

October 26, 2021
PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Waterloo Region District School Board **Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)** was held on Tuesday, October 26, at 6:30 pm virtually on zoom, with the following members in attendance:

Trustees: K. Meissner, L. Tremble

Board Staff: D. Ballantyne, j. chanicka, M. Gerard, M. Hoare, H. McKinna, L. Read, S. Shadaan, G. Shantz

Committee Members: H. Asif, M. Bond, B. Daniel, Z. Gent, C. Laughren, S. Lehal, A. Misra, R. Shaheen, P. Shaw, N. Sheen, C. Ugwuogo,

Regrets: E. Dougan-McKenzie, C. Chugh, M. Wang

Guests: M. Smellie

Call to Order

Committee Co-Chair M. Bond called the meeting to order at 6:38 pm. B. Daniel offered a Territorial Acknowledgement.

Approval of Agenda

The PIC committee approved the agenda for the October 26, 2021 meeting.

Approval of Minutes

The PIC committee approved the minutes from the September 28, 2021 meeting.

Director's Update, Director j. chanicka, Associate Director L. Read, Co-ordinating Superintendent G. Shantz, Coordinating Superintendent M. Gerard

Director chanicka thanked all the parents for sharing their time on this committee.

The Board is at the beginning of the strategic planning process. Staff and Trustees have been working together, Trustees have asked that we honour the work that's already been done, centre the voices of our students and families and pay attention to the needs of our most marginalized students. We plan to build on the data that we have already gathered and will seek third party support to help facilitate the strategic planning process; there will also be an extensive consultation process. We are trying to refresh our current strategic priorities, create new strategies, including a new mission and vision and a learner profile for the WRDSB, all while centering the voices of our students and families and considering how to move the organization towards the 22nd century. We want to engage our students and families in this process, and we will come to PIC for feedback and hopefully benefit from your connections to your community.

A Learner Profile is a profile of our learners after they complete their career as students with us. Who is the type of student we want to graduate from WRDSB?

The WRDSB has partnered with the City of Kitchener to support "A Better Tent City", they have moved in beside the Education Centre and we are supporting with some access to some of the WRDSB's property and support their community members. If we want our students to grow into caring and compassionate

citizens, we need to model that for them to see, the idea of being the change and supporting the people in our community who are in need.

PIC committee member suggested consideration be given to consulting with current and past PIC members. Director Chanicka confirmed they are looking to consult with our families in more than one way, current PIC members, as well as community members and details will be shared when confirmed.

Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grant 2021-22

Coordinating Superintendent Matt Gerard thanked PIC for having him to talk about PRO Grants. We have had a great partnership with many stakeholders, including PIC and the PRO Grant Evaluation Committee. The WRDSB is in a better position than we have been in the last two years. In 2019-20 the Ministry changed the process and now School Boards oversee the PRO Grant process. The WRDSB now has greater autonomy and flexibility to meet the needs of those that we serve.

Desired Outcomes

The Ministry has specified a few criteria that we are to abide by, one of which is desired outcomes. The desired outcomes are what projects are intended to support and address. The language and the direction we've provided by the Ministry has changed and is better.

- Project demonstrates parent input on how schools can improve in at least one of the following areas:
 - Addressing social inclusion and racism specifically anti-Asian, anti-Black, and anti-Indigenous racism and other prejudices toward racialized and marginalized groups
 - Creating a safe and welcoming environment
 - Demonstrating respect for parents as valued partners within the education system regarding decisions about their child's education
 - Enhancing communication with teachers
 - Informing parents about the expectations of the Ontario Curriculum and supporting resources.

Project Activities

Suggestions by the Ministry of activities the projects can engage in. COVID continues to be the main scope restriction, in terms of what can and cannot be done (gatherings, etc.). Most projects are out-reach type events where people from school and school communities are connecting.

- Activities will support school council initiatives or initiatives in partnership with community organizations.
- Activities will identify and address local barriers to parent engagement and may include but are not limited to:
 - Development of parent resources (e.g. leadership resource for parents, resources addressing well-being, mental health, and anti-racism for students and families, etc.)
 - Delivery of parent information sessions (e.g. how to support children and families at home, how to understand curriculum, etc.)
 - Delivery of parent engagement sessions (ex. parent networking sessions)
 - Innovative activities that enable enhanced and diversified parent engagement.

