



reach
SUDBURY SCHOOL OF TORONTO

Handbook for Families

Welcome

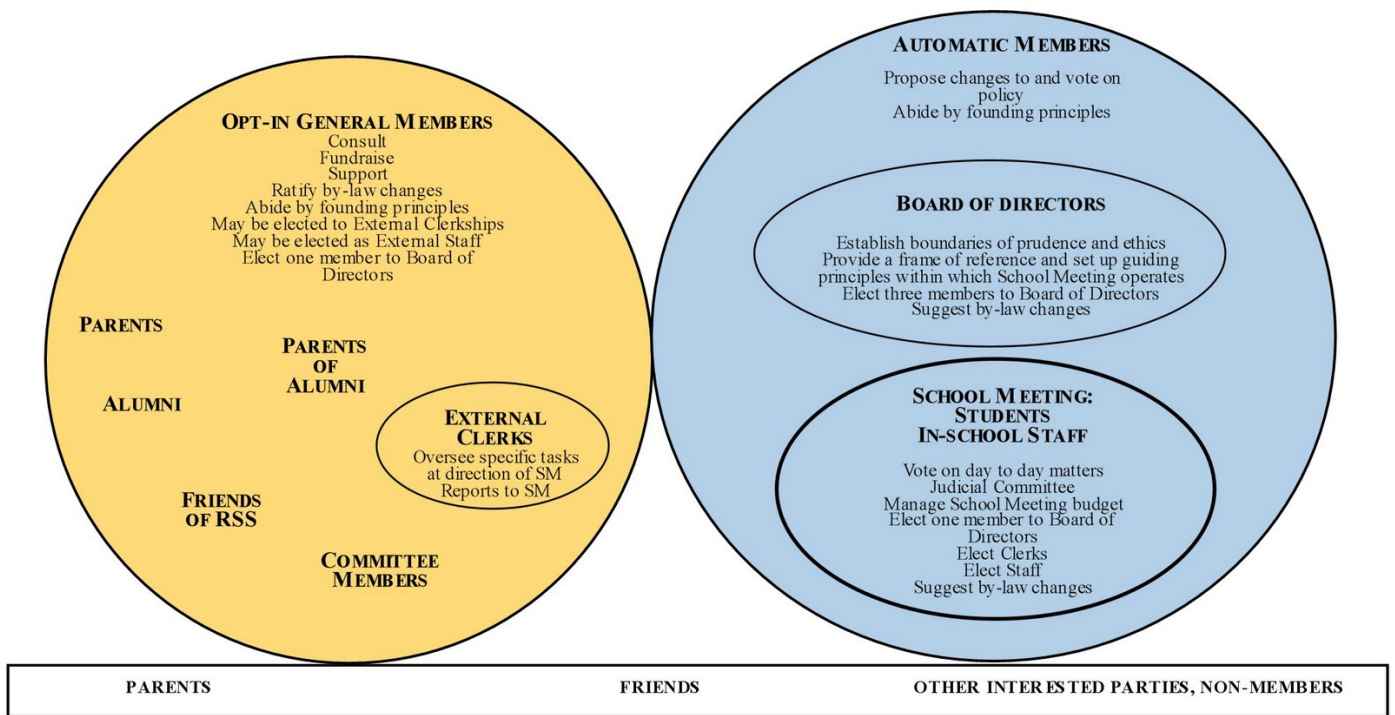
Welcome to Reach Sudbury School of Toronto! We look forward to working with you to make the most of your child’s educational experience. This handbook gives you information on the day to day workings of the school. It complements the *Reach Sudbury School Basics* booklet.

Reach Sudbury School is structured as a not-for-profit corporation. Copies of the by-laws are available to members.

Reach’s structure and who does what

DIAGRAM OF REACH SUDBURY SCHOOL CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

Reach is made up of many people with many different roles. All work together to support the school and its vision.



Corporation

When a family enrolls at Reach, the parents have the option of becoming a member of the school’s Corporation. Students are automatic members, as are staff. Occasionally alumni, alumni parents or other interested members of the public may also opt to join the Corporation.

