

**Parent Engagement Opportunity Fund
Fall, 2009**

Tignish Home and School Association

President: Nicole Morrissey

Principal: Marie Rocheleau

Name of Project: Parent and Student Newsletter and Fall Meet & Greet BBQ

Goal(s):

- To bring parents and students to celebrate a special occasion (Meet and Greet and Kick-Off for 20th Anniversary of School Opening).
- To make parents more aware of the school and Home and School issues and events using a school newsletter.

Description:

Our Home and School newsletter has gone out three times thus far and will continue in the fall. We include school happenings, informative articles, activities for the students to work on with their parents, etc. Our Meet and Greet BBQ is an annual fall event where parents meet each other, Home and School members, teachers and other school support staff. This year we will include 20th anniversary celebrations along with our annual Meet and Greet barbeque.

Did you achieve your goal?

Yes, we did! We sent out a brochure at the beginning of the year as an information newsletter to parents. It also includes a section for parents to fill out and return if they are interested in volunteering from time-to-time. We were pleased with the response! As well, our Meet and Greet BBQ was a huge success as we had around 200 people there to help us kick off our 20th anniversary of the opening of Tignish Elementary School.

Who did the project benefit?

Parents benefitted from the newsletter as it gave them information about upcoming school and Home and School events as well as helpful tips. Everyone benefitted from

the BBQ as the students were able to introduce their parents to their teachers and everyone could mingle in a casual, relaxed atmosphere.

What challenges are you still facing with parent engagement?

1. People are scared to volunteer as they think it will be too time-consuming. However, we are trying to get the message out that it doesn't have to be; when many people help out, then each person's commitment need only be a small one!
2. There are many "single parent" family situations around as many fathers leave to go out west for the winter to find work. Thus, parents find it difficult to get out to events with no other parent around to help out at home.

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

Parent-school communication is always a challenge. At the beginning of the school year most schools send home a document that contains a lot of valuable information relating to the school. The Tignish Home and School decision to create a parent-to-parent document is an excellent idea. It creates an awareness of the role of parents in their children's education, promotes Home and School, provides information about activities and, in the case of Tignish, asks parents to "lend a hand" by volunteering at the school.

The Tignish Home and School and the school took advantage of the school's 20th Anniversary to add to the annual BBQ celebration. This event was a huge success. Events such as this are times of remembering, telling stories, providing an opportunity for former students--who are now parents--to talk their teachers, often telling them the difference they made in their lives. Any event that brings parents, teachers and the community together to celebrate learning needs to be encouraged – well done!