

May 18, 2021
PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Waterloo Region District School Board **Parent Involvement Committee** was held on Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at 6:30 pm virtually on zoom, with the following members in attendance:

Trustees: L. Tremble

Board Staff: D. Ahluwalia, D. Ballantyne, J. Bryant, M. Gerard, M. Hoare, H. McKinna, C. Newton, K. Penticost, L. Read, T. Sargeant, S. Shadaan, M. Weinert

Committee Members: M. Bond, E. Campbell, B. Daniel, Z. Gent, H. Holmes, C. Laughren, R. Shaheen, N. Sheen, C. Smith, C. Ugwuogo, T. Webster, J. Wright

Regrets: S. McCrae

Guests: A. Allen, Tracy

Call to Order

Committee Co-Chair M. Bond called the meeting to order at 6:36 pm.

Welcome and Territorial Acknowledgement

M. Bond welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Approval of Agenda

1. Moved by H. Holmes, seconded by Z. Gent:

That the agenda of the May 18, 2021, Parent Involvement Committee meeting be approved.

-Carried-

Approval of Minutes

2. Moved by H. Holmes, seconded by C. Ugwuogo:

Additions to March 2, 2021 Minutes: add Committee Member C. Smith as attendee and add to New Business section, C. Laughren offered to speak to the Mental Health Advisory Committee regarding her own personal experience with a school and the resources and the mental health community.

That the minutes of the March 2, 2021, Parent Involvement Committee meeting be approved with the above noted additions.

-Carried-

Director's Update: Director J. Bryant

Director Bryant indicated they will provide Ministry and Board updates. Associate Director Read will discuss Return to School plans, Coordinating Superintendent Gerard will provide updates on

AODA plan, PRO Grants and GSN and Coordinating Superintendent Weinert will provide an update on P5000 Employment. D Ahluwalia will also comment on emerging concerns.

We appreciate the patience of parents and students. The pandemic has provided a significant set of complex situations we have to work through. We do not know what the future holds and we are making the best decisions we can with the information we have. We are working closely with Public Health and our coterminous board to make decisions. We will remain flexible so we can pivot if needed, while continuing to get things in place for the upcoming school year.

[Update to Parent Involvement Committee – May 18, 2021](#)

School Reopening & September Planning – Associate Director L. Read

What do families need to do and by when?

- New deadline is June 2nd by 4 pm
- Current WRDSB families – to attend in-person, nothing further to do
- Current WRDSB families – to enrol their child in Remote Learning, contact your school
- Decision is for the entire year

Helping Families Decide

- Feedback from PIC, WRAPSC, Community Partners to reach newcomer families and marginalized communities

In-Person Learning – K – Grade 12

- Focus on safely, mental health and well being
- Students will be cohorted
- Teacher will continue to be expected to maintain a virtual environment
- Secondary schedules are yet to be confirmed, Ministry has indicated quadmester model, we are hoping for two classes per day vs the current one

Elementary Remote Learning – Learning at Home

- School day 9 – 3:20 pm with two 40 min breaks, 180 to 225 minutes of online synchronous instruction per day
- Teachers will be dedicated to remote learning
- Students will cover same subjects and curriculum and will use Google Classroom or Brightspace
- ESL & IEP will continue to be supported

Secondary Remote Learning – Learning at Home

- 180 to 225 minutes of online synchronous instruction per day
- Limited course options at each grade level for each pathway
- Teachers will be dedicated to remote learning
- The SLRP will follow the same school calendar and daily schedule as in-person
- ESL/ELD with fewer course options
- SHSM, French Immersion, Advanced Placement, IB and Integrated Arts programs will not be available

Summary – We know these are difficult decisions to make

- Need to determine number of students registering for Remote Learning so we can staff appropriately
- Limited resources and staff
- Public Health situation continues to evolve
- Teachers, educational staff, administrators are here to support you should you have

questions

- Encourage families to focus on learning, mental health and well being needs of their children

Questions

1. What do you mean by regular school activities? We receive lots of questions regarding clubs and sports, etc...?

Answer: It will depend on what is permitted by Public Health. We acknowledge that is an important part of the student learning experience and for the well being of students and staff.