The Corporation supports the school in various ways, for example through fundraising efforts and occasionally providing input on the school’s vision through ratifying by-law changes. Corporation members may be elected as Clerks to help run the business aspects of the school. The Opt-

in General Members of the Corporation elect a member to serve on the Board of Directors (see below). The Corporation has an Annual General Meeting on the first Wednesday in April, and may call other special meetings throughout the year.

If you, as a parent, are interested in opt-in general membership of the Corporation, please speak to the Admissions Clerk or the Parent Liaison. There is a simple form to fill out for opt-in members. If you are interested in seeing Reach's by-laws, please ask.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors creates the space in which the School Meeting can run the daily life of the school. It establishes boundaries of prudence and ethics, and works closely with the School Meeting to ensure that it receives the support it needs. There are five Directors, one elected by the opt-in members of the Corporation, one by the School Meeting, and three by the Board itself. The Board elects a President, Secretary and Treasurer from amongst themselves and meets regularly. If you would like to learn more about the Board of Directors, please speak to the Parent Liaison or a Board member.

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ALL INFORMATION FROM THIS POINT ON IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE BY DEMOCRATIC
VOTE IN THE SCHOOL MEETING.

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School Meeting

The School Meeting is made up of all students and staff. It meets weekly on Tuesday afternoons at 1 p.m. Special meetings may be called at other times by the Chairperson or any other three School Meeting members by posting a notice at least 2 hours in advance indicating the time and agenda of the meeting. All School Meeting members are welcome to come to any School Meeting but usually are not required to do so, unless those present vote to make the meeting mandatory.

The School Meeting is generally run according to Robert's Rules of Order. It is run by an elected Chairperson and minutes are taken by the elected Secretary. An agenda is posted in advance of each meeting. Any School Meeting member may place an item on the agenda of the next regular meeting by writing it (or getting help to write it) on the School Meeting Agenda sheet, posted on the bulletin board, or by bringing their item to the New Business section towards the end of each regular meeting. All School Meeting members may speak to any agenda item. All School Meeting members have one vote. Decisions are made by majority vote. The minutes of each meeting are posted on the bulletin board and then filed.

The School Meeting may decide anything that affects daily life within the school, within the boundaries of prudence and ethics set by the Board. It makes the school rules, oversees the Judicial Committee, elects Clerks and staff members, and allocates a budget for activities and supplies (administered by the School Meeting Treasurer). School rules are recorded in The Book, which is on hand for all School Meeting members to consult. Please ask if you would like to see a

copy.

As a parent, you can support your child at Reach by encouraging him or her to participate in the School Meeting when he or she feels strongly about an issue or wants resources to be allocated to a certain activity. Students who are unsure about how to get involved in the School Meeting should ask a staff member or another student.

Clerks

The Clerks are elected by the School Meeting to ensure that various tasks necessary to the school's smooth running get done. Some Clerkships are open to all members of the Corporation (external Clerkships) while others are only open to School Meeting members (internal Clerkships). The external Clerkships include: Public Relations and Marketing Clerk, Site Clerk, Staffing Clerk, Bookkeeping Clerk, Admissions Clerk, Parent Liaison, Outreach Clerk and Technology Clerk. The internal Clerkships include: Attendance Clerk, 2 Elections Clerks, School Meeting Chairperson, School Meeting Secretary, School Meeting Discretionary Funds Clerk, 2 Judicial Committee Chairpeople, Emergency Procedures Clerk, Certification Clerk, Cleaning and Maintenance Clerk, Flex Time Clerk and Principal. A person may hold more than one clerkship at the same time.

A list of all current clerks is posted on the bulletin board.

If you have expertise or interest in one of the external clerkships, we would love for you to get involved, either as a Clerk or as an assistant. Please see the Parent Liaison, a staff member or the relevant Clerk for details.