Performance Measures

Performance measures, as outlined in the Final Report, include:

- Improved relationship between school board, PIC and school councils in making project funding decisions

- Increased consultation with PIC and additional parent groups such as SEAC, IEC, school councils, community groups, board's equity body)
- Increase parent participation in initiatives and projects
- Increased promotion of diversity, equity and inclusion at the local level
- Evidence of parent involvement in leadership roles, reporting, and decision making

In 2020-21 we were allocated \$36,000 but only spent \$24,981, we want to avoid sending money back to the Ministry. To support the schools and regional project, the PRO Grant funding is substantially larger in 2021-22:

2018-19 \$91,764
 2019-20 \$36,478
 2020-21 \$36,000
 2021-22 \$68,953

Guiding Principles - used in the past (established in 2020-21)

This is the starting point for the 2021-22 PRO Grants.

- Maintain support Regional PRO Project/Event - PIC to apply for Regional PRO Grant
- Focus on schools that need our support the most (Social Economic Indicators)
- Partnerships with nearby schools/feeder schools (Secondary and Elementary families of schools partnering – this does not happen often)

Points up for discussion tonight:

- *Previously provided schools a range of funding between \$250 - \$500*
- *Support as many schools as possible with the funding available*

Placing Equity at the Forefront

Trustee Meissner and Marcia Smellie were members of the 2020-21 PRO Grant Evaluation Committee and are members of the WRDSB's Equity and Inclusion Advisory Group (EIAG). They have joined us tonight to discuss some thoughts and suggestions on how to place equity at the forefront and create the best opportunity to use this funding. Trustee Meissner thanked everyone for welcoming her and Marcia to the meeting. PIC member Christina Laughren was also a member of the 2020-21 PRO Grant Evaluation Committee.

If we want to be intentional about placing equity at the forefront, we have some thoughts and ideas to share for your consideration, discussion, and input. How can we encourage parent involvement on a meaningful level? Parent involvement looks very different depending on the person and family situation, cultural background, sometimes it's going to an event hosted at school, connecting with teachers, ensuring there's a quiet space to study at home, or participating in committees like PIC.

- What do we allocate to the regional project versus school based project?
- Should we emphasize certain desired outcomes over others (ie, addressing social inclusion and racism)?
- How do we ensure PRO Grant funds are spent?
- How do we distribute funds in an equitable manner?

Sometimes people think because a set amount of money is available, we need to distribute it equally. In certain communities, we know that fundraising is not easy and those schools do not always have access to other funds. Important to ensure funds are distributed in an equitable way not an equal way. To do this we need to look at the socioeconomic factors for schools. We know some schools are also physically close to each other from a distance perspective. Among the desired outcomes are issues of social inclusion, racism, and mental health issues.

Trustee Meissner shared thoughts and questions of how to empower the evaluation committee to understand the socio-economic situation of schools, including do they have active school councils? How can we ensure we have all the information and flexibility that is needed for funds to move a project forward and really focus on the equity piece to support the schools that need it most? How are we evaluating the Regional vs School projects, how many families are we reaching are we receiving value for the funds spent. Some thoughts for consideration and discussion.

M. Gerard emphasized there is a predefined process the Ministry has indicated we have to follow, including proposal/application, project budget, report back. Key questions what is the funding split between regional and school projects? How do we want to approach the school based projects and allocate funding with consideration to schools with the highest needs?

Questions/Comments

Q. Is there a way to simplify the application form? Consider simplifying the language and shortening the form.

A. The evaluation committee can review the form in advance of sending it out to make it more user friendly to try to reduce and/or eliminate this barrier.

Q. Consider surveying school councils. From PIC member experience the amount of work to receive \$500 in funding was not worth it for us. It is not always money, it is also volunteer time and staff support, etc. Also, be careful when considering active and nonactive school councils' status. Even some active school councils have decided not to fundraise.

Q. Speaking to the issue of representation on school council from underrepresented groups and the issue to address antiracism through the PRO Grants, is it possible for the regional projects to look to community service organizations, Muslim social services, Multicultural Centre, etc. to help provide that leadership? These approaches are helpful because the alternative is having dominant cultures writing grants for underserved cultures and doing it for them and not doing it with them. Encourage partnerships with community service agencies.

Q. How can PIC support school councils in writing the application for PRO Grant funding? How does this information get communicated to school councils and is there anything that PIC can do to help fill out the forms, to support capacity building?

A. Great perspective and thinking PIC is knowledgeable re: the application process, should there be more dollars allocated to the regional event to help support some of those parents or communities that may not be in the best position to write those grants with the goal of building capacity, so they have the knowledge and ability for them to write the applications in future years.

