

Who Is The OAPCE?

We are the voice of parents and guardians of children enrolled in the publicly funded English Catholic System of Education in the Province of Ontario.

When a School Board pays membership for all schools it is at a cost of \$60.00 per school. If the Board does not purchase membership for all schools, schools can purchase an individual membership at a cost of \$60.00 per school. When membership for parents/guardians in the OAPCE has been paid either by the school board or your school, you are strongly encouraged to appoint/elect an OAPCE Liaison Representative on your school council. (Regulation 612).

This position is an additional member position to the usual School Council membership and the purpose is to provide contact between the school council and the provincial Association. These OAPCE Liaison Representatives will sit as part of a Regional Council and become the conduit to share parents views and concerns with the OAPCE.

As members it provides catholic parents/guardians the following benefits:

- The OAPCE is the only association recognized by the Ministry of Education and the Institute for Catholic Education as representing the parents/guardians of children in the publicly funded system of Catholic education.
- Membership is what sustains the OAPCE and provides the funds for representation and communication.
- The OAPCE provides a common voice for parents who share a common goal in supporting the continuation and preservation of publicly funded Catholic Education in the province.
- There is an Annual General Meeting of members in the spring. A valid membership entitles voting privileges at this annual meeting.
- OAPCE History
- To view who we are and what we do, please review the attached Power Point Presentation. This tool may be used to introduce the OAPCE Director roles and responsibilities to Catholic Trustees, Catholic School Councils and our partner affiliates. We hope it will address your interest and welcome feedback. For further information, please feel free to contact any Director from the "Board of Directors".

Mission

We shall preserve and enhance the highest quality publicly funded English Catholic Education in Ontario, enabling all our children to become contributing members of the Church, School, Home and Society in accordance with God's Will.

Vision

The Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education as a faith based community, advocates for and is the voice of parents and guardians of children enrolled in publicly funded Catholic English Education in the province of Ontario.

The Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education nurtures passion for Catholic Education through providing and strengthening active leadership and partnership in all regions across the province.

The Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education actively participates with educational and community partners to influence positive outcomes for all children.

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Grade 3 and 6 EQAO tests

What is the EQAO and why are students tested?

The EQAO is the provincial Education Equality and Accountability Office. It is an independent government body that develops and oversees reading, writing and mathematics tests that Ontario students must take in Grades 3, 6, 9, and 10.

The tests give parents, teachers, principals and school boards information about how well students have learned what the province expects them to learn in reading, writing and mathematics.

What do the results mean?

The report tells you if your child's skills are at:
Level 1 - approximately 50% to 59% or "D"
Level 2 - 60% to 69% or "C"
Level 3 - 70% to 79% or "B"
Level 4 - 80% to 100% or "A"

Do the results count on a child's report card?

No. The grades 3 and 6 tests do not count as part of a student's mark and do not affect their progress or future opportunities in school. However, students must pass the Grade 10 Literacy Test or Literacy course in order to graduate with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

How can I help my child prepare?

There is no special preparation for the tests. Some teachers provide sample questions to help students understand what the tests will be like. The best way to help your child is to make sure he or she is rested and at school on time.

How are test results used?

Teachers and principals get a report that shows how students performed in reading, writing and mathematics. If many students did poorly on a particular skill, then teachers try to find better teaching strategies or resources to help students be more successful. If students in many schools have similar difficulties, then school boards know that all schools need to improve their teaching strategies or find better resources.

Parents receive their children's results in the fall. Results are sent to the school where the students wrote the test, and the school is supposed to forward results to students who have left the school.

Do ESL students write the tests?

Yes, although some ESL students may be exempt if they have recently arrived in Canada. Others may have "accommodations" such as more time to write the test, a quiet setting or having someone read instructions and questions. The principal must consult with parents about making accommodations or exempting a student from the test.

Do students with special needs write the tests?

All students are encouraged to write the test but some students with special needs may be exempt. These students usually have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that outline "accommodations" or "supports" that help them succeed in school. The "accommodations" also help students write the EQAO tests. They may include more time to write, a quiet setting or having someone read instructions or questions to them.

The principal must consult with parents about making accommodations or exempting a student from the test.

Do French Immersion students write the test?

In grade 3, schools may choose to have French Immersion students write only the French version of the mathematics test and receive results only for mathematics, or they may ask that French Immersion students write both the French math test and the English reading and writing tests.

