

**Waterloo Region District School Board,  
Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) and  
Waterloo Region Assembly of  
Public School Councils (WRAPSC)**

**proudly hosted the first annual**

**Director's Town Hall Events**

November 12, 2015 - Eastwood Collegiate Institute, Kitchener

November 19, 2015 - Bluevale Collegiate Institute, Waterloo

**Thank you to our host schools, their principals and staff, students, and  
School Councils who made these evenings possible!**

**Special thanks to our planning committee:**

Kathryn Aucoin, Christine Gillis Bilton, Joe Ortiz,  
Jessica Rodriguez, Christine Rose,  
Kathi Smith, Laurie Tremble and  
with support and assistance from Elaine Burns.



**It's about taking our schools, our events,  
our Councils up a notch...**

**From good to great!  
From great to fantastic!**

## Table of Contents

Welcome to the Director's Town Hall Events.....	3
Building Awareness of PIC and WRAPSC .....	4
What is PIC? .....	4
What is PIC's purpose? .....	4
What are PIC's goals? .....	4
What does PIC do? .....	4
What is WRAPSC? .....	5
What is WRAPSC's purpose? .....	5
What are WRAPSC's goals?.....	5
What does WRAPSC do? .....	5
Parent Engagement with Director John Bryant.....	6
Parent Engagement .....	6
Recent WRDSB Re-organization of Senior Administration .....	6
Ask the Director: Open Forum Q&A .....	7
**The new WRDSB School Council Handbook .....	7
School Council 101: Principals and Chairs Share their Experience.....	8
What is the purpose of Council?.....	9
What is the purpose of bylaws? Do we have to have them? How do we write them? .....	9
How do you encourage parents to come to meetings? .....	10
How do you keep people excited about Council? .....	10
What advice do you have for a new Council Chair on how to run effective meetings? .....	10
How does Council gain funds for projects like school ground improvements/greening and how do you apply for the PRO Grant? What can we use PRO grant money for?.....	12
How do you reach parents from marginalized groups? .....	12
What are the roles of different people on Council?.....	13
What types of fundraising have been most successful? How are decisions made regarding fundraising?.....	15
What are your favourite community events? .....	15
What suggestions or tools can you give to help cope with negative voices on Council?.....	16
How do we attract more parents to join Council, attend Council events and help out? .....	16
How do we avoid volunteer burn-out?.....	16
What is in place within the board to support Councils? Where do Councils find help and how can they help parents find the help and answers they are looking for?.....	17

What are effective ways to communicate with the larger parent community? What effect does CASL have and how can you get around that? How does social media fit in?.....17

How can I find out if my Council is achieving its goals? .....17

Post event questions: .....18

A lot of food was mentioned at events. How do you work around the healthy food policy? .....18

How do you deal with teachers who are reluctant to change and embrace student and parent voice? .....18

### Welcome to the Director’s Town Hall Events

Meeting Role	Name	Eastwood Nov 12	Bluevale Nov 19	Role
Scribes	Christine Gillis Bilton	✓		Former PIC/WRAPSC Co-Chair
	Jordan Jackson		✓	WRAPSC/PIC Member
	Jill Magazine	✓		PIC Member

## Building Awareness of PIC and WRAPSC

### Presenters:

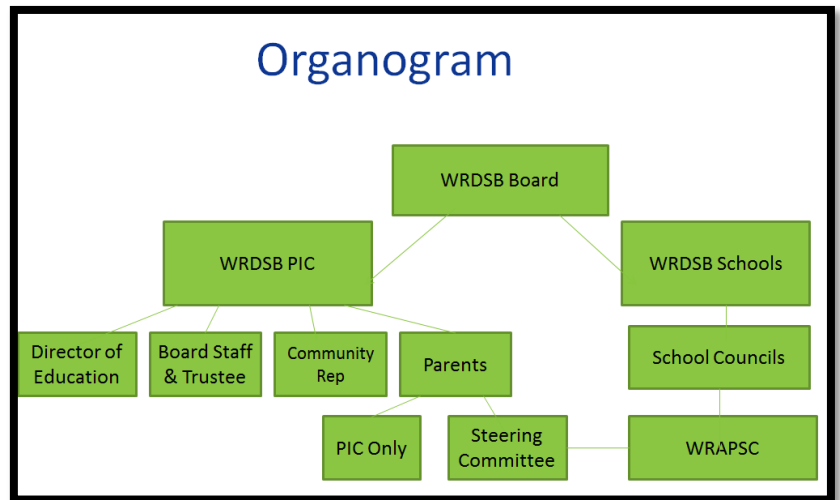
Laurie Tremble: PIC/WRAPSC Co-Chair

Jessica Rodriguez: WRAPSC Co-Chair

Christine Rose: PIC Co-Chair

*“Parent engagement matters. Study after study has shown us that student achievement improves when parents play an active role in their children’s education, and that good schools become even better schools when parents are involved. It is recognized that parent engagement is a key factor in the enhancement of student achievement and well-being”<sup>1</sup>*