Staff

The Staff are elected by the School Meeting to support the students' educational journeys. Their tasks include building supportive relationships with students, modelling and supporting mastery, defending and enriching the school culture, maintaining the smooth operation of the school, and deepening and disseminating the Sudbury model. They serve as mentors, resources, and, when asked, as teachers. Staff encourage students to take charge of their own education and to participate in building a positive school community. Staff are equal participants with students in the democratic processes of the school. However, staff do have the responsibility to intervene directly in any situation that poses an immediate safety threat.

At Reach, we believe in open, on-going communication between parents, students and staff. Often this communication includes quick chats while parents are dropping off or picking up students. This is a good way to begin to build relationships but does not allow the time and focus to discuss larger issues. If you would like to discuss something in depth, please speak to a staff member or the Parent Liaison about scheduling a formal family meeting. We remind parents that students are invited to all discussions about their own education.

Principal

At Reach, the Principal is an elected Clerk who fulfills various legal requirements. Reach's

Principal does not play the traditional role of overseeing the entire school's operations but rather ensures that his or her legal responsibilities are being carried out by various people within the organization. If you have an issue to discuss which you would take to the Principal in a traditional school, and you are not sure who to approach, the Parent Liaison can direct you to the appropriate person.

Ombudsperson

At Reach, problem solving and conflict resolution lie at the heart of the daily school experience. We encourage informal discussion on these issues. Formally the Judicial Committee deals with these issues at the School Meeting level. The Ombudsperson does not exist to undermine this process but to facilitate conflict resolution among members of the Corporation, as a solution of last resort, when all other conflict resolution avenues have been pursued, or when a School Meeting member feels disempowered to bring an issue to the Judicial Committee (e.g., in the unlikely case of alleged sexual/physical/power abuse by a staff member toward a child), or when a parent has an issue with the school that has not been addressed to the parent's satisfaction. The Ombudsperson is elected annually from among the Corporation membership, and may not be a student, staff member, parent or Board member. If no one in the Corporation is available to serve, the Board of Directors will seek someone outside the Corporation subject to ratification by the Corporation. You may approach the Ombudsperson at any time. He/she will direct you to the appropriate person if he/she feels the problem can be better resolved elsewhere.

Volunteers

As a small non-profit organization, Reach relies for its success on volunteers who complement the work of its paid staff. Our most urgent need is for volunteers who can help run the business aspects of the school, either as external Clerks or their assistants. If you have expertise and/or time and enthusiasm to aid in any of these areas, we would be very grateful for your assistance.

Occasionally there is also a need for volunteers in the daily school program, for example to teach a class in a particular area of expertise based on student demand, or to provide extra supervision on field trips. Volunteers who will work unsupervised with students need to obtain a police background check including Vulnerable Sector Screening, for safety reasons. They must also go through a volunteer orientation process. If you are potentially interested in volunteering in this capacity, please see the Parent Liaison or Staffing Clerk. Please note that police checks can take quite a while to be processed.

School calendar

Reach generally follows the same calendar as the Toronto District School Board, available on the Ministry of Education website at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/list/calendar/holidaye.html>

The important dates for the 2011-2012 school year will be posted on our website and handed out to enrolled families before September 1, 2011. Our projected opening date is September 6, 2011.

School hours and attendance requirements

Reach is open from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Students' attendance

requirements vary based on their enrollment status (full-time, part-time or flex-time). All students must be available to participate in the Judicial Committee as needed, which meets Monday to Thursday daily at 1 p.m.

Full-time students are required to attend school for at least 20 hours per week. They are expected to attend daily Monday through Thursday. Fridays are optional for those who have already fulfilled their 20 hours that week.

Part-time students attend from 10 to 15 hours per week. Part-time enrollment is available to students ages 4 to 7 who are not ready for a full-time commitment and also, with School Meeting permission, to students age 16 or older who need more time to pursue their passions outside of school as they transition to adulthood. In order to aid in planning school activities, we ask that part-time students commit to an approximate weekly schedule. Families who are interested in part-time enrollment should discuss their desired schedule with the Admissions Clerk during the enrollment process. If you wish to change your schedule after enrollment, please speak to the Attendance Clerk. On-going scheduling difficulties may be brought to the School Meeting.

