division:** at the beginning of the year, we work on building trusting relationships. Throughout the year we continue to learn from families and share information regarding the child's development and learning. At the end of the year, we share the learning, prepare for transitioning, and celebrate the successes together.
 7. **Prekindergarten** starts with home visits and inviting families into the classroom with small groups or one-on-one family visits. PreK has time built into their schedule for family engagement on Fridays, although many times, events occur during the evening to accommodate families. The ministry suggests that two family engagement activities be held a month.
 8. In **Kindergarten** Good Spirit School Division has built family engagement time into the calendar encouraging events to be held one day during the family engagement window. The windows this year are Sept. 25th to Oct. 13th and Jan. 22nd to Feb. 9. Student-led conferences occur twice a year, which allows families to learn about their child's development, goals, and learning. Kindergarten Orientation or open house is held in May/June to support transitioning students and families into kindergarten.
 9. GSSD **financially** supports family engagement by allocating \$200 per classroom for expenses.
 10. **Examples** of family engagement events in Good Spirit School Division
 - Reading buddy adoption day
 - Brown Bear Learning stations
 - Self-Regulation activities
 - Getting to know your family – placemats
 - Inviting family members to share – beading, Pow Wow
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Respectfully submitted,

Quintin M. Robertson, Director/CEO
Good Spirit School Division