

# Woodlands School Council

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## *Survey Results: Parent Seminar Topics and Structure*

October 18, 2009

### 1. Introduction

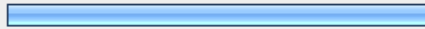
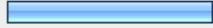
In the 2008-2009 school year, The Woodlands School Council introduced a Speaker Series presenting evening seminars on topics of interest to the school community. One of Council's goals for the 2009-2010 year is to continue and improve the Speaker Series through greater attendance and incorporation of community feedback. Towards this goal, the Council conducted a web-based survey of parents to assess interest in potential seminar topics and solicit suggestions on how the seminars can be improved.







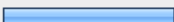
Invitations to participate in the survey were sent to 449 email addresses registered on the Woodlands School Council mailing list.

The survey consisted of ten questions and ran from Tuesday, October 6 2009 until Sunday, October 18, 2009. 46 respondents completed the questionnaire during this period. All information was collected anonymously.




### 2. Responses

Responses to each question are tabulated below. Some questions included write-in sections where comments or supporting information could be provided; these comments have been included verbatim.

1. Prior to taking this survey, were you aware that the School Council offers a Speaker Series?			Response Percent	Response Count
Yes			67.4%	31
No			32.6%	15
			<i>answered question</i>	46
			<i>skipped question</i>	0

2. If you answered "Yes" above, how did you become aware of the Speaker Series?			Response Percent	Response Count
Presentation by school administrators at Grade 7 or Grade 9 Orientation night			12.9%	4
Event calendar on the School Council website			12.9%	4
Email from the School Council mailing list			54.8%	17
Spoke to somebody at the School Council desk at a school event			9.7%	3
Saw it advertised on the school's driveway sign			0.0%	0
Heard about it from my student			3.2%	1
Heard about it from a friend			6.5%	2
Other (please specify)			25.8%	8
			<i>answered question</i>	31
			<i>skipped question</i>	15



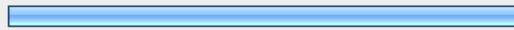

1. By attending the September 2009 council meeting
2. attended the first council meeting in september
3. attend some of the council meetings over the past few years
4. Attended first school coucil meeting where it was discussed.
5. Heard at school council meeting
6. read it in the school newsletter
7. Heard about it from my son.
8. Attended a School Council Meeting

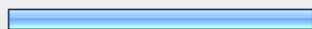

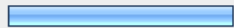




3. Have you attended any of our prior Speaker Series seminars?			Response Percent	Response Count
No, I haven't			71.7%	33
Yes, I've attended one seminar			17.4%	8
Yes, I've attended several seminars			10.9%	5
			<i>answered question</i>	46
			<i>skipped question</i>	0



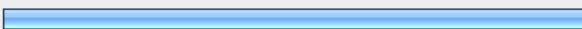

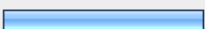
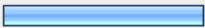
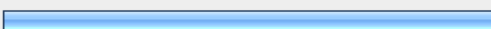