**PIC and WRAPSC work together, and with the Board, to encourage parent engagement and support student achievement.**



### What is PIC?

Parent Involvement Committee

### What is PIC’s purpose?

To support, encourage and enhance the engagement of parents/guardians of the WRDSB in their children’s education, to improve student achievement and well-being

### What are PIC’s goals?

- Develop and recommend strategies that the board can use to effectively communicate with, and engage parents in their children’s education
- Organize presentations and resources to help parents support their children’s learning
- Embrace diversity and inclusion
- Foster wellness and well-being
- Communicate information from the Ministry of Education

### What does PIC do?

- Annual event for parents/guardians – April 16, 2016
- Develop and share information/resources (policy and procedures index, conferences, website)
- Workshops for immigrant families (IES)
- Collaboration website (SCIS)
- Translation of documents for the Equity and Inclusion Group to support their Welcome Centre resources
- Director’s Town Hall event

<sup>1</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education website

## What is WRAPSC?

- ❑ Waterloo Region Assembly of Public School Councils

## What is WRAPSC's purpose?

- ❑ WRAPSC is a parent-run committee that brings together school Council representatives from across the region to share ideas and work collaboratively to improve the effectiveness of school Councils.
- ❑ WRAPSC representative from each of the WRDSB schools' Council is invited to attend 6 meetings/year
- ❑ On average, 30 parents attend and 25 schools are represented at these meetings
- ❑ run by an 8-person Steering Committee
- ❑ PIC representation

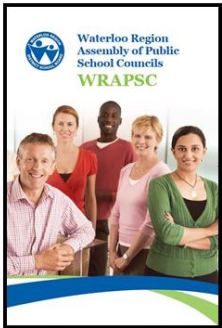
## What are WRAPSC's goals?


- ❑ Provide information from the board, the ministry and the community to parents through school Councils
- ❑ To provide input to board staff from parents in the WRDSB
- ❑ To share ideas and best practices between school Councils to help all Councils support parent engagement in their community
- ❑ To reach all WRDSB School Councils

## What does WRAPSC do?

- ❑ Director's Town Hall events
- ❑ Annual event for parents/guardians – April 16, 2016
- ❑ safeTALK suicide alertness training for parents
- ❑ Provides a forum for sharing information
- ❑ Guest speakers relating to board initiatives and in response to requests from parents
- ❑ Developing an outreach program to encourage more school Councils to attend WRAPSC meetings
- ❑ Updated School Council Handbook - electronic copy

**Building Awareness  
WRAPSC & PIC**

  
[www.wrdsb.ca/pic](http://www.wrdsb.ca/pic)

  
[@PICWRDSB](https://www.facebook.com/groups/WRAPSC/)

[www.wrdsb.ca/wrapsc](http://www.wrdsb.ca/wrapsc) [www.facebook.com/groups/WRAPSC/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/WRAPSC/)

## Parent Engagement with Director John Bryant

**Presenter:** John Bryant - Director of Education, WRDSB (3<sup>rd</sup> year)

### Parent Engagement

Parent engagement is not a connection with the principal or teacher, it is the connection you have with your own child. Ask yourselves three questions:

1. What is your personal definition of parent engagement?
2. As a parent, what is your expectation of WRDSB? Of the board office?
3. How would you like to be involved in your child's education?

Every school culture is different. Are there parents visible in the school? Are they in the classrooms helping out? Are parents providing their voice about what is good for the community?

Having a positive connection with parents leads to a very powerful relationship.

“School Leadership in Canada”, written in the 90’s, recognized the impact of parent, staff & students on the learning process and determining how to sustain and promote that learning.

### Recent WRDSB Re-organization of Senior Administration

Ken Leithwood, Council of Ontario Directors of Leadership (CODE): [“Strong Districts & Their Leadership”](#) identified nine characteristics of effective districts, of which we decided to focus on building productive working relationships and bridging the gaps between the central office and our schools.

WRDSB central office provides support for the schools through business and financial services, education services, human resources and corporate services. The senior team, trustees, families, Ministry of Education and community partners all provide supports.

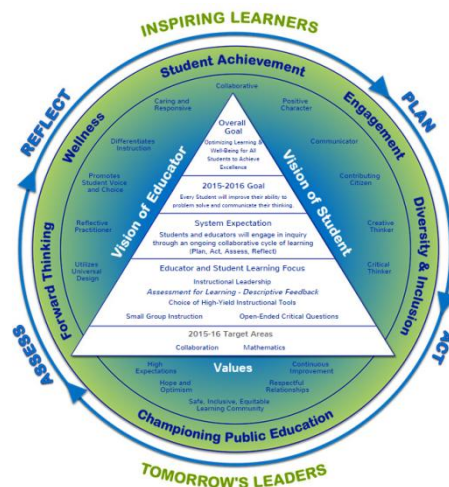
Previously there were four, but are now seven Family of School Superintendents; existing people restructured and now saving \$150K per year. We believe this will improve connections to our schools as each superintendent now has fewer schools to support.

We need to look at our schools as a community hub. KW has very rich allies in its community partners and recently joined [“Sustainable Waterloo Region”](#).

[“Ontario’s Leadership Framework”](#) on the Ministry of Education website, is the curriculum for principals.