2. Follow-up question: If students are still cohorted how will we go back to these activities?

Answer: Anything in-person will be difficult to resume in the Fall until cohorting has ended. It will be Ministry and Public Health that provides direction/guidance that we will follow.

3. What was the interest in Remote Learning at first deadline?

Answer: 6% requesting remote learning, prior to moving to full remote we had 30-35% enrolled in distance learning.

4. Confirmation - If families filled out the form and they are fine with it, they do not have to do anything. If they want to make a change, contact their student's school. Yes, that's correct.

5. Is Quadmestering mandated by the Ministry?

Answer: The Ministry of Education is strongly encouraging boards to look at quadmestering. In Secondary this year, we had a quadmester system and class sizes of 15 or fewer. Quadmestering is the first level of cohorting. We are hopeful that students will be able to go to school everyday and we will not have to go to the second level of cohorting. Public health weighs in on this and it's based on local data and local transmission rates. Contact tracing is very challenging in a semestered approach. The Board in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Public Health are going forward with quadmestering. Anything different than this will need to be approved by Ministry and Public Health. Secondary teams are looking at every option. Currently considering four different models.

Coordinating Superintendent of Business Services & Treasurer of the Board, M. Gerard

Parent Reaching Out Grant 2021 – Update

- 46 School Council PRO Projects and \$20,305 in funding were approved for 43 Elementary and 3 Secondary School
- 65% of project included virtual speaker/workshop on topics such as mental health, well being, internet safety, environment, physical activity, virtual art and talent nights, etc..
- Regional Project: PIC offered free online speaker sessions for parents and caregivers. Designed to Engage, Equip and Energize parents.
- Budget \$12,500
- Summary, complex year to plan and execute PRO Grant projects. All projects followed COVID-19 protocols.

- 2021-22 PRO Grant funding announced \$68,900 more than double this year's funding.
- How we can equitably deploy these funds and receive the most value?

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Plan (AODA) - Update

- Review of 2012-2020 Accommodation Plan
- Review of Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act updates
- Development of plan objectives for 2021-2026
- Key areas of the Plan: Customer Service, Employment, Information and Communication, Physical Environment, Systemic, and Transportation
- Consultation to Date: Accommodation Steering Committee, EIAG, SEAC, Union Partners, Student Senate, PIC, WRAPSC
- Next Steps: updating plan with feedback received
- Prepare a draft plan for review and approval by the Board of Trustees
- Publish plan on Board's website
- Provide opportunities for ongoing feedback
- Monitor and report on the Board's progress to plan

2021 – 2022 Grants for Student Needs (GSNs)

- Received on May 4, 2021 – focus on important memorandums B7 and B8 and changes to the GSN
- Provided information related to September 2021 planning, Priorities and Partnership funding, COVID-19 Supports, School condition and improvement and renewal funding, Board projections based on Ministry information
- As enrolment changes numbers are subject to change
- COVID Related Supports subject to Half Year Rule – the following supports have been made available:
 - Additional staffing, School operation supports, Transportation, Special Education support, Mental Health supports, Re-engaging Students and Reading assessment
 - Agreement for the funding will not flow to us until the Fall
 - Next Steps:
 - Staffing is underway
 - September 2021 planning underway – mode of learning June 2021
 - Awaiting further direction from the Ministry
 - Budget tabled with Board of Trustees during the week of June 14, 2021

Coordinating Superintendent of Human Resources, M. Weinert

Revised Policy P5000 Employment (Fair, Equitable and Inclusive Hiring)

Update on revised policy P5000 Employment – Ministry of Education revoked reg 274 Hiring Practices Ministry issued Policy Program Memorandum, the deadline is March 31 to have a new policy approved, the new policy essentially mirrors PPM 165.

Question from PIC member: In section 7, the representation content, how is this determined? Is it evidence based, through the student census, etc.? How often is it revisited? That section was vague and there may be an opportunity to talk about the value of the census work. How often do you look at the diversity of not just the students but our communities?

Workforce census is used to compare and increase the baseline and representation within our various employee groups. When another workforce census is conducted, we can compare, how have we done, and look at is our workforce representative of the community in our region?