6. Which of the potential topics are most interesting to you?								
	No interest	Minimal interest		Moderate interest		Highest interest	Rating Average	Response Count
Transition from middle school to high school	40.6% (13)	21.9% (7)	3.1% (1)	12.5% (4)	9.4% (3)	12.5% (4)	1.66	32
Transition from high school to college and university	0.0% (0)	9.8% (4)	2.4% (1)	17.1% (7)	12.2% (5)	58.5% (24)	4.07	41
Transition from high school to vocational programs	32.1% (9)	17.9% (5)	14.3% (4)	17.9% (5)	7.1% (2)	10.7% (3)	1.82	28
Conflict resolution with teenagers / Parenting teenagers	0.0% (0)	15.4% (6)	0.0% (0)	30.8% (12)	28.2% (11)	25.6% (10)	3.49	39
Collaboration with teachers and administrators to aid learning	2.8% (1)	8.3% (3)	2.8% (1)	30.6% (11)	25.0% (9)	30.6% (11)	3.58	36
Issues with teen body image and self-esteem	0.0% (0)	13.9% (5)	19.4% (7)	25.0% (9)	22.2% (8)	19.4% (7)	3.14	36
Student exchange programs	22.2% (8)	11.1% (4)	8.3% (3)	13.9% (5)	30.6% (11)	13.9% (5)	2.61	36
Adolescent mental health and depression	8.3% (3)	11.1% (4)	13.9% (5)	27.8% (10)	22.2% (8)	16.7% (6)	2.94	36
Money management for teens	2.6% (1)	10.5% (4)	10.5% (4)	21.1% (8)	23.7% (9)	31.6% (12)	3.47	38
Drug and alcohol awareness	2.8% (1)	16.7% (6)	11.1% (4)	16.7% (6)	19.4% (7)	33.3% (12)	3.33	36
Developing future leaders	0.0% (0)	9.4% (3)	3.1% (1)	9.4% (3)	28.1% (9)	50.0% (16)	4.06	32
Other(s) (please specify)								7
<b>answered question</b>								<b>44</b>
<b>skipped question</b>								<b>2</b>

1. Healthy nutrition for teens.
2. Learn about how teenagers communicate these days and how to clue in to potential problems.
3. Understanding Diversity, celebrating and accepting differences
4. Would be nice to have the Peel Police come in and do a presentation for parents on the drug and alcohol Awareness.
5. what can the parents and students do if the teachers can't reach the teaching standards.
6. The social role of teachers within the school system. Teaching our children what is permitted and what is not.
7. Time management for Teens

7. Do you have a preference for seminars that are addressed to:			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Parents		9.1%	4
Students		4.5%	2
Both		77.3%	34
Doesn't matter		9.1%	4
<i>answered question</i>			44
<i>skipped question</i>			2

8. Which of the following reasons (if any) would discourage you from attending Speaker Series presentations:			
		Response Percent	Response Count
The proposed topics do not interest me		46.3%	19
My work schedule prevents it		34.1%	14
I have too many evening commitments as it is		34.1%	14
I do not speak very good English		4.9%	2
I have young children that I cannot leave alone at home or with a babysitter		2.4%	1
I am uncomfortable in the school environment		2.4%	1
Other:		9.8%	4
<i>answered question</i>			41
<i>skipped question</i>			5

1. They didn't start on time.
2. I have some commitments
3. An evening conflict with work (only occasionally)
4. I'm about 35 minutes from the school but would try if it seems beneficial

9. Which of the following benefits (if available) would encourage you to attend Speaker Series events, or are reasons why you already participate in these events:			
		Response Percent	Response Count
The topic is of interest to me		88.4%	38
I can get out of the house and do something out of the ordinary		9.3%	4
It's an opportunity to socialize with other parents		30.2%	13
It's an opportunity to socialize with school staff in a non-academic setting		30.2%	13
It's important to me to be involved in my child's educational environment		74.4%	32
Did someone say free snacks?!		9.3%	4
Other (please specify)		2.3%	1
<i>answered question</i>			43
<i>skipped question</i>			3

1. I don't eat due to allergies at school, but food brings people in!

10. Do you have any other suggestions that would help School Council to make the Seminar Series a greater success?		Response Count
		13
<i>answered question</i>		13
<i>skipped question</i>		33

