

Name of Home and School/School Council

- Prince Street Home and School
- St. Jean Home and School
- West Kent Home and School
- Spring Park Home and School
- Parkdale Home and School

Name of President/Chair

- Peter Rukavina (Prince Street)
- Erin Hennessey/Cathy Hennessey (St. Jean)
- Alison MacDougall/Kelly Murphy (West Kent)
- Ellen Campbell (Spring Park)
- Andrea MacNeill (Parkdale)

Address

Prince Street Home and School
60 Upper Prince Street
Charlottetown, PE C1A 4S3

Telephone

(902) 892-2556 (Peter Rukavina)

Email

- peter@rukavina.net
- elhennessey@hotmail.com
- cathyhennessey@hotmail.com
- alisonmacdougall@hotmail.com
- Kelly.Murphy@vac-acc.gc.ca
- amorse@eastlink.ca
- agmacneill@islandtelecom.com

Name of Principal

- Terry MacIsaac, Prince Street Home and School
- Debi Mais-Murphy, St. Jean Home and School
- Ross McDermott, West Kent Home and School
- Serge Leduc, Spring Park Home and School
- Michele LeClair, Parkdale Home and School

NAME OF PROJECT

Engaging Parents, Students and Staff through Informal Recreational Opportunities

WHAT IS THE GOAL(S) OF YOUR PROJECT?

“Schleicher explained to me that “just asking your child how was their school day and showing genuine interest in the learning that they are doing can have the same impact as hours of private tutoring. It is something every parent can do, no matter what their education level or social background.” – Thomas Friedman, New York Times, Nov. 19, 2011

1. Each school has experienced challenges with parental involvement in the school: while each has a core of parents who are highly involved in school life, comfortable in the school, and participating in the home and school association, there are many more parents who have very little or no involvement at all. We recognize that there are many reasons for this, and further realize that is unreasonable to expect all parents to participate to the same degree; however we also realize that a *very small amount* of “engagement” with their children’s education can pay off significantly. Knowing this, our primary goal is simple and modest: **to create informal recreational and social activities, inside and outside the walls of our partner schools, to bring together parents, students and teachers and staff.**
2. Secondly, by working together on a joint project, we five downtown Charlottetown elementary schools wish to strengthen the connections between our school communities. Our schools have much in common: we are each small elementary schools of a similar age, we are all located within a few kilometers of each other, we each serve socio-economically and ethnically diverse communities. And yet, historically, our school communities have had little contact, meaning that opportunities for sensible cooperation are missed, and preconceived notions about each school have been allowed to fester. We seek to address this first by the mere fact of our cooperation and, second, by creating opportunities for parents and students to visit and participate in activities in *other* downtown schools.
3. Finally, we seek to address the paucity of recreational and social opportunities for families in the winter months in downtown Charlottetown, especially for families that do not participate in organized formal activities (sports, music, ballet). While not perhaps fitting into the classical “parent engagement” framework, it is our feeling that by getting parents, students and staff together in informal settings will

pay off immeasurably in building school communities, making parents comfortable seeing themselves are a part of the education system, and getting parents together to discuss common issues and concerns.

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO MEET YOUR GOAL(S)?

Over the winter and spring of 2012 we will organize a series of informal recreational and social activities for parents, students, teachers and staff. Some of these will take place inside our partner school buildings, others will take place in community facilities outside the school.

Each activity will welcome parents, students, teachers and staff from *all* partner schools, seek to encourage social interaction and fellowship, be free of fees or charges, and arranged at a time of week and time of day to suit busy families. The activities, while they may involve an “educational” component, will be held primarily to encourage simple *involvement*.

In discussing the needs and opportunities in our schools we realized that, in past, many situations where parents find themselves “engaged” in their children’s education are either crisis-response (mold issues, school closures), problem-response (anti-drug, anti-bullying), fundraising-related, or, in the case of parent-teacher interactions, brief, formal, and devoid of opportunities to participate in activities *with other parents and students*.

