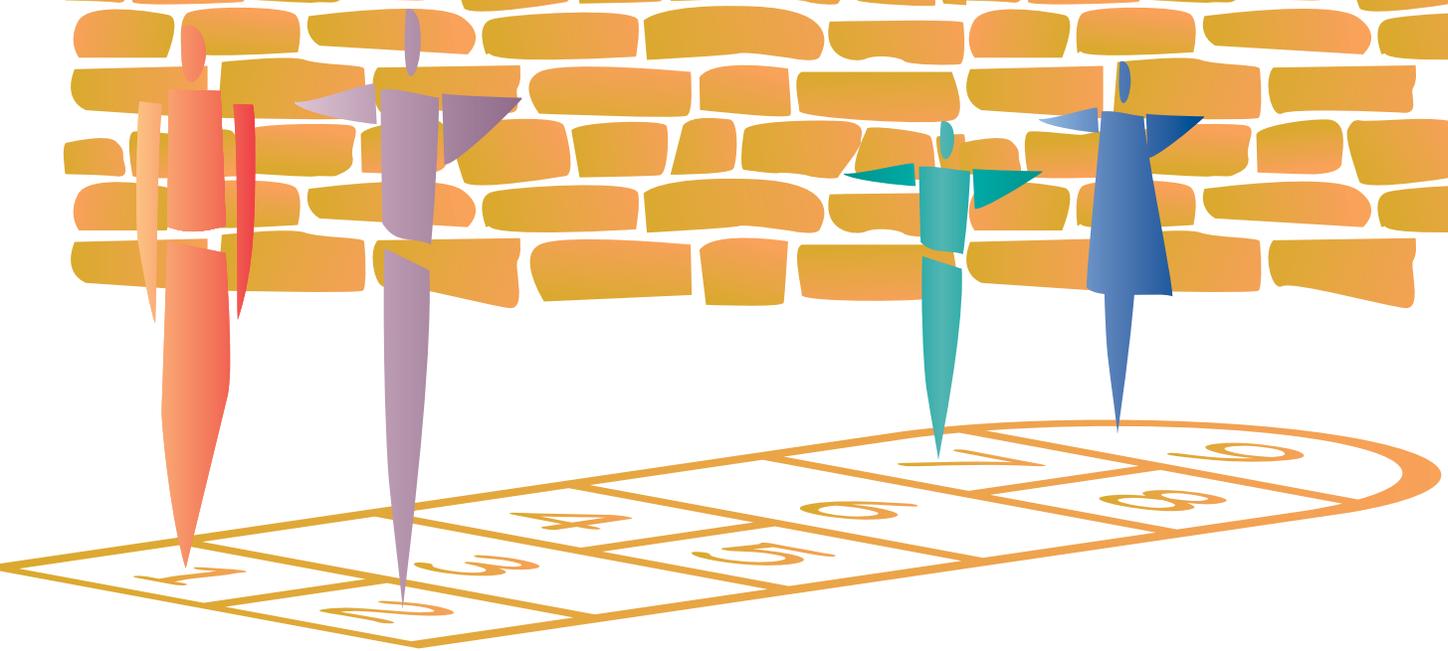


PARENTS,  
LET'S GO!



Parent Participation Organization.

Helping schools be their best!



# Getting involved



## Is parent participation crucial for schools?

The Fédération des comités de parents is convinced that parent participation enables schools to fully carry out their educational mission.

Participation may be varied:

- ▶ The primary role of parents is to be personally involved in fostering the academic success of their children, which means, among other things, attending parent-teacher and / or report card meetings;
- ▶ Parents are often asked to take part in school activities, either as resource persons, volunteers, or as audiences at school plays or presentations;
- ▶ They are consulted on the school's objectives, parent expectations and specific projects or issues;
- ▶ They can get directly involved by joining various official structures of participation.

The parent participation organization (PPO) plays a key role in developing and enhancing the contribution of parents.