Flex-time students attend Reach 3 to 10 hours per week on Wednesdays and Fridays. They must sign up for their desired times the week before. Flex-time is \$15/ hour, paid in advance. Please speak to the Flex-time Clerk if you have any questions or wish to schedule time at school.

Consistent attendance is important for community-building and also for individual students to benefit fully from Reach's educational approach. The Judicial Committee will meet with students who fail to meet their minimum attendance requirements to resolve this issue. The families of part-time students who exceed 15 hours per week will be billed monthly at \$15/hour for the extra time.

Student drop-off and pick-up

As students come and go on varying schedules, it is very important that we keep track of who is in the school at any given time. There are two sign-in/ sign-out sheets posted on the bulletin board, one for signing in and out for the day and one for keeping track of off-campus excursions. Students must sign in and out on the relevant sheet when they enter or leave the school. Young children may need help from their parents or other school members but are still responsible for doing this. Also, all students must check in and out with the Attendance Clerk whenever they arrive or leave. The name of the Attendance Clerk on duty is posted on the bulletin board.

We encourage parents, especially ones with young children, to assist their children in getting settled when they arrive at school and to help speed their departure at the end of the day. However, we ask that parents try to minimize their disruption of other activities that may be taking place throughout the school. There are chairs and Sudbury-related reading material in the waiting area for parents who need to spend extra time in the school at drop-off or pick-up.

Absences

The Attendance Clerk will follow up by telephone with full-time students who are not at school by noon, Monday through Thursday, and with part-time or flex-time students who fail to show up for

their scheduled times. Families are asked to please call the school in the morning if a student will be absent that day.

If you know in advance that you will be absent for an extended period, please speak to the Attendance Clerk. Prolonged absences may require School Meeting approval.

Emergency closing policy

The decision to close the school due to weather conditions or other emergency will be made by the staff members working at the school that day. Every effort will be made to communicate with families in a timely manner about school closings. Generally we will try to follow the lead of the Toronto District School Board in inclement weather. The Attendance Clerk will update the school's voice mail message before 9 a.m. if the school will be closed for the day so that families may call in for information. Also, the Reach website will be updated to reflect the closing.

If the school is open in inclement weather, parents or students who are in charge of their own transportation must make their own judgements about whether it is safe to travel to school. Whenever there is questionable weather, the school will respect the decisions made by families, and absences will not reflect on the students' attendance records.

Daily life at Reach

Classes

Participation in formally organized classes rarely happens at Reach, and is not considered necessary for a good education. Informal and individualized learning suits some students better, while others prefer more structured activities.

Classes are organized based on student interest. Classes can be taught by staff, students or experts brought in specifically to share their subject knowledge. Classes can range in formality. A class could be a student and staff member sitting down together whenever they both have a bit of time to see how the student's independent math study is going. Another class could consist of a professional filmmaker, hired by the School Meeting, bringing his cameras and editing software to school to for an intensive workshop involving many students. School Meeting members who wish to organize a particular class often ask around the school or post a sign-up sheet to see if anyone else shares their interest.

Students can organize classes without staff involvement, and they can also approach a staff member for assistance. The first step is for the interested students to discuss with the staff member:

- what exactly they want to learn (e.g. not just "math" but "arithmetic" or "basic calculus" or "the math I need to be able to design a skateboard ramp")
- how they want to learn it (textbook, interactive on-line resources, teacher-led class sessions, hands-on activities, etc.)
- who should teach the class (which could involve checking the school's resource list of experts or canvassing the school community to see who has expertise in the subject, and

- students interviewing potential teachers)
- the type of commitment expected of both teacher and learners (lesson plans vs. spontaneous activities, drop-in vs. scheduled commitment, homework or no homework, etc.)

Some classes are governed by class contracts that formalize the commitment expected of all participants. They are signed by both teachers and learners and are enforceable by the Judicial Committee. Classes that hire an instructor from outside the school or that receive money from School Meeting must have contracts. Other classes may also have contracts if their participants choose to do so.

