

**Parent Engagement Opportunity Fund  
Spring, 2009**

**Ellerslie Home and School Association**

President: June Ellis

Principal: Jason Cormier

**Name of Project: Welcome Barbeque**

**Goal(s):**

- To welcome returning parents, new parents and children to the school
- To provide an opportunity for the parents to meet the principal and staff in an informal setting
- To provide parents--in person--with an informational brochure about homework tips, parent-teacher interviews, etc.
- To meet new parents and introduce them to the Ellerslie Home and School

**Description:**

A barbeque took place on the school grounds with activities for the children and a "get-to-know-the-staff" activity for the parents. The principal and staff did the barbequing and the Home and School helped plan the event and distribute the brochures. The Ellerslie Home and School also had their first "meeting" of the school year on this evening and were able to take advantage of having the parents available in an informal context. Thus parents were introduced to the concept of H&S in a "non-traditional," informal context which, hopefully, will be a motivator to become involved on other occasions.

**Did you achieve your goal?**

Yes, we met our project goal. There was an incredible turn out of returning parents and new parents. We were able to introduce them to Home and School with brochures available for take-home. The parents were then able to meet the individual teachers. The students had a great time as well, with the Junior High and High School students running their activities. Our evening was such a success that we intend that it becomes an annual event!

**Who did the project benefit?**

Parents, students, teachers, Home and School, Westisle Leadership students, all benefited from the evening. It was a get-to-know-each-other type of evening in a relaxed environment.

**What challenges are you still facing with parent engagement?**

The challenges will continue to have parents come to meetings and to participate when it is time to replace officers in the Home and School Association. To reduce this challenge, a form was sent home with parents asking them how they could volunteer in other ways. Everyone has family and work commitments but this seems to work quite well.

**Thoughts about the project topic (provided by project partners):**

Parents and school staff, for the most part, meet formally. Parent interviews, individual meetings, and parent volunteers are formal ways to connect. Gathering informally to share food and talk about "whatever" breaks down barriers. It is often the case that there are opportunities to talk about topics of interest outside the school that then lead to school related subjects.

A welcome barbeque is just that--a "welcome." It is a way to say to all parents that they are welcomed as a major "learning partner" and that both partners, teachers and parents, can work together for the enhancement of children's learning on an ongoing basis, formally and informally.