

Fundraising now main job of parent council ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Parent councils want to improve communication between home and school.

Instead, they spend the bulk of their time fundraising, a first-ever survey of parent councils by People for Education has found.

"Despite saying enhancing communication is councils' most important role, when asked how they spend most of their time, the majority of school councils report fundraising as their number one activity," says the report, released Monday morning by the advocacy and research group.

"Organizing school/community events comes second, and communication third. School improvement planning, working with principals on school policy and student achievement initiatives are substantially farther down the list of how councils spend their time."

The report notes that because fundraising activities "often require substantial planning and organization... it is not surprising that a substantial amount of council time is dedicated to this work."

Parent or school councils were created 15 years ago to bring schools and parents together as partners to help improve student achievement. Every school in the province is required to have one. Most of the members are parents, along with the principal and a teacher, and meetings are generally held monthly.

In total, Ontario schools raise more than half-a-billion dollars a year through fundraising, school fees and revenue from vending machines and cafeterias.

Half of councils say they raise money for computers, classroom supplies and textbooks, and 15 per cent for renovations or additions.

"Our school council has decided against fundraising in the past few years," writes one school council chair from the Superior-Greenstone District School Board in the Nipigon area.

"Fundraising requires much time. We feel our time can be spent better with other activities, such as influencing policy changes, supporting school initiatives and promoting community."

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-reprinted from the Toronto Star

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