Formal evaluations, such as tests, may take place in classes if the participants want. These evaluations are for the benefit of the learners only and the school does not keep track of any results. Evaluation in classes tends to be informal, individualized and on-going. As classes are custom-designed and usually small, learners can work on concepts until they have completely grasped them rather than moving on with only, for example, 70% understanding. In this context, marks lose their meaning and importance.

Field trips

A field trip at Reach is defined as any off-campus activity which takes place during school hours and involves both staff and students (whereas off-campus excursions which involve students only fall under the Open Campus policy, below.) Like classes, field trips generally arise out of student interest. School Meeting members who wish to organize a field trip may ask around the school or post a sign-up sheet to see if anyone shares their interest. Occasionally the school may receive information about upcoming special events that may be of interest to students and this information is usually posted or announced at the School Meeting. As, by definition, staff are involved in field trips, students who wish to plan a trip should consult a staff member.

During a field trip, unlike on campus, staff supervise the students. All participants (staff and students) must meet to discuss appropriate behaviour and guidelines for the trip before it takes place. These discussions can range a short chat before heading out to the park to a series of planning meetings for people who wish to participate in a camping trip. The supervising staff must feel comfortable with the planning and guidelines that have been set in place before the trip can proceed.

All field trips will maintain at least a 1/10 staff/student ratio. Trip guidelines will always specify that students must obey staff instructions. Approved adult volunteers with police background checks filed at the school may substitute for staff. Adult volunteers assume the same responsibilities on field trips as staff do. If you are interested in becoming a field trip volunteer, please speak to the Staffing Clerk or a staff member. Please note that it can take a considerable amount of time to process background checks.

Students who participate in a field trip must have a release form signed by their parents on file at the school before the trip takes place. To facilitate spontaneous trips (for example to the local

park or library), parents are encouraged to sign the Field Trip General Release in the Application Package. For field trips which are planned before the day on which they occur, the trip planners will usually send home an additional information form. Any student who does not have a general release on file at school can participate in this type of trip if their parent signs a release form specific to that trip.

Open Campus policy

The core campus is defined as the indoor space of the school. All students are free to move about the core campus. They are not necessarily directly supervised there, although a staff member will always be present in the core campus when school is open (unless all school members are away on a field trip, etc.).

The Open Campus policy allows students who have both parental and school approval to leave the core campus unsupervised by staff during their time at school. Only students whose parents have authorised Open Campus for their children in the Application Package may apply to the school for open campus certification. There are various levels of certification. Each level allows increased freedom to students (from going anywhere on campus alone to going into the neighbourhood with other certified students, all the way up to navigating the city and public transit alone). For each level of certification, students must demonstrate that they can be safe, respectful of others, responsible for communicating with the school about their whereabouts at all times, deal with emergencies, etc. If you are interested in seeing the detailed certification procedure, please speak to a staff member.

Judicial Committee

The Judicial Committee, or J.C., is the conflict resolution arm of the School Meeting. Reach students are required to take their turn on J.C., and to cooperate when called as a witness.

All School Meeting members are encouraged first to try to resolve issues through informal conversation. Students may ask other students or staff for help with this; however, staff are not disciplinarians or problem-solving authorities. Staff must intervene in any situation they feel poses an immediate safety issue but otherwise work within the same democratic structures as the students. All students and staff are responsible for maintaining a positive school culture and addressing issues they see.

If informal conflict resolution does not work, any student or staff member can bring an issue to the J.C. by filling out a complaint form or getting help to do so. Being “written up” is a very common thing and is not intended to be shameful or scary. It simply means that someone needs help solving a problem.

The J.C. is run by two elected J.C. Chairpeople/J.C. Clerks. The J.C. meets daily at 1 p.m. (except for Fridays). Each meeting includes the Chairs, one staff member, one older student and one younger student. All staff and students must take their turn serving on J.C. This ensures that the process is fair. J.C. meetings are democratically run with all participants having one vote. The person making a complaint and the person who was complained about are asked to tell their sides

of the story. The J.C. tries to figure out what happened. The group talks about what was not okay about the situation and comes up with solutions. Outcomes can include discussions, warnings, voluntary agreements, imposed consequences, and requests for the School Meeting to review its rules or consider suspension or expulsion of a student.