## The history of PPOs

Parent participation made its official debut in 1972 with the creation of school committees, which were abolished in 1998 when governing boards, composed of parents and other education stakeholders, were formed.

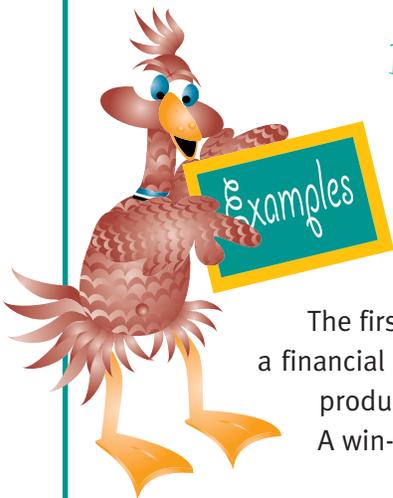
The main purpose of PPOs, designed exclusively as a forum for parents, is to promote the participation of parents in school life.

### Making involvement an upbeat adventure

Why not start out by saying that joining the PPO can be an exhilarating, enriching and uplifting adventure for everyone concerned? Take MacDonald Cartier High School in Saint-Hubert, for example.

Steeped in a long tradition of parent participation, the school, through its parent group dubbed the MacParents, stages two highly successful events every year.

The first, a “Craft Fair”, is a money-making community event in which regional artists make a financial contribution to the school in return for the opportunity to showcase and sell their products. The second event is a social dance for old and new parents at the school. A win-win situation!



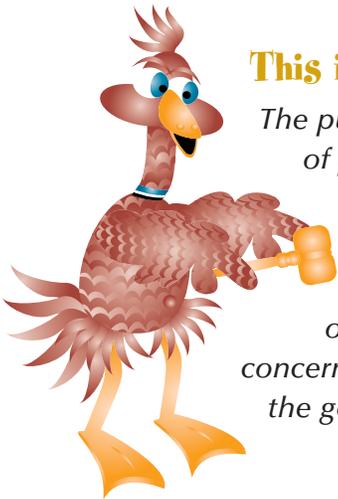
# Why join the PPO?

## The goals of the PPO are to:

- ▶ Promote parent participation in the academic success of students;
- ▶ Foster the collaboration of parents in developing, implementing and evaluating the school's educational project:

## The educational project defines what is expected of a school, in other words, its objectives and the means by which to ensure these objectives are achieved;

- ▶ Keep attuned to the perceptions, comments and suggestions of parents;
- ▶ Nurture the deliberations of parents on what they want for our young people;
- ▶ Collate the concerns of parents and inform the instances in question;
- ▶ Advise the parents' representatives on the governing board on matters that concern parents;
- ▶ Support the action of the parents who sit on the governing board or the parents' committee.



### This is what the Education Act has to say:

*The purpose of a parent participation organization is to encourage the collaboration of parents in developing, implementing and periodically evaluating the school's educational project and their participation in fostering their child's academic success (section 96.2).*

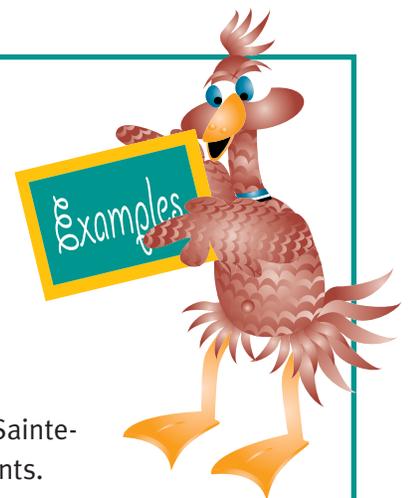
*A parent participation organization may advise the parents' representatives on the governing board regarding any matter of concern to parents or any matter concerning which the organization is consulted by the parents' representatives on the governing board (section 96.3).*

### THE PPO. Reaching out to parents...

The PPO of Gabriel-Le Courtois School in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts sought and obtained authorization to print a feature entitled "Cent façons de récompenser nos enfants sans dépenser" in the school newspaper. By publishing this compendium of helpful tips, the PPO found a tangible way of keeping its pledge to support parents.