### [WRDSB “Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement \(BIPSA\)”](#)

contains lots of planning documents, links and resources!



## Ask the Director: Open Forum Q&A



### **Q: What are you doing about communication, especially with regards to websites?**

- This is definitely a challenge because there is so much information to try to capture, share and keep ahead of. It is continuous work and we often rely on our already very busy principals to do the updates. Determining how to set up sites is difficult because of the vast difference in user abilities and in how the information should be communicated. If we mandate the material and push it out to our schools, they lose their individuality.
- PIC member, Joe Ortiz has been working with our IT team to ensure parent voice is being represented. Other ideas or suggestions please send them along!
- We are lucky to have WRAPSC as well; perhaps this is a discussion that could be had with WRAPSC assembly members at a future meeting.
- Suggestions and feedback:
  - > Things that are used more frequently should be easier to get to!
  - > What if we could log in with OEN and get relevant information?
  - > School Day is working really well!
  - > Text is a great way to communicate!

### **Q: What strategies can Councils use when they face challenges in reaching parents?**

- Have a welcoming outlook! Tap other parents on the shoulder and say hello and invite them to come along. Redefine the word “engagement” to parents within your school. Don’t expect all parents to feel that engagement means attending Council meetings!

### **Q: What do you do when you’re an engaged parent, but there may be a conflict with the school’s opinion of what engagement should look like (home vs school)?**

- This is a courageous conversation, and it is very important for the families to be allowed to express their opinions and feel welcomed into the school. This is a broader topic, but parent engagement is a very passionate focus for John.

## **\*\*The new WRDSB School Council Handbook**

Everyone is going home with a USB with a digital version of the updated WRDSB School Council Handbook. On it are also great resources for Council (forms, grant info, templates, roles & responsibility) and much more! This School Council resource can also be found on the WRDSB website <http://www.wrdsb.ca/our-schools/get-involved/school-councils/>.

## School Council 101: Principals and Chairs Share their Experience

### Our Facilitators:

Name	Eastwood Nov 12	Bluevale Nov 19	Council Role
Jessica Rodriguez	✓		WRAPSC Co-Chair
Kerri Getcliffe		✓	PIC/WRAPSC Member
Christine Gillis Bilton		✓	Former PIC/WRAPSC Co-Chair

### Our Panelists:

Name	Eastwood Nov 12	Bluevale Nov 19	Council Role	Notes
Andrea Michelutti	✓		Principal, New Dundee PS	Council meets 4-6 times/year and otherwise work a lot through social media
Karen Tomlin	✓		Principal, Howard Robertson PS (1 <sup>st</sup> year)	Council meets every month; very involved/active
Ken Popp	✓		Council Chair, Howard Robertson PS	Parent, who really likes to talk and engage with other parents.
Jen Wilson	✓		Council Chair, Franklin PS	Have been involved for several years; at different schools.
Angelica Allen	✓		Council member, KCI	Has been a Council member at six schools, with 9 principals. Total of 14 years on Council. Former Chair of PIC/WRAPSC.
Cathy Vollmer-Ashley	✓		Principal, KCI (5 <sup>th</sup> year)	Council has 15-20 members, which includes meetings and parent workshops.
Jeff Klinck	✓	✓	Principal, Eastwood CI (4 years)	Eastwood has 2 Councils: a regular Council and separate Council for its (magnet) Integrated Arts Program. Celebrating its 60 <sup>th</sup> birthday in 2016.
Tracy Morency	✓	✓	Council Co-Chair, Eastwood CI	This is her 4 <sup>th</sup> year as Chair and 14 <sup>th</sup> year on Council.
Wendy Daley		✓	Council Chair, Suddaby PS	Also an active member on Huron Heights PS Council.
Erik Kuttis		✓	Council Chair, Baden PS	On Council since early 2000; worked with several different schools and principals.
Jenn McLellan		✓	Council member, Cameron Heights CI & Laurelwood	Has been member of both Councils for 5 years
Don Oberle		✓	Principal, Doon PS	Has been an administrator for 6 years.
Ray Teed		✓	Principal, Cameron Heights CI	Has been a principal for 21 years.
Joanne Weston		✓	Council Chair, Doon PS	Has been a council chair at Doon for many years and has served on other school councils as well. Joanne is also a past-PIC member.
Nancy Woodhall		✓	Principal, Baden PS	Has been a principal at Baden PS for 4 years, and an administrator for 11 years total.



## What is the purpose of Council?

- At the elementary level Council is more involved in fundraising.
- Sometimes people don't realize that Councils exist at secondary level and they serve more as an information conduit.
- Try to have a presence at everything, especially those that involve parents. Examples: grade 8 information nights, magnet information night, parent-teacher nights, system support for incoming grade 9 parents.
- Offer feedback to admin on various topics or provide feedback to the board – usually through WRAPSC – on system-wide issues ( Example: bell times)
- Keep abreast of what's going on in the building, across the board and across the province
- Council helps parents navigate the school and provide tips on how to ask the right questions of teachers.
- Run parent engagement and parent-outreach events.
- Council should be an advocate for the students and for the school
- Council is the voice for the entire school community and should represent the views of the broader school community. This can mean soliciting feedback from parents who aren't at the table, through surveys, etc.
- All Councils need to write bylaws. Consider a subcommittee to do this; once they are completed, they go to the full Council for approval. This subcommittee is disbanded once done.
- Councils working in a collaborative partnership with the principal will enable them to have a bigger sense of involvement and it's important that Council be viewed as part of the solution and part of the team.
- Kindergarten is an easy entrance level for parent involvement, but we must not forget how important it is all along the school career that parents stay engaged through all the grades.
- Help create events (fun fair, BBQs), and are a key to making connections in the community.
- Don't forget that as the school changes and evolves, parents are great resources and/ or a beacon for children to want to keep their parents involved all along, regardless of the age/stage of education.
- Help parents who have questions about how secondary schools work differently than elementary schools.