In Grade 6, French Immersion students are expected to write all the tests in English, though they may use a bilingual glossary of mathematical terms.

How can I get more information?

The EQAO website: www.eqao.com has answers to frequently asked questions. You can phone or email People for Education at: 416-534-0100 or p4e@peopleforeducation.com

This tip sheet was developed by the Ontario Parent Inclusion Initiative with the support of the Ontario Trillium foundation. Partners include Dilico Ojibway Child & Family Services, Thunder Bay; F.A.I.R., Family Service Association, Toronto; Keewatin-Patricia DSB; PERCS- Waterloo Region; People for Education; Settlement Workers in Schools; and parent representatives from Ottawa and York Region.

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School Councils

- What do you think about your school's homework policy?
- Do you have strong feelings about the school's dress code?
- Have you good ideas for recruiting volunteers to coach teams?
- You would be a great candidate for the school council.

Purpose

School councils are elected to advise principals and boards on ways to improve student achievement to make the education system more accountable to parents.

By law, they must be consulted on:

- ◆ the process and criteria for selection and placement of principals and vice-principals,
- ◆ board codes of conduct and dress,
- ◆ policies for fund-raising by school councils, and
- ◆ action plans for student improvement based on standardized test results.

School councils may also make recommendations to their principals and school boards on any matter from improving the school yard to changing the length of the lunch break to discussing school closings. Principals and school boards are required by law to consider recommendations made by school councils and to report back to them on how they plan to act on their advice.

School councils in turn, are responsible for sharing information with parents and the community and seeking their ideas and views about matters under consideration by the council. For example, if the school is planning to develop a policy on homework, council members should try to consult with as many parents as possible.

Membership

Every school is required by law to hold school council elections within the first 30 days of the school year.

Members must include:

- ◆ the principal (or vice-principal), who is a non-voting member,
- ◆ one teacher,
- ◆ one non-teaching employee,
- ◆ one student in secondary schools (optional for elementary schools),

- ◆ one or more community representatives appointed by the elected council, and
- ◆ as applicable, a representative from the recognized parent associations in the School Council Handbook.

Principals and School Councils

Principals are supposed to support the work of the council by providing information and by notifying the school community about school council meetings and elections, and publicizing the names of council members and annual reports of council activities and financial statements.

Fundraising

School councils may lead fundraising activities as long as they are in accordance with board policies and guidelines.

Any funds raised by the school council (and any assets purchased with those funds) belong, legally, to the board.

All fundraising activities conducted by the school council must be included in the annual report prepared by the school council.

Encourage participation

It's often a challenge to find enough committed volunteers to join the council and attend meetings.

- ◆ set up a phone or email tree to inform parents about meetings and hot issues,
- ◆ keep parents informed with a newsletter or website,
- ◆ provide translation,
- ◆ offer child care,
- ◆ provide orientation or a "buddy" for new members,
- ◆ Introduce everyone at the beginning of *every* meeting,
- ◆ feed your members with pot luck or pizza,
- ◆ engage a guest speaker to talk about topics such as reading, parenting, homework, or sex ed.

For more information go to the Ministry of Education, School Councils, A Guide for Members

www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/council02.pdf

Parent Teacher Interviews

Parent teacher-interviews are held two or three times a year at the end of each term when report cards are sent home. They are opportunities for parents and teachers to talk together about how to help each child succeed in school. They are very short – usually 10 or 15 minutes. It's important to prepare before the interview to make the best use of that short time. If you need more time, schedule another appointment.

1. Prepare

Read your child's report card.

Make notes about your questions and concerns.

Talk to your child about the report.

What do you want to ask the teacher? Make a list.

2. Ask Questions

Arrive on time. Bring your list of questions.

The teacher will review your child's report card or show you samples of his or her work.

Tell the teacher what your child likes and dislikes about school. Let the teacher know if you think there is too much or too little homework.

Parent-teacher interviews are strictly confidential. Share personal information that might be affecting your child's progress or behaviour at school (e.g., family illness, job search). This information will help the teacher understand your child better.

- ♦ What does my child do well?
- ♦ What skills does she or he still need to develop?
- ♦ Is my child getting extra help? In what subjects?
- ♦ What is your homework policy?
- ♦ How much time should my child be spending on homework?
- ♦ How does my child get along with the other students?
- ♦ How can I help my child at home?
- ♦ What is the best way to contact you if I have more questions?