### ...and to students

Based on input from the teachers and parents of Arc-en-ciel School in Pontmain-Sainte-Anne-des-lacs, the school's PPO set up a snack and hot meal service for the students.



# **The PPO and other school partners. Where the action is:**

**The PPO works in tandem with other players in the school.**

## **With the governing board**

Under the Education Act, governing boards are granted major functions and powers, including:

- ▶ Adopting the school's educational project (goals and implementation measures) and annual budget;
- ▶ Approving the principal's various proposals concerning the operation of the school;
- ▶ Organizing and finding funding for special activities.

**There is no direct link between governing boards and PPOs. However, a good working relationship is critical for the optimal performance of both groups.**

## **With the parents' representatives on the governing board**

The PPO is recognized as an advisory body:

- ▶ It may be asked to advise the parents' representatives on the governing board and the parents' committee representative;
- ▶ It may also take the initiative in advising these parties.

**There are mutual advantages to close ties between the PPO and the representatives on the governing board and the parents' committee, as long as their respective roles are clearly defined and respected.**

## **With the school principal**

School principals come under the director general of the school board, and not the governing's board:

- ▶ They ensure the quality of the educational services provided by the school;
- ▶ They are the academic and administrative directors of the school and manage its resources.

**School principals cannot be members of the PPO and there are no provisions in the Education Act for their involvement in the PPO.**

**This being said, it's hard to imagine how a PPO can operate properly without ongoing, effective communication with the principal.**

## **With school services**

The Education Act (section. 96.4) states that the PPO "may hold its meetings on the school premises" and "use the school's administrative support services and facilities free of charge **subject to the conditions determined by the principal after consulting with the governing board.**"



# It all happens at the annual general assembly of parents...and a bit before

Decisions as to the creation and operation of the PPO are made at the annual assembly of parents in September. The chair of the governing board is in charge of calling this assembly and works with the school principal to draft the agenda, which usually includes an item on the PPO.

On this occasion, if they desire, parents may to form a parent participation organization (Education Act, section 96).

If the school has more than one immovable, or if it provides both elementary and secondary instruction, parents are entitled to form one PPO per building or instructional level (Education Act, section 96.1).

The general assembly of parents determines the name, composition and operating rules of the PPO and elects its members (Education Act, section 96).

## If there already is a PPO:

- ▶ The chair of the PPO presents the organization's annual report;
- ▶ He announces the organization's action plan or tables a list of projects for the coming year;
- ▶ He calls for the election of new members;
- ▶ The meeting of parents amends the composition or operating rules of the PPO, if necessary.

## If there is no PPO:

- ▶ It's up to the chair of the governing board to initiate its creation;
- ▶ The chair works with the school principal to produce a PPO proposal;
- ▶ The chair submits a written proposal that includes the name, functions, number of members, basic rules of operation, and so forth, of the PPO.



**The name : a promotional tool**

Here are a few suggestions for names for your PPO:

- ▶ ... School Parents' Forum
- ▶ The Friends of ...School
- ▶ The Volunteers' Club of ... School
- ▶ The Union of Parents of ... School
- ▶ Xxx School Projects
- ▶ ... School in Action