## What is the purpose of bylaws? Do we have to have them? How do we write them?

- All Councils must write bylaws, as directed by the Ministry of Education.
- At minimum, councils must have bylaws that identify election procedures, rules around conflict of interest and a procedure for conflict resolution. See the new WRDSB School Council Handbook for more details and real samples.
- Consider a subcommittee to do this; once they are completed, they go to the full Council for approval. This subcommittee is disbanded once done.

## How do you encourage parents to come to meetings?

- Small schools may really need to look at this issue.
- Survey parents about why they are not coming. You might be surprised to find out what their reasons are! (Example: parents travel a lot and cannot make meetings)
- Social media: consider Twitter, Instagram, Storify, and School-Day to get message out to the community.
- Live tweet during Council meetings – allows parents to respond right then during the meeting.
- Use Storify so people can provide feedback after the meeting this way.
- Invite the students' other family members (aunts, uncles, grandparents) to follow on social media too. This means that when these adults were there to visit they knew what was happening in the school and might come in to offer to help with something.
- Small Councils - benefit is that they get to hear all ideas and are able to take the time to make things fun and remember they are all in it together for the school and kids
- Every idea is a good idea, but not every idea fits our current need.

## How do you keep people excited about Council?

- Let everyone speak and try to cultivate their ideas/try your best to make everyone's ideas work.
- Have a succession plan and learn to delegate and train others.
- Organize something social for your Council.
- People can be afraid they will get roped into doing things if they speak at Council meetings so you don't want an environment that makes people feel that way. Subcommittees can help with this.
- Try to match someone experienced with new people to involve them and mentor them.
- Do break-out groups at Council meetings: pose a question and break into groups. People will feel less intimidated this way and they will get more ideas.
- Having co-Chairs for all subcommittees allows a new person to shadow someone more experienced and then in a year or two they might take something on themselves.
- Develop a "cheat" sheet about the different roles, the time commitment and what's involved.
- Have a volunteer form which by filling it out just means that people want to hear more about volunteer opportunities and might just start with something small.

## What advice do you have for a new Council Chair on how to run effective meetings?

- Make sure you are including everyone's voice and everyone gets heard.
- Run effective meetings: stay on topic and put a timer on, so that discussions don't go on for too long. Leave enough time for things that you know members will want to discuss or that members have to vote on and time for people to raise suggestions of what they want to discuss at the following meeting.
- Develop an agenda and include a time estimate for each item.
- Distribute the agenda at least one week in advance of the meeting; this serves as a reminder of the meeting and then people can prepare since they know what's coming.

- Have a secretary to record minutes – other than the Council Chair. This is especially important in a large group.
- Send out minutes in a timely manner and make available in school and on website.
- If meetings run late or someone dominates the discussion, people may not encourage others to come.
- Write and approve bylaws! At minimum, they should identify election procedures, rules around conflict of interest and a procedure for conflict resolution. See the new WRDSB School Council Handbook.
- If you have a large group and many hands going up, keep a scratch pad with you and jot down names as people raise their hands so you don't forget anyone. If possible, give everyone around the table a chance to speak once before inviting repeat contributors.
- Do the leg-work in advance so that details are being addressed at the meeting with everyone.
- Discuss ground rules in advance, for example, you can't discuss personal issues.
- Don't allow personal attacks & don't judge other parents; make sure people recognise the need to be civil.
- Don't have the whole Council discuss issues – develop subcommittees. They should be given ground rules and told when they have to report back. Make sure the subcommittee knows they don't have the ability to make major changes (e.g. they can't change the whole fundraising structure without approval)
- Keep meetings to 90 minutes - 2 hours max
- If you have a packed agenda, remind members at the outset that, while you don't want to limit contributions, you don't want to be there till midnight and ask everyone to try to stay on point.
- A new school will have a lot for Council to do and can get large numbers of parents who want to help. Write the bylaws and consider including that you do not need to be a member of Council in order to be on a subcommittee (Note: Subcommittees do need to be Chaired by a Council member). This allows Councils to involve more parents than just those that attend meetings.
- When there are new people, go around the table for introductions and to welcome them.
- Use name placards – even simple half-folds with a marker. This is especially helpful at the start of the year with new faces, or in large groups. Also helps the secretary to record attendees.
- If things become contentious, step in. Recognize both sides and if you can, paraphrase the comments using more moderate language and repeat it back to the individual – “I think this is what I hear you saying – is that fair?” this lets the individual know that they've been heard but hopefully diffuses any escalation.
- If someone goes off topic, ask them to hold that for another time. Have an agenda item for “other business” and push off the item until you get there. If it has potential to balloon into something bigger, tell the person that you recognize the importance of the item BUT want to ensure it receives the attention it deserves.

