

## **Home-school connection key to student success**

By Heather Hudson

It's the 6 o'clock question heard at dinner tables the world over.

"How was school today?"

Though the response may vary from a mumbled "I don't know" to an excited blow-by-blow of the day's events, asking this simple question – and having the gentle perseverance to get an answer – may be the single most important thing parents can do to ensure their child's success in school.

"We know from research that when parents are involved it makes a huge difference in student achievement. It communicates that school has value and is important," said Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) Superintendent Sharon Stephanian.

"It begins with parents starting a conversation at the end of the day about how school went. If they are able to have discussions with their children on a regular basis, that is absolutely a key piece to the success of those students."

Talking and reading with your child in the evenings can be just the beginning to establishing a link between home and school. Other ways to get involved include volunteering in the classroom or joining your child's school council or home and school association.

The HWDSB recognizes that it can be tough to make a commitment during daytime hours to interact with the school. That's why they're looking for new ways to allow parents to get involved.

Starting in February, the HWDSB will be offering a series of evening seminars in locations across the district that will help parents make the link between home and school.

"These are opportunities to engage our parents in local schools through workshops and presentations. Topics are still being finalized – and we're open to input from the community as they are developed – but will certainly include literacy, numeracy and healthy active living," said Stephanian.

"It's just another way we're trying to connect with parents on a regular basis."

The board is especially interested in getting the parent perspective as they move forward with the strategic planning process for HWDSB schools for the next three years.

Data from the completed surveys issued to parents last spring are helping to shape their direction and, to get further input, they've established a parent involvement committee to advise and support the board of trustees and executive council.

“The more parents are involved, the higher the comfort level in terms of communication between home and school. There are so many ways parents and schools can work together and we're just really interested in exploring all the options.”

For more information about connecting with your school, visit [www.hwdsb.on.ca](http://www.hwdsb.on.ca) and click on the Parents tab.