We seek to create positive, informal activities, activities unlike the traditional “sit in a hot gym and listen to an RCMP officer tell us about the evils of X”-style home and school activity that we have all held in the past to little enthusiasm and poor attendance. The specific activities are to be determined – indeed the selection and planning of the activities amongst the partner school organizing committee is an important component of the project itself, for through this process, we hope to learn more about each others’ schools, each others’ home and school organizations, and, ultimately, to reveal additional opportunities for cooperation.

In our initial discussions we’ve talked about activities both inside school buildings (“Sunday afternoon parent-child basketball”, “Saturday morning bicycle repair”, “Friday evening cooking class”) and in the community (CARI rink and pool, Confederation Centre Art Gallery, Murphy Centre, etc.).

HOW WILL THIS PROJECT HELP PARENTS BECOME MORE INVOLVED WITH THEIR CHILDREN'S LEARNING?

Parents becoming involved with their children's learning requires conditions that support this:

- parents must feel comfortable about the very idea of "involvement"
- parents must feel comfortable in school buildings
- parents must feel comfortable in communicating with teachers and staff
- parents must have opportunities to meet other parents and discuss common issues
- parents must feel that their involvement will have positive outcomes

Traditional opportunities for parent involvement ignore many of these points: many parents are uncomfortable in school buildings, see their children's educational experiences through the lens of their own less-than-happy memories of time in school, and, because of the fragmented nature of the downtown school communities, have little opportunity to meet other parents.

Our project seeks to increase involvement in children's learning by *fostering the preconditions required for involvement* by working to overcome these barriers: by taking an informal approach, by focusing on recreation rather than on things that feel uncomfortably like formal "learning" (in a negative way), we seek to ease the transition of parents into school life.

HOW WILL THIS PROJECT CREATE BETTER PARENT AND SCHOOL CONNECTIONS?

1. By getting parents into their own school buildings in a fun, informal way, we're working to make parents feel comfortable in the school building. So that when they come into the school again for a parent-teacher interview, or are asked to volunteer as a Science Fair judge, or think about becoming a reading coach, they are not dissuaded by discomfort or preconception about what the school is really like.
2. By getting parents into *other* school buildings we're educating everyone about the richness of the downtown school community, working to overcome prejudices, seasoning the ground for inevitable school attendance zone discussions, and working, in a small way, to change the perception of schools as unapproachable, imposing institutions into open, welcoming community infrastructure.

3. By engaging parents in informal social and recreational opportunities with principals, teachers and staff we're working to make parents see members of their children's educational "team" as regular everyday people. It's much easier to feel connected to a school if you've gone bowling with the French teacher and made felt hats with the youth worker.
4. By creating opportunities for parents to talk *with each other* in a school-related activity, we'll promote the kind of parent-to-parent dialogue that we know, from the home and school federation, parents profit from greatly. By taking this outside of the usual formal "home and school meeting" framework we hope to free the dialogue from negative connotations and involve a greater community of parents.
5. By creating recreational and social opportunities for parents and children to participate in together as a family we're strengthening family bonds, laying the groundwork for conversations about education ("hey, Mom, this is the same kind of floor hockey we play in gym", "hey, Dad, that's Mr. Blue the man who teaches music; ask him about that guitar you wanted to fix up").

PARTNERS

See list of project partner schools; in addition to the five home and school associations, we seek to involve the principals, teachers and staff of the partner schools in the project.

This proposal was developed jointly by representatives of each partner home and school association, and the application has been reviewed and approved by each body.

Proposed Budget Details / Final Financial Report Form

Amount being requested (up to maximum of \$1000) **\$5000 (5 schools x \$1000)**

This form serves two purposes.

1. Please list all the items you expect to pay for and estimate each cost below and submit this form with your application.
2. At the end of your project, a copy of this page with final costs is to be submitted with all receipts and invoices along with the evaluation form.

NOTE: It is important for you to keep a copy of this report for reference if contacted for further clarification on your expenses.

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>✓RECEIPT</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
(i.e. speakers, resources, materials, refreshments, etc.)		
1. Advertising and promotion of activities		\$500
2. School-facility expenses (janitorial overtime, etc.)		\$500
3. Facility rental (pool, rink, art gallery, theatre)		\$2000
4. Supplies and materials (art supplies, food, equipment)		\$1750
5. Honoraria (outside volunteers)		\$250
	TOTAL =	\$5000