## How does Council gain funds for projects like school ground improvements/greening and how do you apply for the PRO Grant? What can we use PRO grant money for?

- Partner with Evergreen Learning Grounds.
- Teachers camped out overnight on the green space they were hoping to improve. For every \$100 that was donated, a teacher lost their tent! School mascot and news stations included. Parents very involved and supportive. A huge event that happened successfully in a very short period of time.
- [Parents Reaching Out \(PRO\) Grant](#) information is offered by the Ministry of Education.
- There is also a Parent Involvement (PIC) Grant used for initiatives to offset costs for events or activities which engage parents in their child's education. See new WRDSB School Council Handbook for details.
- Examples include: Human Library, Mother's Circle support, Parents' Lending Library

## How do you reach parents from marginalized groups?

- Work to build relationships: greet people when they drop off and pick up and try to provide opportunities for the community to come together.
- Have parents whose role is to reach out to new parents or ones who are having difficulty. Helper parents can step in and help out with things like picking them up to take them to a parent event
- Keep bus drivers up to date on what is going on in the school so that they can give out information to parents (Example: when they pick up from the bus stop a parent might hear "don't forget there is a concert coming up" from the bus driver).
- Support parents at their feeder schools. If kids are finding it challenging to consider the move from elementary to secondary then a teacher can come in August and help the students familiarize themselves and get to know the school.
- Use experts who already know how to reach out to marginalized groups. Look for places in your community like House of Friendship, the KW Multicultural Centre.
- Child/Youth Workers (CYW) in the school will often know who needs help and what kind of help they need.
- Re-jig expectations: you can't expect everyone to come to Council meetings. You need to think how else you can reach people who can't come to the meeting. This means really learning about who is in your community and what they need. Community centres often have this type of information.
- Work with community partner or parents to translate commonly used documents into various other languages on the back and offered translation for those who called the school in advance to arrange it
- Get out and talk to parents! Look for people who you don't see at the meetings and provide them with information and a welcome personal invitation to come to meetings. Some people don't get involved because they feel uncertain or don't know how.
- Eastwood has the biggest population for Pathways to Education so they decided to invite the Director of Pathways to be a community representative on Council to get her perspective on how their events will impact the community (Example: Pathways has an annual community dinner to explain to families the transition to secondary school and Council members attend that event to open up lines of communication.)

## What are the roles of different people on Council?

### Students

- The students also have a very powerful voice, and should have an opinion of what happens in their school. They should provide student viewpoint and update Council on what students are doing.

### Principal

- Bring the school, board and ministry perspective to meetings.
- Build trust with the Chair and the Council members to provide as effective a Council as possible.
- Work with the Chair to establish the agenda.
- Get insight into what is on the mind of their school, and to get clarity for the Council on topics.
- It's really important for the Council and principal to work together and communicate arising issues, prior to the meetings, so the principal can be prepared to address the topic.
- To listen openly to Council ideas, share information in a timely manner.
- Help facilitate meetings.
- Solicit feedback from the parent community via Council on issues affecting the entire school community (Examples: dress code, Code of Conduct and bell times).

### Chair

- Start meetings with a celebration of good news and successes happening in the classrooms.
- End meeting on time
- Make sure you're seated in a spot that you can make sure that everyone is participating.
- Remain impartial and ensure everyone has a chance to talk.
- Keep the meeting on track with the focus on reaching every student. Keep the direction of the goals/decisions as Council on the focus of equality for all students, and family demographics.
- Make sure you have an agenda and establish a relationship with the administration, to help build the agenda topics. Solicit input from Council members on items that need to be on the agenda
- If any additional information is required (prep-work), make sure you send out in advance and minutes from the previous meeting for any action item follow ups.
- Use name tags for new faces and ensure everyone is given a chance to introduce themselves.
- Make sure all members are respectful (remind parents to not make it a personal agenda platform).
- Try to reach a decision by consensus vs voting. It won't always work out that way, but it will help if an indecisive group can compromise vs a decision moving forward by a vote.
- Chair the meeting; ensure that all viewpoints around the table are heard and discussion remains respectful.
- Ensure that items that do not belong at the Council table are redirected. Ex: a parental concern regarding their student in the classroom. This would need to go through the teacher or guidance counselor first.

### **Secretary**

- Take robust minutes to document the discussions and decisions made at Council.
- Ensure minutes are posted on the website and available in the school.