Consider creating a video going out to schools with all the information about PRO Grants, how to apply, project ideas, how to partner/collaborate with their family of schools, etc. It may encourage school councils to participate, more than an attachment in an email.

Successful projects from one school can be replicated with the help of community agencies, social services agencies that are trying to help speed up the connection making and networking with the help of Principals, staff, and school councils. It can become a ripple effect in the community and the agencies will be happy to help and reach out.

Q. What are the problems to solve? Having socioeconomic indicators can help to determine. The

concept of value for money, is the money you're spending going to give you the desired benefit? We are investing this money, is there a better way? There are a lot of speakers happy to help pro bono. Rather than defaulting to, we must pay this person, there are many resources and people within our community.

Action Items

- Improve clarity around the process, simplify application form, examples of successful projects
- Promote PRO Grants, PIC can lead this as a Regional project to create a video for school councils with information PRO Grants.
- Consider hosting a traditional (virtual) PIC PRO Grant Regional Event.
- Does PIC want to consider reaching out to some affinity groups or associations in the region to help support us and should it be administered centrally by PIC?
- Need feedback/decision from PIC on the three ideas regarding plans to spend Regional funding dollars.
- School perspective is to allocate dollars to schools with higher needs based on socio-economic indicators. Keep in mind we have 121 schools plus 2 alternative education sites. We'll have to make decisions about what this will look like to differentiate the project amounts.
- Timelines likely will have to be modified based on feedback received tonight that we need to action and they may change.

PIC Co-Chairs to come back to staff with some thoughts on plans for the Regional dollars, staff will make changes suggested and confirm members of the PRO Grant Evaluation Committee.

Question: When referring to marginalized and minority communities, who is the board talking about that we need to be supporting? Where can we find that information, so we're not going on individual assumptions?

Answer: One internal resource the board has is an equity index. It aligns with the Ministry's development index but there are some other factors included in our index.

To look at it from an equity perspective, there are marginalized individuals in every school community, looking at social factors there may be more marginalized individuals in some communities than others.

There are some individuals and communities that have been historically disproportionately underrepresented including Black and Indigenous students, students that come from poverty, 2SLGBTQ+ students, students with identified learning needs, newcomer students and Multi Language Learners (MLL) students.

There are some communities that have been historically underrepresented, and identity can be a predictor of success for those communities. This has been consistent over the last 40 years and this is supported by research, which includes the communities mentioned previously. This is not limited to the WRDSB and it is in every education system throughout North America.

PIC Committee Member suggested the committee consider the split between maintaining and improving on what PIC is currently doing and focusing on this new and important work of equity and inclusion.

Staff confirmed the PRO Grant Evaluation Committee will evaluate the projects to ensure they meet the Ministry criteria. Funds allocated to schools provide the scope for the project, where we need to change our approach is to recognize there are schools in our community that do not have money to run events and we should focus more funding for schools in greater need of support.

They may be an equity focus in their work but the goal is for equity-seeking groups to have more financial resources to do a project or event. It may be people from a school community coming together and talking about math, a math night. It is the school population that is typically underserved coming together to talk about math. The event itself creates an equity opportunity. It is important not to call out certain schools so as not to stigmatize them.

At the heart of parent involvement is equity. It is about engagement and engaging all families and which then also supports students. Most parent involvement and school council projects that come forward have an equity component. It may look like a math night but at the heart is equity, helping all families access learning and success in a more equitable way.

PIC Committee Member asked if French Immersion (FI) registration for marginalized groups is also being reviewed. Staff confirmed they could provide an update at a future meeting, prior to French Immersion registration in January. Currently, the French Immersion Review Committee is shifting to address concerns with FI to ensure the program meets the needs of all WRDSB students.

Trustee Report, Trustee Tremble

Trustee Tremble shared the Trustee Report which is included in the agenda package.

Trustee Tremble highlighted the *OPSBA Discussion Paper on Transitioning from COVID-19 School Experience*. There is a video to watch and paper that can be read, there is also a survey available until November 1, 2021. People can complete the survey or email Trustee Tremble with their feedback as she will be sending a summary to OPSBA from the WRDSB, feedback will be anonymous.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer C. Laughren shared the Treasurer's Report which is included in the agenda package.

The emphasis is to create a budget for spending. One item that came up is a motion to approve monies for four to five members of PIC to attend the Children's Mental Health Symposium (online) for approx. \$500. The member can choose one of three days to attend and you have access to recordings until the end of January 2022. Please email Christina the date you're interested in. Attendees are requested to share a summary of one of the sessions with PIC members.

