



## MAPC 2010 AGM Networking Session

### Question #1

*What kind of communication do you feel has been effective for your PAC to get information out to your parents (e.g. newsletters, phone calls, brochures, etc.)?*

- Tried newsletters and phone calls. Works only on certain families. Hard pulling in immigrant families, especially ones from South America. A lot of times the notes don't get home. Talk to people face to face at the bar or co-op. Face to face communication is the most effective. People forget what's in the newsletter.
- Face to face
- Handing out information during meet the teacher at the start of school, also speaking to kindergarten parents during a kindergarten info session in May or June
- Synervoice – an online phone system capable of being interfaced with the student management programs (Trevlac, Maplewood) that schools use to manage info. Messages can be recorded anywhere in the world, specific classes/students/whole school can be chosen to send the message to them. We use it to remind parents about meetings, library sales, special events and "other" and it is GREAT!!
- Newsletter, messages home and personal phone calls and email
- Using extra space available on report cards has worked extremely well to disseminate important information as it is often likely that parents actually read the one document fully all the way through to Grade 12
- School Newsletter – We used to put the minutes from our meetings in the newsletter. We now do "Notes from Parent Council" – very informal and much more effective. We recently did a survey in our school asking if we could send the newsletter by email and the parents' response was that they still want the paper copy. Occasionally, we send home a short note on coloured paper. "Family Count" notes go to the youngest child, not the oldest. Our school really discourages paper use.
- What types of privacy laws would we need to deal with to create an email list? Another person at my table said they quit using their email distribution because they didn't get more people at meetings and never got replies or responses.
- AT our K-6 school, our Parent Connection has a "Communications through Technology" rep, who has established an email list. The list includes a large percentage of our parents (by their consent). While we find the email list has been great assistance in "getting the word out", the paper backpack drops still seem to elicit the most responses to requests for feedback or assistance. We are a small group, so phone calls have been used as a last resort, but in a pinch, they can be very effective. We also contribute updates to the school newsletter. (I also find that direct communication, via emails or paper notices sent home, is the best way to communicate at the middle and senior years levels, but they can be harder to implement in larger schools.)
- Mostly by phone calls and home visits

- Newsletter, PC column, plus notices, email blasts and one-on-one email, notices posted around the school
- Mainly email
- Website – posting school info/minutes, monthly newsletters
- Monthly school newsletter, PAC section on the school website, email contact for info and volunteers, information board in school for our PACs info, celebration events such as concerts and community based celebrations (BBQs etc.)
- Electronic communication of newsletter, events, upcoming meetings
- We compile the list the first day of school at teacher conferences. This has been successful in promoting interest in the in the parent council
- Open communication with the principal and staff at our school is an extreme plus for us. Recognition by students and parents for what the PAC is doing for them and the school
- Email updates about website are great. Newsletters are fantastic!
- Being part of the school's website would likely be effective
- PAC chair would speak at a parent night for incoming and new students – these would be an “assembly” where administration speaks to parents and PAC is invited to speak as well
- PAC chair sends notices home and we use our website. Word of mouth at school events also works well
- We use our newsletter and have found it has had good results
- We have a link on the school website to our website. We have an independent website. We have submissions in our school newsletter which is now available online. We are in the process of trying to use class reps (who are not PAG Directors) to distribute by email our information and notices (i.e. Volunteer requirements). We advertise our meetings through newsletters, door posters and email. We also put out information at various functions such as; volunteer orientation, September school “meet the staff”, teacher conferences
- Bi-weekly email updates family
- PAC Newsletter not in the school newsletter
- Lots of volunteers but can't get out to meetings
- Set up booth at school events, ask for email address
- No new ideas just doing the same ideas
- Personal contact with parents asking what they want to have information about - listen to parents, surveys, going to Family Rooms in schools to make contact
- Reaching out to nursery, kindergarten parents
- Having fun, family activities to promote PAC and involvement
- Support of school administration of PAC
- Topics – special needs vs. regular students, how to support inclusion including allergies, panel discussions



