



# joining our voices

## Parent Engagement in the Early Years

A Collaborative Community Workshop  
Thursday, January 21, 2010

### Parents and Educators Urged to Share Responsibility for Early Learning Outcomes

On Thursday, January 21, the Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC), the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) and the Niagara Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) hosted a special workshop for early childhood educators, teachers and parents. The event took place at the Quality Parkway Hotel & Convention Centre in St. Catharines and featured a presentation by Dr. Debbie Pushor, Associate Professor of Education from the University of Saskatchewan.

Dr. Pushor is an outspoken advocate for increasing parental engagement and leadership in children's education. She urged event participants to adopt a new paradigm of parental engagement in their children's early years learning. Rather than seeing educators as the primary decision makers and knowledge holders in the process, she suggested a shared responsibility model, in which parents are also considered knowledge holders, are kept informed and are participants in decision-making.

Some two hundred educators and parents attended the free evening session. Kathryn O'Hagan Todd, Director of Children's Services for the Regional Municipality of Niagara offered opening remarks, referencing the recent provincial report *With Our Best Future In Mind*. Mark Lefevre, Administrator of School Effectiveness (NCDSB) and Sue Mark, Superintendent (DSBN) and Marcy Heit, School Board Trustee (DSBN) also spoke at the event. For more information about Dr. Pushor's research and parent engagement ideas, please visit [www.debbiepushor.com](http://www.debbiepushor.com).

The ECCDC, DSBN and NCDSB wish to thank all of those who braved the winter weather to attend the *Joining Our Voices* event and sincerely appreciates your thoughtful input and comments. For more ideas and resources for promoting parental engagement in your early years learning program, please contact one of the ECCDC's Early Learning and Child Care Resource Consultants at 905-646-7311, ext. 304.



166 Principals, Teachers, Early Childhood Educators, Parents, Students, Administrators and Staff of Early Learning Support Agencies were in attendance.

What did you find most beneficial about the session this evening?

- All of the ideas shared around parent engagement.
- Understanding the difference between parent involvement and engagement.
- Opportunity to dialogue. Questioning session was informative.
- Sitting and sharing experience/advice with the different backgrounds of people at our table.
- Active and very engaging speaker.
- Making more connections with parents and students and questioning how well do I know these families and children.
- Being left with the challenge of accepting change and a positive feeling of future education.
- Parents and educators are "knowers", while parents are the first "knowers".
- Challenging what we are doing, looking at moving things further.
- The examples given by the presenter really brought the points home.
- Concrete ideas to engage parents in the education landscape.
- Debbie was an amazing presenter with so much information to share that is beneficial to educators and parents alike.
- New ideas to join children, parents and teachers together in learning.
- Relevant information, some good ideas to implement into our program on relationship building.
- I enjoyed the whole session. We have been welcoming to parents and volunteers, but haven't asked their opinions, thoughts, ideas. Or just the idea of it being okay for parents to "linger".
- Thought provoking presentation.
- It really made me think about my practices and take steps to change them, not just improve the same ideas I've always done.
- Different positions on engagement and how involved parents could/should be. Learning as a community.
- Debbie set an opportunity for a rich learning environment.

In what ways will you use the information gained in this evening's presentation?

- In developing future classroom practices.
- To help gain perspective re: parental engagement and how to enhance my awareness of such in my classroom.
- Try to implement and make changes to my planning and teaching strategies.
- Implementing ideas of engagement in community programming.
- As a parent, I now realize at home I should not have to be a teacher and share this philosophy with my parent council.
- Working to engage parents instead of just inviting them.
- Discussions with staff team, plan opportunities for "engagement".
- Try to make my classroom more inviting and work harder at engaging my parents.
- I learned how to be more effectively engaged in my child's education and with my parents in my home daycare.
- I explored new/different ways of engaging parents effectively.
- Engaging, makes me step back and rethink how I/the school welcome parents and visitors.
- Pay more value into what our parents do offer and not where they struggle.

#### Additional Comments

- Great information and knowledgeable session.
- Debbie was an excellent speaker, very engaging.
- Speaker dynamic, passionate and knowledgeable.
- A well organized, inviting and informative workshop.
- Thank you for hosting this incredible presentation!
- A very welcoming evening – met wonderful people.
- Well put together. Thanks for the informative evening!
- Very inspiring – I am encouraged to make a change.