### **Teacher (staff) Member**

- Share the staff viewpoint on things that are happening so Council has an appreciation for how decisions impact the classroom and operation of the school. While they do not speak to individual student issues, they can speak to general topics. Example, what are some things teachers do to help kids transition to the next grade, especially the significant milestones of gr 1, junior grades and middle school? How might technology be used in the classroom?
- They can also provide a professional teaching opinion on initiatives parents may bring to the table.
- They bring ideas back to the rest of the teaching staff for consideration.
- In an elementary school, it is helpful to have representation from both the primary and junior levels. The two reps could alternate meetings.
- Relay information between the staff and Council. If there is information Council would like, ask the teacher rep(s) to bring it to their next meeting.
- Speaks about programs, what's happening in the classrooms, collect staff wish lists, and also organizes our student representative.
- Present proposals for items needed at the school.
- Should be included on all emails (agendas/minutes etc.) as part of Council and take responsibility for passing the information to colleagues through email or, in conjunction with the principal, at staff meetings.

### **Community Member**

- To provide a community or neighbour viewpoint
- Community representatives can be a very valuable resource on a school Council yet most schools don't have one. It is worth seeing if there is someone in your community who could be that voice.
- Whenever we engage the community members on specific topics, it is helpful to gain insight and knowledge that would benefit the school community.

## What types of fundraising have been most successful? How are decisions made regarding fundraising?

- Any and all spending decisions are made by a recorded vote.
- As Chair, I prepare a written report in advance outlining the opportunities or ideas that have been brought to the table, getting as much detail as possible including project budgets, etc.
- Sometimes many different fundraisers: magazines, wrapping paper, flowers can overwhelm students/staff/parents and can be more costly than people can afford.
- Consider doing 1 event only (Ex: dance a-thon) and set a goal. Parents know it is the only event, how much they need to pay and what the money is for. Takes considerably less volunteer time.
- If you're not sure what to do as a fundraiser, don't hesitate to reach out to your parents and survey what they would like to participate in
- If an event doesn't work, don't give up because sometimes they grow over the next year.
- Rely on other schools and network to launch into great ideas.
- Events don't have to be huge either. Sometimes the small things are just as impactful.
- Allow teachers to create wish lists in order to have an idea of what the funds are needed for and what the raised money will be used for.
- Kids love dance-a-thons. Consider giving all kids a prize and not based on who raises how much.
- Big fundraiser is Elmira Poultry.
- Consider having one Council person's role to be in charge of applying for grants. The updated WRDSB School Council Handbook includes all grants that WRAPSC was aware of.
- When looking to plan an event, contact WRAPSC to get ideas or to borrow templates from other schools, so you don't have to recreate the wheel. Get and share tons of information on [WRAPSC's Facebook page](#).

## What are your favourite community events?

- Building a sense of community is more important than bringing in money.
- Determine what you want, the benefit to bring to your community members? Fun fair; very time consuming, but brings everyone out. Get parents involved in helping with things like running booths. Make some profit, but it is more about bringing everyone together.
- Determine if it is a fundraising event or a relationship building event.
- Serve hot chocolate, play Christmas music, collect for the food bank & show a movie in the gym.
- Human library - ask people from the community to speak, run different segments where attendees move every 20 minutes to hear a different person speak on topics such as suicide prevention, public health nurse, arts community (fashion designer, author), people to speak regarding new immigrants and refugees.
- Consider many factors when preparing an event (what are the needs, who make up your community, etc).
- Bring speakers into the school and partner with other schools helps to unify the community at large.

- Events that help to educate parents and communicate about what is happening in the classrooms have been successful (example: science fair).
- Community BBQ (school and town community) is always successful.

### What suggestions or tools can you give to help cope with negative voices on Council?

- As the Chair, you need to keep the meeting on point. Also be conscious that there might be a hidden agenda/underlying issue to the negativity.
- Establish a Code of Conduct and review it at the beginning of the year. If a meeting is not going well, you can suggest taking the issue offline or reschedule the meeting.
- Good communicating skills include ensuring the person knows they were heard and validate their feelings but set the boundary to move forward.
- Lean on your administrator for managing those difficult situations.
- If an event has consistent negative feedback, you can/should also solicit feedback for all events
- Be conscious of the fact that Council is a volunteer group of parents, and remember that people will make mistakes and everyone has a learning curve.

### How do we attract more parents to join Council, attend Council events and help out?

- Council does outreach with our community partners by attending their meetings.
- Council table at Grade 8 or 9 Parents' Nights Parent-Teacher interview nights.
- Be PRESENT! Having a presence helps and perhaps have the Chair say a few words at events.
- Create public relations documents: postcards, buttons, and posters to advertise your Council. Example at right:



### How do we avoid volunteer burn-out?

- How to avoid burnout. Do not underestimate the importance of this as most of the work is being done by the minority of parents!
  - ASK for help! People, especially newcomers, assume that everything is under control unless you actually ask for volunteers. If someone is passionate about it, they will step forward. If not, perhaps it is not that important to the school community.
  - Do only what you can do. Before canceling a project, send a note home to parents announcing that due to the lack of volunteers, the project may be cancelled.
  - Try to rotate at an event like parent-teacher night. Each takes a turn at the table so that we can also put our mom or dad hat on and see our children's teachers too!
  - Share jobs if necessary – try to get Co-Chairs, Co-Secretaries, Co-WRAPSC reps.