1. Moved by Mandi Bond, seconded by Zac Gent:

That \$400-500 in funds be approved to send interested parents/guardian members to the 2021 Online Children's Mental Health Conference held November 19-21, 2021.

-Carried-

Co-Chairs Report

Co-Chair M. Bond shared the Co-Chair Report which is included in the agenda package. There were no questions.

Consent Agenda

Co-Chair M. Bond shared that the following four reports are included in the Agenda Package for information: Governance, Immigrant Engagement, Membership, PRO Grant.

The Co-Chairs will be approaching the next person on the list to join the PIC Committee.

After tonight's presentation, we will need to rethink the information in the PRO Grant report. We need to consider is PIC a contributor or a promoter, does PIC want to do both? Do we want to enable others to put in more applications and be very focused or do we still want to hold an event? It opens it up for some conversation. Sandeep will take the lead in setting up a meeting to discuss this.

Immigrant Engagement

The Immigrant Engagement subcommittee submitted two projects for review by PIC.

For the first project, Conversation Cafes, with the KW Community Foundations, Immigrant Equity Fund, we can have conversation cafes in schools and can develop this collaboration with this grant money. It will help schools by connecting parents, developing peer support and they will benefit by having members of their parent communities attend the program. How we can help foster that process for immigrants through our school system? The board would need to provide information to help determine which schools are the highest needs or have the largest immigrant populations. It will be dependent on the school Principal on how we can connect with families, they will be our connectors and we will need school Board support and approval for the success of the project. Rozina will be applying for this grant this week, it is due October 29, 2021.

A PIC Committee member suggested that someone from the school board would need to review the application if they are to be a supporter/collaborator on this project, as PIC's capacity is an advisory body.

In principle, this is something that the WRDSB would want to support, but staff right now are extremely taxed, it's been a challenging few months with the additional strain of continuing to navigate COVID. The proposal will be shared with Director Chanicka and Associate Director Read for their review and consideration.

Policy Review

- [P4000 Pupil Accommodation Review \(Consolidation or Closure\)](#)
- [P2009 Board Advocacy](#)
- [P2000 Environmental Values](#)
- [P3005 Expressions of Sympathy](#)
- [P4016 Business Complaint](#)
- [P3009 Parental Leave – Trustees](#)

Trustee Tremble indicated they are developing a new policy review process. It will include PIC and they will be asking for written feedback. In the future, there will be more significant consultation and accountability for the review process. A trial process will begin in January 2022 with the full process being rolled out in 2022-23. There will be fewer policies reviewed, but a more thorough and guided process.

Policies will be reviewed by the Board on November 8 and November 15, 2021. If anyone has feedback please provide it to Beth and Mandi by November 5, 2021.

Discussion Items

If you have feedback about the Ministry questions, please email it to Beth and Mandi.

PRO Grant Report Discussion

In the PRO Grant subcommittee report included with tonight's agenda package the initial plans were to host a similar event to last year over three days with a focus on health, wellness and mental health and supporting parents.

Based on tonight's discussion, does PIC want an event like last year or should we redirect our time and effort to help school councils in applying and executing PRO Grant, making the process easier for schools to run their events? For example, a video, including how to complete the application, help with the process, project ideas, etc.? This would enable schools and may have more longevity and future benefit than hosting an event.

PIC Regional Event could be used to reach more school councils and more parents. If projects/events are delivered during COVID does each school need to go through this process? Consider the Regional PRO Grant event being spread out over the year with topics that have had past success.

Could we look at producing curriculum nights (math, literacy) at the regional level and then support schools by providing supplies/resources to families? Create a base project and each school can personalize it. Do we look at engaging some of those communities that are underrepresented? Do we reach out to other Board Committees, EIAG, SEAC, IAC, etc.?

When events are brought to communities with mindfulness it is better for the community and more community members can participate making it successful.

Questions / Future Agenda Items / Final Remarks

Future Agenda Item Request: We request a discussion-based item be added to December 2021 agenda to review how PIC fits into WRDSB's parent engagement strategy/model, and what can be done to support the development of a structure for PIC to ensure the Committee is able to fulfill its mandate with a more productive and time efficient investment from PIC parent volunteers.

[Background/Rationale for this request can be found here.](#)

Next Meeting

To be held virtually, Tuesday, December 7, 2021, at 6:30 pm.

Adjournment

The Parent Involvement Committee Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.