Take notes so that you can share the comments with your child.

3. Follow Up

Talk to your child. Stress the positive things the teacher said. Talk about how you and the teacher are going to help with the things that need to be improved.

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Solving Problems at School

Parents sometimes need to talk to the teacher about school work, their child's relationship with another student or their child's special needs. Most teachers are used to getting these kinds of calls from parents and want to help your child succeed in school.

Parents as partners in education

In Ontario, parents are encouraged to be partners in their children's education. In fact, there is now a part of the Education Ministry that is dedicated to helping parents become involved in their children's education and school community.

But the system can sometimes be confusing or intimidating. Who should you talk to if you have a question or problem?

If you want to talk to the teacher on the phone, call the school office, leave a message and the teacher will call you back.

If you want to meet with the teacher, call the school office and leave a message that you want to make an appointment to meet with the teacher. If you think your child needs extra support or a special program, you can ask for a meeting with the teacher and other staff at the school. Some schools can provide interpreters.

Here are some tips for talking with the school staff:

Talk to your child

- Ask your child questions to help you gather information.
- Try using "open-ended questions" like, "What do you find difficult about ... ?" "Tell me what happened..."
- Listen to what he or she says and ask more questions.

Talk to your child's teacher or the school's guidance counsellor

- Talk to the teacher about your concerns and how your child feels.
- Try using comments like "My child told me that..".
- Ask questions to help you understand school policies and procedures.
- Listen to the teacher's point of view and suggestions.
- Talk about what you and the teacher will do so your child gets the same message from both of you.

- If your school has a guidance counselor, he or she can give you information about the rest of your child's courses and advice about how to solve social or educational problems.
- You can take time to think about what the teacher has said; you don't have to decide anything right away. Agree to talk again to see if the solution is working.

Talk to the principal or vice-principal

If the teacher is not able to help, speak with the principal or vice-principal. They may be able to help directly or involve other teachers or other staff at your school.

Talk to the school superintendent or your trustee

If the problem still isn't solved, you can contact the school superintendent or your school trustee for assistance. The school secretary or principal can tell you how to contact the superintendent or trustee or you can go to your school board's website to find the information.

Remember to:

- Be informed: Find out about your school's policies.
- Attend all regular parent-teacher interviews and events. It is easier to solve problems if you and the teacher have already met.
- Attend any meetings about your child that the school invites you to. (e.g. special education, IEP, school discipline)
- If your problem can't be easily solved, keep written notes about important meetings and conversations.
- Ask for an interpreter if you are not comfortable expressing yourself in English.
- Concerns about our children can be upsetting. Try to stay calm. People are more likely to listen to your concerns if you express them calmly.

For more information:

Call People for Education at 416-534-0100 or obtain copies of this tip sheet in other languages at:

www.peopleforeducation.com

Visit the Ministry of Education website at:

www.edu.gov.on.ca

Visit www.settlement.org/edguide for videos and information in many languages

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Starting school— *tips for parents*

Starting school is an exciting time for students and their parents, but some students have first-day jitters. The following information will help make starting school easier.

What will my child learn in Junior and Senior Kindergarten?

- ◆ Kindergarten is an introduction to the more formal learning that begins in Grade 1. It might seem as if kindergarten students are only playing, but they are actually learning about letters, numbers, reading, the arts, physical education and even science through many different activities.
- ◆ Teachers often set up educational toys and games in 'activity centres' around the classroom which children visit during class.
- ◆ The Kindergarten program is set out by the provincial Ministry of Education and includes six main areas: Personal and Social Development, Language, Math, Science and Technology, Health and Physical Activity, and the Arts.
- ◆ Kindergarten students do not usually get homework, but they often bring books home to share with their parents. Reading with your child – in any language – is one of the best ways to help them succeed in school.

What's the difference between Kindergarten and Grade 1?

- ◆ Students go to school all day every day in Grade 1, and the teaching and learning is more formal. Children still play and spend time learning social skills, but they are also taught in a more structured way about reading, writing, math, science, social studies and the arts.
- ◆ By the end of Grade 1, children should be able to read simple words and books and understand basic math skills like addition and subtraction and measurement.
- ◆ For some students the transition to Grade 1 is just as big as the transition to Kindergarten. It may take them a few weeks to get used to the new structure and the new rules.

