

**Parent Engagement Opportunity Fund
September, 2009**

Hernewood Home and School Association

President: Colleen Parker

Principal: Patti Sweet

Name of Project: Grade Seven Welcome Event

Goal:

- To ease the transition for incoming Grade Seven students and parents from elementary schools.
- To provide a welcoming, open opportunity for parents to visit the school, ask questions and be engaged with their school's experience.
- To encourage positive communication between school and parents.

Description:

We sent a description to all of the parents who were entering Hernewood in their grade seven year and hosted a Welcome back BBQ in September. This consisted of an Open House, Meet & Greet, school tours, BBQ, with door prizes, etc. All Hernewood teachers and staff were encouraged to attend.

Did you achieve your goal?

Our goal of easing transition, providing an opportunity for positive communication and a welcoming environment for parents was achieved. We had 88 of 104 Grade Seven families attend our Welcome BBQ. All comments made by students, staff and parents were positive!

Who did the project benefit?

Grade Seven students benefitted because the event resulted in reduced anxiety about starting a new school year. Grade Seven parents benefitted because it provided them with an opportunity to make connections with the teachers and experience a positive experience with their child at school. Hernewood staff benefitted because the first day of school was much smoother than past years with fewer anxious, nervous students.

What challenges are you still facing with parent engagement?

Finding ways to effectively communicate with our parents on a regular basis. Encouraging parents to participate in school activities/events (Example: Breakfast Club, concerts, special

events, Parent Council, etc.). Thoughts about the project topic (provided by project partners)
The passage from Grade Six to Grade Seven can be traumatic for both the students and their parents. It is a time when the child who at one time "stuck like glue" when out for a walk with a parent now asks that same parent to walk a block behind in case a friend sees them!

It is a time of major emotional, physical, sexual, and intellectual growth. For children it means leaving behind the security of the elementary school years and venturing forth into the mysterious teen years. The school has a vital role in the development of a grade seven student. Having ways to welcome parents in this journey is important.

The Home and School and/or parent Council can be a vehicle to engage parents in their child's Junior High years. This initiative is a positive example of how to comfortably and naturally have "parent engagement in their child's learning" happen.