

EDITORIAL

with Traci Gardner

Stay involved

The kids have gym shoes, regular shoes, new clothes, new backpacks, lunch boxes, and school supplies out the yin-yang;

We parents have filled out information packages, documents, volunteer forms, registration packets, and parent contracts; kids have had haircuts, vaccinations, pep talks, bike tune-ups, and meltdowns.

The refrigerators are stocked with lunch foods and snacks. Or, the "Timmy's" cards were loaded. On the first day of school, the kids were photographed at home, on the bus, or at the school, as much as they hate it, it must be done, of course.

Acton's schools were humming with excitement on Tuesday and Wednesday morning with students eager to see their friends, parents excited to get back into a routine and teachers ready to teach and get to know their new students.

And where are parents in all this? Research shows that parental involvement is key to helping a child get all they can from school – and not just attending parent/teacher meetings, but really getting involved in what their children are doing and learning, and showing that leaning does end when formal schooling does.

Effective parent and family engagement in education is more than just participation in school meetings and helping with fundraising, it is actively engaging with your child's learning, both at home and at school. When schools and families work together, children do better and stay in school longer.

Parent engagement is associated with improvements across a range of indicators, including:

- Better education outcomes
- An increase in engagement with school work
- More regular school attendance
- Better behaviour
- Improved social skills.

School-family partnerships take time and effort to establish and maintain. There are specific steps that schools can take in order to reach out to parents in a positive and continual way. But that is not always enough. Since school-family relationships are a two-way street, parents must build on the school's efforts, or initiate their own, and work with teachers in a productive way for the success of the children.

A child's success in school is a shared responsibility. Therefore; communication between the home and school is always a two-way endeavour. Schools today use a variety of tools—websites, newsletters, progress reports, and e-mail to engage parents and continue communication. Parents need to remember, however, that these tools, though useful, are no substitute for actively participating in their child's school by serving on the parent council, going along with your children on field trips, or helping out in the classroom.

Share your time where you can. A little goes a long way, and both your child and your child's teacher will appreciate your efforts.



FURRY FRIENDS: If you have a garden, most likely you will have a chipmunk, and if you have peanuts they may just hop up on your knee for a snack. - Submitted photo

Preparing for back to school

This back to school stuff is exhausting. When I was a kid back to school meant a couple things. First, it meant my mom, myself and my sister would go shopping about a week before. We got a few things each - perhaps a new sweater and a new pair of shoes. We had a big outing to Shoppers World in Brampton and maybe a stop for lunch at Big Boys. I really can't remember back to school being much more than that.

Back to school for me now, the mom, started back in March, March. Backpacks and matching lunch bags had just come into Costco and I made the mistake of not picking them up when I first saw them. A month later, recruiting four different Costco shoppers and I was able to secure a matched set meeting both kids approval. Then with each lunch bag we need to have containers for each nutrition break (formerly known as lunch and snacks) since schools encourage litter-less lunches. I don't know if it is school policy or my kids are just "OCD" but on those days I'm a little lazy with being litter-less, the litter comes home as a reminder for me.

Refillable water bottles need



By
Angela Tyler

to be the right size and weight while not leaking. I found out it's better to send a smaller bottle that weighs less, that they can refill, rather than give them one big enough it could water a lawn.

Since then, it's been one thing after another. As parents of school aged kids know, long gone are the days of one pair of shoes and maybe a pair for special occasions. We need indoor shoes, outdoor shoes, rain boots, shoes for soccer, good shoes for church, shoes for dance and Lord help us if you're like me and have a kid who loves to dance and requires a different pair and outfit for each type of dance.

Four short years ago I had no clue what was involved in keeping a kid in school now. In reality, homework is the least of our worries. Who knew that last fall when I stocked up on ten pairs of mitts for each kid that we would have lost one from almost every pair by February? I learned quickly that on long

weekends you ask for shoes to be sent home because our first year, our eldest grew four shoe sizes in one grade. And most importantly, I am learning the art of labelling.

This weekend, the Dude and I took turns labelling. He labelled and sharpened pencil crayons. I labelled an eraser for the first time in my life and crayons. As I stuck tags on the crayons I wondered how long until they snapped in half and therefore only half of the crayon would have her name on it.

It took three days on and off to 'prep' for back to school to clean out clothes that were too small and replace with their new stuff, loading up the backpacks with indoor shoes, sharpened pencils, final trips to grocery stores and Costco for lunch stuff (oops healthy food breaks), labelling and more labelling, etc., etc. And just when I thought I was ready one day in advance, thanks to Halton having a PA Day as their first day this year and about to take a moment for myself I realized that in less than six months back to school back packs will be on sale at Costco again. Such a vicious cycle.



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