How can I help my child settle in?

- ◆ Some children cry on their first day of school, but they often calm down shortly after their parents leave. The teacher will let you know if your child is having problems adjusting so that you and the teacher can work together to help your child.
- ◆ When parents show an interest in their children's school, students are more likely to be successful. Talk about school with enthusiasm, and ask your child specific questions about their day, like "What songs did you sing today?" "What book did the teacher read?" or "Did you visit the library?"
- ◆ Participate in school activities as much as you can. Attending school concerts, sports and community events will help you feel comfortable in the school and give you a chance to get to know the other members of the school community.

Can I spend time in the classroom with my child?

- ◆ It's important to ask the teacher about visiting the classroom. Most teachers welcome visitors, but they may ask parents to visit at specific times so that they don't disrupt the learning activities.

How can I find out how my child is doing in school?

- ◆ Teachers use different ways to report on your child's progress. They may talk to you informally or send a note home.
- ◆ Students receive report cards at least twice a year with information on their progress in all the subject areas, and there are scheduled parent teacher interviews at least once a year (you can ask for an interpreter if you need one).



What if I want to speak to the teacher?

- ◆ If you have questions or concerns, you can ask the teacher for an appointment or phone the school. By making an appointment, you will ensure that the teacher can set aside enough time to talk and prepare for the meeting. That way the meeting will be much more helpful for you, your child and the teacher.

Can I volunteer in my child's class?

- ◆ Ask the teacher about volunteer opportunities in the classroom. Most teachers appreciate the help, but may need to schedule volunteer visits to coordinate them with planned classroom activities.
- ◆ If you are not available during the day, find out if there are things you can do from home, or if there are evening or weekend activities that you can help with. Many schools have events like movie nights, fun fairs, or other community events, and they always need volunteers.

What is Curriculum Night and why should I go?

- ◆ This is an evening, usually held in September, for parents to meet the teachers and find out more about the programs offered at the school. It is sometimes called an "Open House" or "Meet the Teacher Night".
- ◆ At Curriculum Night you will meet the teacher and find out about the class schedule, homework expectations, and plans for the year. You will also have the chance to meet other parents and staff members.

When will my child learn French?

- ◆ In some school boards, students start to learn French in grade 1, while in others, students start in grade 4.

- ◆ French Immersion is a program where students study in French for most of the school day. French Immersion programs start either in Senior Kindergarten or in grade four. You can ask your principal for more details.

What is a School Council?

- ◆ The school council is the parent organization at the school. Contact the school council if you have questions about how to get involved at the school, or if you are looking for information from a parent perspective.
- ◆ Council meetings are open to everyone in the community, so you do not have to be a member to attend. It is a great way to keep up with what is happening in the school.

Where can I go if I need help?

- ◆ You should feel free to ask for help or information whenever you need it. School secretaries know almost everything that goes on in the school, so the school office is a good place to start. There you can find out about things like interpreters, special education, daycare and lunchroom programs, or make an appointment to talk to the principal or your child's teacher.
- ◆ Some schools have settlement workers to help families new to the country, and most schools have access to specialists who can help if your child is having difficulty.
- ◆ Community centres, libraries and Ontario Early Years Centres also have helpful programs and resources for parents and children.
- ◆ The People for Education website has information available in Arabic, Chinese, English, Farsi, French, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tamil and Urdu at www.peopleforeducation.com.

This tip sheet was developed with the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

It is an initiative of the People for Education Parent Inclusion Project. Advisory committee: Dilico Ojibway Child & Family Services, Thunder Bay; F.A.I.R., Family Service Association, Toronto; PERCS- Waterloo Region parent/trustee representatives and Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS);

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High School Courses and Choices

Entering high school is an important time in your child's education. The courses that students choose in grade 9 will have an impact on what they can study in later grades and after high school. This Tip Sheet is only a first step to understanding those choices.

How can parents help?

Between October and January your grade 8 student will receive information about high school programs and courses. Some schools hold high school information nights or open houses. It is important to read the information and attend the information meetings so that you can help your child make choices that suit their interests, abilities and future goals. In some communities, grade 8 students will choose between secondary schools that offer different kinds of courses and programs.

Your child will bring home a form for you to sign. The form lists the choice of courses. It is important to go over the options with your child and make sure that they are taking courses that suit their interests and abilities. It is your responsibility to approve the choices your child makes.