While the J.C. process is one of the most empowering in the school, both in terms of building community and personal growth for individuals, it is not always easy. J.C. participation takes patience and focus. It can be hard to be called to account by your peers. It can be frustrating to spend time repeatedly helping a struggling student learn to be more responsible. Parents can support their child's J.C. participation by empathizing with their difficulties while emphasizing the importance of J.C. It is like the conscience of the school and is the mechanism which ensures democracy rather than anarchy. If your child has questions or concerns about the J.C. process, you can encourage them to speak to one of the Chairs or to a staff member, or you could approach the Staffing Clerk or a staff member to schedule a family meeting.

Suspension and expulsion

Occasionally the J.C. may recommend suspension of a student for repeated rule violations, safety concerns, or on-going disrespect for the J.C. process. The School Meeting discusses and votes upon suspension. Being suspended is not a black mark on a student's record. Suspension is a time for the student to reflect on whether he/ she really wants to be at Reach and take on the level of responsibility this requires. Many students go through this process at some point. When a student is suspended, the family is called in for a meeting with 2 school representatives (one staff, one student) to discuss the reasons for the suspension. If the J.C. recommends a suspension of more than 5 days, the family will be contacted before the School Meeting makes a decision so they may provide any relevant information and have some advanced warning. Sometimes the School Meeting suspends someone "indefinitely". This means that before the person returns to school, he/ she will need to explain to the School Meeting why he/she is ready to come back, and have their return approved by the School Meeting.

In extreme cases, the School Meeting also has the power to expel students.

Cleaning

All students and staff are responsible for cleaning up any mess they make at school before leaving the area to do something else, or getting help to do so if they need it. This includes washing dishes.

All students and staff participate in daily chores, administered by the Cleaning and Maintenance Clerk.

Cubbies and personal property

Each student and staff member has a cubby to store their belongings in at school. Each person's cubby is off-limits to everyone else without the owner's permission. Each person is responsible for their own belongings. Students are encouraged to bring items from home that they would

like to use at school. Please do not bring anything potentially dangerous to school. In the case of disagreement about whether an item is dangerous, the owner will be asked to store it in his/her cubby until the end of the day and take it home until the School Meeting has had a chance to discuss its use.

Food

There is no set lunch hour. Students and staff eat when they are hungry. Non-perishable food may be kept in cubbies. Perishable food can be labelled with the owner's name and stored in the refrigerator. The kitchen appliances are available to all students and staff who are certified to use them. People who are not certified may still cook if they are directly supervised by someone who is certified.

Health and safety

Certification

Certification applies to school items that are fragile or potentially messy or dangerous (e.g. electronics, kitchen appliances) as well as certain privileges (e.g. open campus policy). The School Meeting, working with the Certifications Clerk, will determine which items require certification, what you must understand or be able to do in order to be certified, and who may be a certifier. Any School Meeting member can become certified to use any item if they can fulfill its certification requirements to the satisfaction of the certifier. Certification procedures and a list of certifiers and certified users will be posted next to any item requiring certification.

If you have questions about certification or which items require certification, please see the Certification Clerk.

Student health information

Families are asked for information about student health conditions, including allergies, during the enrollment process. Please update the school as soon as possible if any of this information changes.

Administration of medication at school

If a student requires prescription medication while at school, please speak to the Principal clerk for details about Reach's Administration of Medication Policy and Procedure, and for a copy of the "Letter to Parents/Guardians for Administration of Prescribed Medication to Students" which must be filled out and signed. Prescription medication will be stored in a locked box generally out of reach and sight of very young children. This is to prevent accidental ingestion by youngsters who are unaware of its dangers.

Over-the-counter medications (e.g., analgesics, antihistamines, and such) must remain in control of students who bring them to school or stored in the lock-box.

Emergency procedures

Procedures for dealing with fire, medical and other emergencies are clearly posted in the school,

along with information on particular student health concerns.