1. Parent involvement and awareness by the school community of the seminar series.
2. Promoting to the kids  
Mississauga News  
Advise other high schools of presentations
3. the more communicaiton the better. you could offer babysitting for young children. students could babysit.
4. Involve food wether you provide it or have pot lucks or something.
5. Participate at seminar from audience and speaker
6. It's really important that these series are primarily addressing the students while incorporating information and recommendations for parents to be part of the development of the children.
7. Make it clear to the children that they are welcome to attend too!
8. Having school council members calling parents and having a one on one discussion about the council and its goals; getting emails through direct contact at school events that parents attend, eg. plays, concerts, sports events, even when picking up students after an activity.  
Arranging school council social/evenings for parents to get to know the council  
Perhaps dealing with topics from a students perspective for parents
9. Better adverstising and wording used in the title of the speaker; the title has to grab the parents' attention.
10. Seminars that parents can bring their high school children to are a great benefit, especially for single parents who do not want to go out after not seeing their kids all day and leave the kids at home for a few hours. Keep the seminars to one and one half hours at maximum so we can get home and do other things. 2-3 hours are too long. Start on time and end in a timely fashion, those who want to stay afterwards can, but those of us with a million things to do need to get in, get the information and get out to get other things done and prepare for the next day coming.
11. Students should not be embarassed to have their parents attend school events OR be seen with their parents.
12. Perhaps if they do it jointly with Erindale since that's closer for me.
13. Invite other councils to join you

### 3. Analysis

#### 1. Seminar Awareness

The first two questions addressed the community's current awareness of the Speaker Series. Two thirds of respondents said that they were already aware of the Speaker Series, and that emails from the School Council were the main mechanism of awareness.

An awareness level of 67% is surprising, but might be explained by turnover in the school community as incoming grade 7 and 9 families would not have been exposed to the program last year.

It is not surprising that the email list is the primary source of awareness for the respondents, as only parents who read Council emails participated in the survey! It is interesting however that that emails were the primary source for only half the respondents, with the school council website calendar, oral presentations at school events, and attendance at council meetings accounting for most of the other respondents.

These results suggest that council should continue its varied outreach efforts and not rely solely on the email distribution list. Additionally, the low response rates for “heard it from my student” and “heard it from a friend” suggest that word-of-mouth is an approach that we aren’t yet using effectively.

Question 5 responses suggest that we should also continue to use the roadside sign where possible, and consider a call-out campaign. These approaches are particularly needed for families who do not have ready access to email or are not on our mailing list.

## **2. Satisfaction with Past Seminars**

Questions #3 and #4 address satisfaction with past seminars. Responses are generally positive and in line with expectations for the first year of this program.

The first comment expresses the “need to get other schools involved”. Council implemented a teaming approach with Erindale Secondary School to invite our communities to each other’s speaker events. “Cross-border” turnout was very low however, regardless of the hosting location (Woodlands or Erindale). Further joint promotions with the Erindale School Council should be encouraged as an effective shared seminar program would provide significant advantages to both schools.

## **3. Reasons for Attending Seminars (or not)**

Questions #7, #8, and #9 explored reasons why parents might or might not attend seminar events. Results were generally unsurprising with the exception of question #7. Most of council’s presentations last year were targeted at both parents and students; however we generally had only parents attending. While it is unlikely that students will ever drag their parents to a Council seminar, we should put effort into making students dragged to the seminars by their parents feel welcome! Serving snacks and emphasizing interactive presentations and discussions may help in this regard.

## **4. Speaker Series Topics of Interest**

Question #6 asked respondents to rank potential seminar topics by relative interest. Responses were then tallied to produce an aggregate score from 0.0 (no interest by anyone whatsoever) through 5.0 (of maximum interest to every respondent) and the resulting ranking is:

1. Transition from high school to college and university (4.07)
2. Developing future leaders (4.06)
3. Collaboration with teachers and administrators to aid learning (3.58)
4. Conflict resolution with teenagers / parenting teenagers (3.49)
5. Money management for teens (3.47)
6. Drug and alcohol awareness (3.33)
7. Issues with teen body image and self esteem (3.14)
8. Adolescent mental health and depression (2.94)
9. Student exchange programs (2.61)
10. Transition from high school to vocational programs (1.82)
11. Transition from middle school to high school (1.66)

Council will be taking these rankings and the write-in responses quite seriously and is attempting to line up speakers to address the most popular topics.