If you need help, talk to your school guidance counsellor. Schools and school boards also publish information about school choices and lists of courses. School settlement workers can provide support to newcomers to Canada.

It is very important to remember that the courses students choose in grade 9 will affect their options in the future. There are many different types of courses. Some lead to community college, some to university and some to apprenticeship or directly to work. Not all high schools offer each type of course.

Students who succeed in grade 9 courses are more likely to graduate from high school. Parents should help their children choose appropriate courses **each** year.

What can parents do to help their children make good choices?

- Talk to your child about what he or she would like to do after high school.
- Pick up or download the course lists from schools in your area or read the school profile on the school website. Not all schools offer the same courses and courses types.
- Go to high school information nights and Open Houses. Some schools provide interpreters.
- Make an appointment with the school guidance counsellor, vice-principal or principal for help making choices that best suit your child's interests and strengths.

What are the requirements for graduating from high school in Ontario?

- Students must pass 30 credit courses between grades 9 and 12. Of the 30 credit courses, 18 are compulsory credits and 12 can be chosen from optional credit courses.
- Students must complete 40 hours of community service.
- Students must pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test or Literacy Course.
- Most students complete high school in four or five years but they may stay until they are 21 years old.

What choices do students have in grades 9 and 10?

In grades 9 and 10, there are four types of courses:

- **Applied**- focus on practical applications and concrete examples;
- **Academic**- focus on theory and abstract problems;
- **Locally Developed** compulsory credit courses (also called Essentials) for students who need more flexibility and support; and
- **Open**- to prepare students for further study and enrich their education.

Students must take English, mathematics, science, geography, history, physical education, and French. Students may choose to mix different types courses. For example, a student can take Applied English and Academic math. They can also choose from optional or open courses in subjects that interest them.



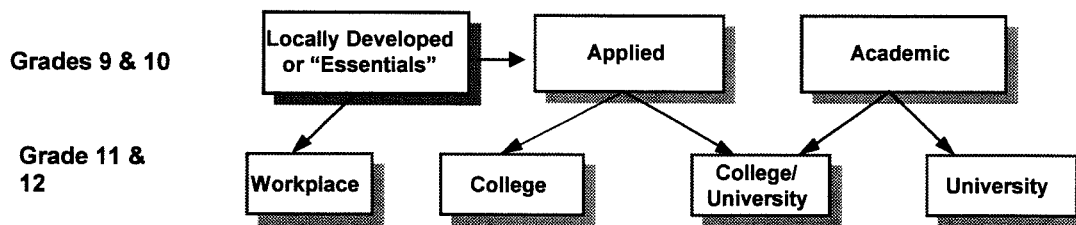
How do course choices in Grades 9 and 10 affect students?

The courses students choose in grades 9 and 10 prepare them for specific courses in grades 11 and 12 and will affect their choices after they graduate.

What choices do students have in grades 11 and 12?

Students choose from four types of courses that prepare them for their goals after high school: Workplace, College, University/ College and University.

Where do the courses lead?



Can students transfer from one type of course to another?

In some circumstances, students may change from one type of course to another. To do so, they may have to repeat a subject (e.g. a student who completed grade 9 Applied math may have to take grade 9 Academic math). Or it may be possible for the student to take an on-line or summer school transfer course. The guidance counsellor can help you.

What should parents ask when choosing a high school?

- What subjects do you offer in grade 9 and 10 Academic, Applied and Locally Developed Courses?
- What subjects do you offer in grades 11 and 12 Workplace, College, College/University, University courses?

- What optional courses or programs do you offer? (e.g. computer networking, languages)
- Is there a chance any courses will be cancelled because of low enrolment? Which ones?

What should parents ask about Special Education Support?

- What kinds of special needs can your school support?
- What resources does your school have? (e.g. staff, programs, computer lab, special courses)
- What kinds of courses do you have for special needs students? Are they separate courses or combined within an existing course?

What should parents ask about ESL programs?

- Do you have ESL credit courses (e.g. ESL Science)? In which subjects?

For more information:

- Visit your school board's website or phone your child's school
- Ministry of Education <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/secondary/oss/oss.pdf>
- <http://www.settlement.org/edguide/> Newcomers' Guide to Education.
- For copies of this tip sheet in other languages go to the People for Education website at www.peopleforeducation.com

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