- Form subcommittees if needed and let people target their interest so they feel they are biting off a smaller piece of the pie.
- Recruit current students. Older students can be greeters and direct parents during an event. Student-made posters promoting an event or a project are nice to hang in a school - let them get creative. When students are involved, they are more likely to encourage their parents to attend.
- Recruit secondary school students whenever possible! This allows parents to enjoy the evening with their kids. Ask if any Council parents know kids in high school who can help and ask them to recruit friends. Create a flyer with contact information, a sign-up sheet and an announcement for the school guidance office. Secondary students (generally) prefer to text so have a volunteer willing to communicate via text. Follow up with a reminder close to the event day & remind them to bring their volunteer sheet. Have the Principal ready with a pen at the end of the night. Where applicable, offer free food while they are helping.
- There are many parents who want to help but can't get into the school during school hours. Create a list of jobs that can be done at home - writing grant applications, communicating with volunteers, creating flyers, writing announcements, prepping tickets, etc. Send home a flyer with the list of jobs. Try to keep each job to a small time commitment.
- Ask Council members to bring a friend to meetings or ask their friends to do at-home jobs.
- Keep meetings enjoyable. Greet everyone as they enter, thank them for their time as the meeting closes. Get to know members beyond their relationship with the school, chat and laugh.

### **What is in place within the board to support Councils? Where do Councils find help and how can they help parents find the help and answers they are looking for?**

- WRAPSC is awesome!
- The new WRDSB School Council Handbook!
- Your administrator can link you to staff resources in the board.

### **What are effective ways to communicate with the larger parent community? What effect does CASL have and how can you get around that? How does social media fit in?**

- Facebook –share items from the school, the Board, WRAPSC, People for Education
- School website
- Phone outs
- School sign
- See the board website and the new WRDSB School Council Handbook regarding CASL, social media and communication.

### **How can I find out if my Council is achieving its goals?**

- Ask! Use Survey Monkey and have parents fill it in online.
- Reduce the number of meetings. Perhaps only meet 6 times per year but communicate by email between meetings to send out minutes, updates from WRAPSC, and to keep people engaged.
- Ensure you are putting effort into succession planning

- > At last meeting of the year, we talk about succession planning for the next year: who is staying on and who is graduating?
- > This is where bylaws can also help as you can customize them. One school set up their Co-Chair position so that it was two-year position and they were staggered after the first year, so that there was always a returning Chair to guide the new person.
- > This is where having co-Chairs can really help!
- > For things like PRO grant application where the application for next year's project is due by May of this year, work with the incoming Chairperson.
- > Commit to running events for multiple years so that as soon as the current year's is wrapped up, a post-mortem is held and planning for next year can begin.

## **Post-Event Questions:**

### **A lot of food was mentioned at events. How do you work around the healthy food policy?**

- There are exception days written into the healthy food policy. Create a plan early in the year with the school to ensure Council events with food are budgeted into these exception days. Creating a Council plan of events, projects and fundraisers for the year also helps to align projects, charity drives, etc. with the school's plans to ensure parents are not overwhelmed with requests for funds and time.
- We are lucky to have a life skills class that bake treats; not always healthy though. We have had pizza or veggies. We don't provide a lot of food, mostly cookies as this is part of the class program.

### **How do you deal with teachers who are reluctant to change and embrace student and parent voice?**

- Establish and maintain a good working relationship with staff and teachers.
- Have positive discussions at Council about the good things going on at the school and how parents can support this good work.
- If there is a concern, ask questions to understand why the issue is happening.
- Provide reasonable and actionable solutions.
- This is largely driven by the tone set by the principals, so work on maintaining positive relationships!



## 2015-16 PIC Town Hall Sessions

# Welcome

### Targets for Tonight:

1. Provide Insights Into “Parent Engagement” and our current work and available resources.
2. Explain how our organizational structure has been refined to provide for engagement of stakeholders.
3. Share some personal experiences of the importance of parents in the shared role of optimizing student achievement & well-being.

## 3 Questions For You...

1. What is your personal definition of Parent Engagement?
2. How would you like to be involved in your child's education?
3. As a parent, what is your expectation of the Education Centre staff?