Gratitude to PIC

- Director Bryant shared his sincere thanks with the Parent Involvement Committee, on behalf of the entire senior team. Working closely with parents through PIC and our School Councils is so important to the work we do. Volunteerism – the best models for that are parents and our staff, the support and connections are tremendous. Thank you for all your work.

Emerging Concerns

Deepa Alhuwalia is the Human Rights and Equity Advisor for the Board and has been in the position since 2020. She's been with the Board since 2008.

The goal is to help the system identify systemic barriers and work with staff to eliminate these barriers.

What supports or training is provided to school council members to make sure they understand their rights and responsibilities under the Human Rights Code? The Human Rights Branch can work with Staff to create a click and play module that could be shared at an early school council meeting in the fall and with opportunities to pause and have a conversation and dialogue about the information. Work can begin over the summer and we can ask for feedback from members of PIC and WRAPSC.

What sort of support is available to PIC membership recruitment in terms of equity and diversity? There are opportunities related to engaging in professional development and PIC can reach out to the Human Rights Branch to discuss these opportunities.

PIC would like to request some support for Membership Recruitment for members of committee doing the interviewing around bias awareness training, reviewing interview questions, and creating a question(s) related to equity, on why it's foundational and important. Deepa offered to work with PIC to help set this up. Important to include the selection criteria PIC is using, the process, having a lens on the whole package, and particularly on some of the language that is used.

On May 6, Deepa Ahluwalia and Leah Martin held a stakeholder feedback session to review the draft Human Rights Procedure. PIC members are wondering what is going to happen with that feedback and when will those procedures be available that outline next steps people can take when they think the Human Rights Policy has been violated. It is a robust feedback process, 20 different groups, scheduling some stakeholder feedback sessions into the Fall, and hoping to have the procedure ready early in the new year. PIC request, please consider providing groups with two weeks to gather and provide feedback.

Trustee Report, Trustee L. Tremble

Trustee Report is included in the agenda package. Trustee Tremble shared that Trustees are receiving training on the Policy Review Guide on June 2, 2021. Policies will likely be back on the Board Agenda on June 14, 2021. If there is Policies PIC members want to comment on, email feedback to Trustee Tremble.

Trustee Tremble will inquire about who is providing the Policy Review Guide Training and ask if PIC can be scheduled for training.

Trustee Tremble asked if there were any questions about the Ministry of Education Proposal for Remote Learning and encouraged parents to send a letter to Minister, MPPs, etc. happy to help with letter content, if needed.

Treasurer's Report

E. Campbell presented the Financial report. There were no questions. Full summary on PRO Grant Event expenditures is included in the Agenda Package.

Co-Chair Report

Co-Chair B. Daniel shared the Co-Chair Report which was included in the agenda package.

PRO Grant Event was a success in April. PIC Immigrant Engagement Sub Committee met with Kind Edward School Council.

Thank you to Director Bryant for your leadership and team approach.

Thank you to all PIC members for your dedication, efforts, and time you've shared with us to make this committee successful.

Looking to plan a strategic meeting in the summer to discuss goals for September.

Membership Report

Recruitment committee consists of C. Laughren, M. Bond, B. Daniel, E. Campbell and C. Smith.

Completed [PIC Mid Year Check-In – March 2021](#) using a quick 10 question survey with parent members. The 2020-21 PIC Committee has diverse parent representation from throughout the region. Important to gather evidence mid-way through the year to find out how parent members are feeling and use the information to inform our recruitment strategy and future PIC strategies.

Response rate: 12/13 members. Top three reasons for participating in PIC: i) contribute to my community, ii) address diversity, inclusion and barriers to engagement, iii) insight into decisions which could affect their child's learning and well-being.

Survey feedback revealed three recurring themes: Orientation to PIC; Relationship with the WRDSB; PIC Operations

Recruitment – currently documenting our process for how we are recruiting, considering where we have gaps in parent representation and actively recruiting through established Board communication channels.

Received 13 applications to date, deadline May 31, 2021. Interviews will take place in June 2021. PIC Committee will be selected and ready to go for September 2021.