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### Question #2

*Some schools have the philosophy of placing a student in the next grade when they have clearly not demonstrated the academic outcomes of that grade. Do you feel your school/division does this, and what are your comments and concerns?*

- Our division does it, but it's wrong
- Depends on school and resources available to support students
- Get community resource officers in school to assist families to understand school system and reach those students in need
- Parents need to be part of the plan and process for academic plans of children
- Testing done at early years
- Speech/language supports need to be given at early years
- Regular contact with parents about the child's progress
- Yes, I do feel my school does this. The parents are well informed of any troubles their child is having long before the end of the year. However, I don't necessarily agree. If child has not demonstrated the proper academic ability for that grade, I think they should have to go to summer school to improve their mark
- Regardless of what my school division does, I believe a child should be held back if they are not ready to move forward either socially or academically. I think it has a negative effect on the classroom when students are placed ahead when they are not ready
- We know of a situation where this is being done. It was admitted by the Superintendent that the administration was aware of this. We hear about the graduation stats and that the numbers have increased. I think that this is wonderful. But, what is the quality of the knowledge that these children are said to graduate. Are we actually pushing these certificates/diplomas to increase our stat numbers in competition with other provinces?
- In my school I am aware of a number of students who have been held back a year. I don't know whose decision that was. I don't see a problem with that.
- Our school division, upon discussion with the parents, will allow parents to advance children who have not reached academic outcomes for social/emotional reasons. I believe it is a case by case basis and there can't be a blanket solution
- I think placement is an individual circumstance decision. Parent, school and student consultations are important. If holding the student back means losing tem, is it worth it? If the goal is growing each student's education grade level is not as important as attendance
- Just as important is what we do for students who are clearly ahead of their grade level and what we do to meet their specific needs
- Not by policy and not intentionally but I think they do so because of outside pressures or expectations – parents, peers, teachers

- It has been my experience that divisions do not always honor the “individual” in making these decisions, but rely on a “policy” for all students. It may involve more meeting and discussions (time) but decisions in the best interest of each student need to be made
- I know they do this. I believe in the long run the child will pay the price. I feel that the child will drop out of school by the time they are in high school because they do not know how to deal with the work or studies that is required of them Rejection by peers plays a big role in how they conceive themselves
- Some of us the table believe the parents are the ones driving this. They “don’t want their child to fail”. But what they don’t realize is by not holding them back, they will continue to struggle, rather than holding them back and hopefully succeeding in the future.
- The parents need to be given all the pros and cons to holding a child back, maybe a child that gets held back in grade 2 or 3 will not drop out in grade 10/11 because they feel stupid compared to their friends
- Yes, our division and the division where I work promote this belief regarding moving/promoting children to the next grade. Reasons given – more important to self confidence to keep children with their peer groups. As a parent, and educator, I know my son better than the school system does so my voice should also be heard.
- If factors other than measurable intellect are equitably considered, including physical, emotional, psychological, then “skipping a grade” may be realistic. I believe that divisions and school to school differences are evident and inconsistent which is part of parents’ uneasiness with the issue.
- In our K – 6 school, I don’t recall ever being aware of a child being held back. I personally support this approach (placing students in the next grade regardless of outcomes) for these age groups. My understanding is that teachers of young children are accustomed to teaching for different developmental stages, even in single grade classes. I do, though, feel that all important decisions about a child’s education should be made in consultation with parents. Neither the school nor the parent knows everything, but together they know a lot more about a specific student than they would individually.
- This is not written down anywhere but it’s highly suggested. In 12 years only 2 have been held back. In one case, parents petitioned a very high special needs want to give kids another year to mature. When get to high school need to take modified courses. A kindergarten child was held back because of developmental delays. It wouldn’t have worked to pass this child on.
- It’s not in the best interest of the all students if drastically behind. Not doing them a favour. Get to high school they can’t cope. Kids that a little behind can be passed to the next grade if there is help available.