Waterloo Region  
District School Board

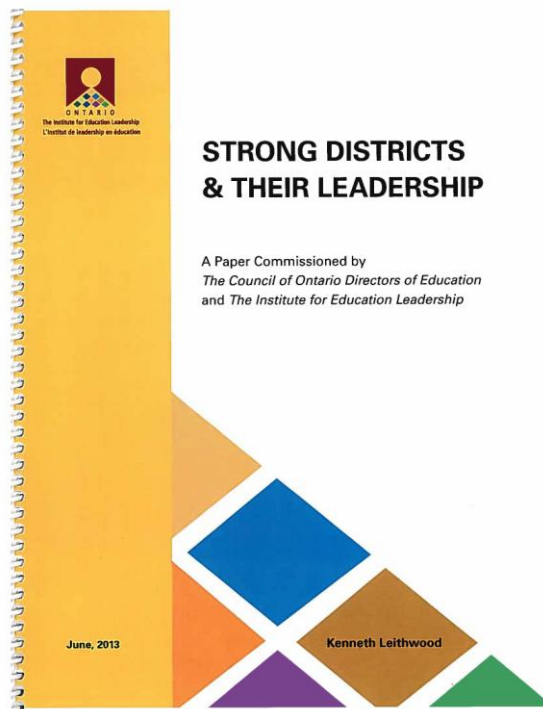
## WRDSB

### Senior Team Reorganization

Improving productive working relationships

# Why Reorganize?

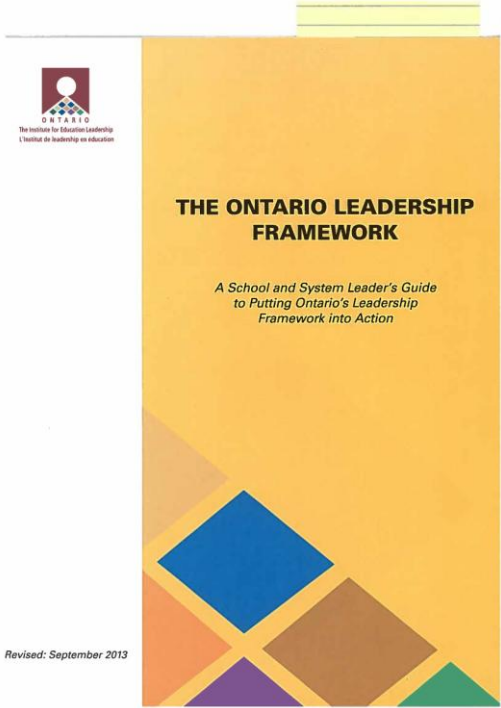
- We identified collectively that we needed to change
- Challenges with relationships, service, trust
- Believe our new structure will support improved student achievement



# Productive Working Relationships with Staff and other Stakeholders

The relationships that matter most and that are the focus of development in strong districts lie within the central office and between the central office and its schools, parents, local community groups and the Ministry of Education. Communication throughout the system and within schools is nurtured by structures which encourage collaborative work.

*Strong Districts & Their Leadership - Kenneth Leithwood*



## Nurturing Productive Working Relationships

- Adopt service orientation
- Encourage reciprocal communication that is open and transparent
- Develop open, collaborative relationships
- Promote high levels of interaction & shared sense of responsibility
- Buffer schools from external distractions

*Ontario Leadership Framework, p. 19*

## Our Belief

**We believe enhancing our productive working relationships will improve student achievement and well-being.**

## The Goals of the Reorganization

- Utilize the new organizational structure to improve service and build trust between central office and schools
- Learn together about how best to lead and reciprocally serve each other and our school communities



If we improve service then we will enhance trust and productive working relationships which will positively impact student achievement and well-being.





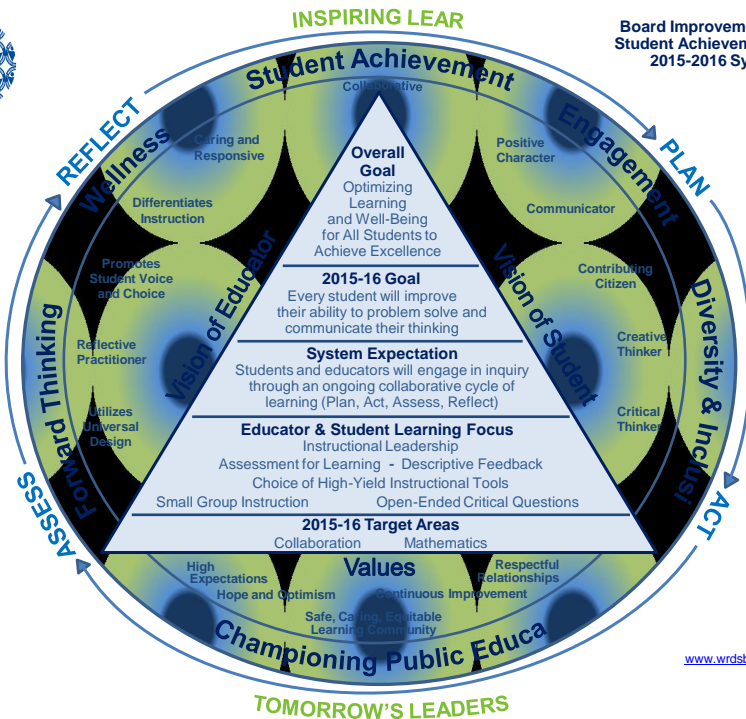
**Relationships + Service + Trust =  
Improved Student Achievement & Well-Being**



**Board Improvement Plan  
for Student Achievement  
and Well-Being**

**2015-16**





## Links to Referenced Materials...

### 1. Strong Districts & Their Leadership

[https://education-leadership-ontario.ca/media/resource/Strong\\_Districts\\_and\\_their\\_Leadership\\_2013.pdf](https://education-leadership-ontario.ca/media/resource/Strong_Districts_and_their_Leadership_2013.pdf)

### 2. The Ontario Leadership Framework

[https://iel.immix.ca/storage/6/1380680840/OLF\\_User\\_Guide\\_FINAL.pdf](https://iel.immix.ca/storage/6/1380680840/OLF_User_Guide_FINAL.pdf)

### 3. Achieving Excellence

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/renewedVision.pdf>