Highlight that our PIC is the only statutory committee of the Board where parents recruit parent volunteers. Have not had a review of process or selection criteria and it can change year by year, depending on parents.

We have asked Deepa and her team to review our recruitment materials. This will help ensure PIC Committee selection is equitable and fair from year to year and that the process is documented, which will make it more efficient.

We are still looking for a community representative, we can have up to three.

Asking for any recommendations from our members that are leaving and also asked PIC members to promote that PIC is recruiting.

PRO Grant Event Report

PIC offered free online speaker sessions with parenting experts for parents and caregivers.

Three different sessions were offered plus one delivered specifically to WRAPSC. Participation ranged between 295 and 402 people, there were 1094 registrations, not including the Tuesday WRAPSC meeting.

- April 7 - Jennifer Kolari, MSW, RSW: Helping your child to thrive with connected parenting & Rob Bebenek: Comedy act. Registrations: 402
- April 8 - Dr, Jean Clinton: Resilience: How can we support our kids and ourselves in these challenging times? Registrations: 397; 291/397 attended the event.
- April 10 - Selam Debs: Anti-racism Workshop & Jonathan Hood – How to Thrive and Feel Alive during tough times. Registrations: 295
- 40-50% attendance at the sessions.

Post Speaker Sessions Survey response of only 5%, but no negative responses
Virtual is a great option – we live in a large region, consider hybrid or virtual option for the future
Support for teenage girls came up a lot and more sessions on mental health. Parents expressed need for Q&A and more interactive sessions in the future.

Thank you to the PIC PRO Grant Event Committee and the contributions of everyone on PIC that was involved and thanks to the Communications Dept. for the marketing and tech support.

Group Discussion Questions

- What are the plans for destreaming in Grade 9 for September 2021-22?

Answer: Associate Director Read – The core of the decision to destream is research and evidence that demonstrate disproportionate outcomes for racialized students specifically. Where students are destreamed we see more equitable outcomes and success for all students. Staff could share more information about destreaming in the Fall.

- C. Laughren shared an observation based on her own experience and that of other parents, that the use of surveys involving students has gone up exponentially. Through the Research Department many surveys are being conducted including: Student Census, MDI Survey, Preferences of Learning, Quadmestering, etc. In addition, teachers, guidance, Student Councils are also doing surveys. Students are being surveyed on everything. Does the Board have a Policy/Directive/Guideline in place for how we approach our students with surveys? It is a lot to ask of students to answer the many different surveys with the “give back” or the results being shared in a meaningful way. Has the Board considered providing guidelines on how this tool is used so we are protecting our students and so they also do not experience survey fatigue for the important surveys?

Answer: Associate Director Read – We do not currently have a Guideline in place, and we share your concerns around survey fatigue. Over the last year and a half, we have seen more surveying of not only students, but families, staff, and community. We have heard that feedback and are taking it away and thinking about it.
The good news is we’re looking to gather student voice input. We need to match that with what are they receiving in return, what is the action that’s coming out of gathering that feedback. We do try to do that centrally, but we could investigate introducing some broader Guidelines and protecting our students from survey fatigue. We must clear the traffic so we can gather the important feedback for the Board and the Ministry that informs decisions. We hear your concerns and appreciate your candid feedback and will take it away.

C. Laughren could you ask the Research Department to provide some Best Practices to

use when conducting surveys given the many different groups being surveyed.

J. Bryant this is an important issue, and we share your concerns. We have received a number of requests from the Ministry of Education who are monitoring what's going on in each board this year and to inform their decisions. Some of the data is quite critical in how the Ministry supports us and future direction, etc.... Survey fatigue is something we've heard of and we will take your concerns back and work with our Research Dept.

New Business / Future Agenda Items

- Destreaming – Information regarding implementation
- Survey fatigue and possibility of Survey Guidelines and/or Best Practices

Next PIC Meeting

- 2021-22 PIC Tentative Meeting Dates
 - Tentative PIC Parent Members Orientation Meeting: September 21, 2021
 - Tentative PIC Meeting Dates: September 28, 2021, October 26, 2021, December 7, 2021, January 25, 2022, March 1, 2022, May 17, 2022

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.