Staff have first aid training, including training for dealing with anaphylaxis. The school has an epinephrine auto-injector for emergency use. For students with a known risk of anaphylaxis, the principal and the family will create an anaphylaxis plan that will be kept on file at the school. The principal will also communicate with staff, parents and students at the beginning of each school year and upon the enrollment of new students or the hiring of new staff, regarding any known life-threatening allergies among School Meeting members. We will let you know if there are any allergens that should not be brought into the school. Because staff do not undertake constant direct supervision of students on Reach's campus, efforts to minimize exposure to identified allergens/ triggers will depend highly upon all students' and parents' awareness about anaphylaxis and their co-operation in minimizing exposure.

In all cases of injury at school, a report will be filled out and parents will be contacted. Please inform the school as soon as possible if your contact information or that of your alternate emergency contact person changes. Staff will generally inform parents of young students' minor bumps and scrapes at pick-up time.

We discuss fire safety at school and legally must conduct 6 fire drills a year. It is helpful if parents talk about fire and other emergency drills with young students who may not have experienced them before as the idea can be a bit frightening for some children.

Communication

Family meetings

Family meetings are the main method for parents, students and staff to discuss together the student's educational experience at Reach. They are meant to complement, not replace, open on-going communication between parents and their children. Family meetings can be requested by parents, students or staff members at any time. Please see the Parent Liaison or a staff member to schedule one. Students are always invited to family meetings as it is their education that is under discussion.

Family meetings are ideal for times when:

- parents want detailed information about what their child is learning at school.* Sometimes it can be hard for students to articulate what it is they are gaining from their Reach experience, especially if they are working on skills that are difficult to quantify (leadership, resourcefulness, creativity, etc.). Although no one can truly know everything another person is learning at any given time, a staff member can share his/her observations and help students reflect on their experiences.
- a student is experiencing a challenge at school and would like co-ordinated parental and staff support.* The student, staff, and parents can discuss the nature of the challenge together and come up with some ways it could be addressed.
- students or parents are unclear about some aspect of Reach's approach* or how it applies in their particular situation and would like to discuss it more with a staff member.

-students and parents are contemplating a move to a new school or transition to post-secondary education or the workplace. If families are trying to figure out whether Reach is still a good fit for them, staff can give insight into what Reach can and cannot offer to address their particular needs. For older students who are considering life after Reach, staff also can share information on Reach's graduation process, post-secondary admissions, and support for students moving on to the workplace. We strongly encourage families who are considering leaving Reach to schedule a family meeting.

Family meetings are good times for parents to share their concerns about their Reach experience. We ask that parents bear in mind that our school program is run democratically; staff may not have the authority to resolve all issues raised in family meetings on behalf of the school. Staff can explain the school's problem-solving bodies and facilitate issues being brought to their attention. Ideally staff can help empower students to engage in the problem-solving process. Also, some issues are complex and involve many stakeholders; it can take time to find lasting solutions to these kinds of problems. We appreciate everyone's contribution to and patience with community-building.

There is a family meeting 3 months after initial enrollment for each student. After that, family meetings occur upon request.

Family supports

Parent liaison

The Parent Liaison Clerk supports families on their educational journey at Reach. Please speak to the Parent Liaison if you have questions about Reach's educational philosophy, concerns about a particular issue, or want more support in some area but aren't sure who to talk to. The Parent Liaison can discuss any of these issues with you or point you to someone who can help you out. The Parent Liaison can also help set up family meetings with staff.

Mentor parents

When you enrol, you will be asked if you would like a mentor parent, a veteran Sudbury parent who can talk to you about their family's experiences and answer your questions along the way. We realize that Sudbury education is not currently mainstream; sometimes it is easier to navigate this kind of education if you can speak to someone who has already been there. If you did not ask for a mentor parent at enrolment but would like one later, please speak to the Parent Liaison.

School events

Throughout the year, the school will host a number of events to help build community within our school and to introduce Reach to the larger community of Toronto. These may include educational philosophy discussions, Reach information nights, school potlucks, etc. We invite all parents to participate. If you would like to help organize events like this, please speak to the Parent Liaison.