**Feel free to use these suggestions or, better yet, come up with your own name!**

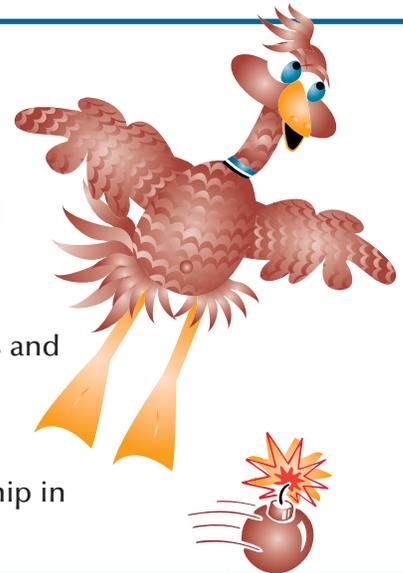


## Getting going

- ▶▶ Take the time to get to know each other as members and to forge strong ties: between members of the PPO, with the chair of the governing board, the principal, etc.
- ▶▶ Use the school's priorities (educational project, success plan, and annual action plan) as the starting point for defining achievable goals and projects for the PPO.
- ▶▶ Earn the trust of the school community.
- ▶▶ Draw the lines of communication your organization wants.
- ▶▶ Determine the logistics and needs for meetings (place), communications and a secretariat.

### Pitfalls to avoid

- ▶▶ Acting unilaterally and focussing on projects that have no bearing on life within the school.
- ▶▶ Getting caught up in controversy or problems (volunteers tend to steer clear of conflicts and hassles).
- ▶▶ Setting the bar too high and, as a result, experiencing repeated failure (a truly solid team is built on small incremental victories and accomplishments).
- ▶▶ Tiring out your best volunteers.
- ▶▶ Failing to provide for incoming members and future membership in the organization.



## Making your presence felt

Even with the best preparation and intentions in the world, PPOs sometimes have trouble finding their rightful place and making their presence felt in the school. When this happens, you can:

- ▶▶ Pinpoint the problem;
- ▶▶ Talk it over with the people concerned;
- ▶▶ Make any necessary changes in your working relations, goals and projects;
- ▶▶ Find out what's happening in other PPOs;
- ▶▶ Review the above mentioned advices.

## Plenty of leeway...

### PPOs can expand to accommodate plenty of goals, such as:

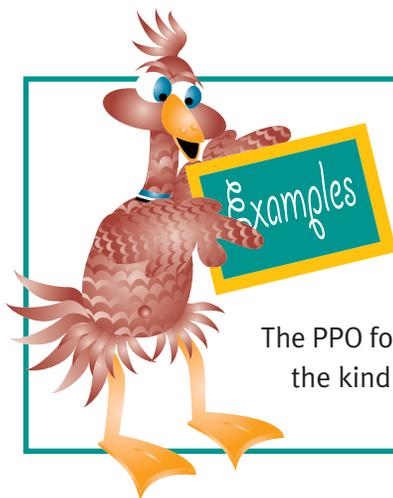
- ▶ Providing parents with any available information;
- ▶ Organizing conferences and theme days and weeks;
- ▶ Starting a parent volunteer bank;
- ▶ Doing fundraising for the governing board;
- ▶ Helping organize extracurricular activities, celebrations and other big events;
- ▶ Developing projects for improving the school, e.g. schoolyard;
- ▶ Creating a telephone chain;
- ▶ Developing community projects.

The list can go on and on, depending on your needs and creativity.

## ...for plenty of projects

### The PPO can be of invaluable help in activities such as:

- ▶ A newsletter for parents;
- ▶ A newspaper for students;
- ▶ Safety campaigns;
- ▶ Decorating the school;
- ▶ Staff appreciation week;
- ▶ School photos;
- ▶ Certified babysitters' courses;
- ▶ Student accompaniment;
- ▶ A welcome committee for kindergarten and Sec. I students;
- ▶ A parent get together;
- ▶ Pen pals or student exchanges;
- ▶ Surveys as part of the educational project;
- ▶ Reward activities;
- ▶ etc.



### Fundraising, yes but ...

The PPO is not a fundraiser per se, but can help organize the fundraising activities which are within the purview of the governing board, aimed at projects that benefit students.

The PPO for Saint-Maxime School in Cookshire was right on target when it polled parents on the kind of fundraising they wanted, with excellent results!



## Resources

To start up a PPO, for detailed information on a specific topic, to find the tools, or resources you need...

**Contact the FCPPQ. We provide:**

- advice;
- documentation;
- references;
- training workshops.

Visit our website at [www.fcppq.qc.ca](http://www.fcppq.qc.ca)

Contact your regional association through your school board' parents' committee.



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