

December 7, 2021
PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Waterloo Region District School Board **Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)** was held on Tuesday, December 7, at 6:30 pm virtually on zoom, with the following members in attendance:

Trustees: L. Tremble

Board Staff: j. chanicka, E. Dougan-McKenzie, M. Gerard, M. Hoare, H. McKinna, L. Read, S. Shadaan, G. Shantz

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

Regrets: D. Ballantyne, C. Chugh, Z. Gent

Guests: A. Lindemann

Call to Order

Committee Co-Chair B. Daniel called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm. B. Daniel offered a Territorial Acknowledgement.

Approval of Agenda

The PIC committee approved the agenda for the December 7, 2021 meeting. Moved to approve by A. Misra and seconded by M. Bond.

Approval of Minutes

The PIC committee approved the minutes from the October 26, 2021 meeting. Moved to approve by M. Bond and seconded by A. Misra

Director's Update

Director j. chanicka, Associate Director L. Read, Coordinating Superintendent G. Shantz, Coordinating Superintendent M. Gerard

Coordinating Superintendent Shantz provided an overview of the steps and processes the WRDSB is required to follow when an incident happens at a school, due to legislation.

Whenever an allegation comes forward, it could be child abuse or child neglect, we have an obligation to report. In Ontario, this is required for every school board and authority.

When a report is made Family and Children's Services (F&CS) decides if they will begin an investigation. Once this is determined, the school board has an obligation to assist F&CS. The labour investigation is on pause while F&CS carries out its investigation. They can involve the police and often work in partnership. The school board is not privy to the questions they ask and only helps to facilitate.

Information can be found on the [Human Rights Branch](#) on wrdsb.ca.

Director Chanicka expressed that it's been amazing to connect with students and staff from 82 out of 122 schools from across the district he has had the opportunity to visit. He confirmed the past 20 months of the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant cumulative impact on staff and students. Students are coming back after having been away for so long and struggling with socialization skills and how to interact with one another. There is a level of exhaustion from staff at all levels. Staff are front line workers and we continue to work to see how we can best support them.

Teacher/Parent Communication

Q. How can we connect with staff/teachers and build relationships without adding to the burden?

A. It's important to build the relationship and create the partnership. Reach out to the individual teacher and discuss what is the best way to connect. There are many communication tools such as a take home planner, weekly updates, emails, different apps such as class dojo, etc., different teachers use different tools. Depends on the teacher and the student. Encourage parents to reach out to their student's teacher. There continues to be an expectation that parents conference with families, this has not stopped it's just not on a dedicated day. If you are unable to make connections with the teacher, reach out to the Principals.

Q. How do we maintain a consistent experience for students and parents? Are there guiding principles? Is there a list of the different applications that teachers can use and is there a consideration of standardizing applications being used by teachers?

A. The use of technology has proliferated, it is important to properly manage the privacy of student and parent information. We are in the process of evaluating best practices and reviewing software applications to confirm they meet standards. We're minimizing the number of tools and making sure the ones we use are effective. The two main systems that are used are Google Classroom and D2L Brightspace platforms. The functionality and features of both of these systems are increasing exponentially.

Role of PIC /Parent Engagement

We value parent engagement and parents as partners. We recognize the value parents bring to our schools and school communities as they engage with us to improve student achievement and well-being.

The WRDSB has the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), as a provincially mandated committee and we also have a Waterloo Region Assembly of Public School Councils (WRAPSC). This is different than other boards.

We are at the beginning of the strategic planning process which will guide our work for the next five years, part of this is how we engage our communities and families. Operational pieces would connect to the strategic plan. How will this happen? Building partnerships and leveraging them. Important for there to be an ongoing dialogue/conversation between members of PIC and WRAPSC. What is the purpose of the structures, what function does the group see themselves serving and how can they work together to support parent engagement? The challenge is to be responsive and for PIC and WRAPSC to have a conversation on how to work together to meet the goals of parent engagement.

We value parent engagement and understand it needs to look different in different communities, it needs to be responsive. School councils are only one form of engagement. Some people may not feel comfortable joining a school council.

An example is we want to hear from more students as we go through the strategic planning process. What are the structures that would increase student voice that would help in our strategic planning? There is nothing legislated around student voice. We have Student Senate, and we have other groups that are contributing, none is more important than the other, they all help us to better serve.

As we go through the strategic planning process, what should PIC be thinking about?

- PIC will be engaged as a part of the strategic planning process around what you think is important for parent engagement
- Helping to scan for innovative forms of parent engagement and best practices for engaging families from across the region and sharing this information. What are examples of ways we can work together to support the parent/teacher communication recognizing the covid pieces? Also recognizing the good practices that are happening elsewhere in the board so Principals can support their teachers.

Established practice includes facilitating and supporting school council meetings, encouraging parent involvement in that structure/process. Ensuring staff understands there is an expectation and responsibility to provide ongoing communication with parents/families about student progress, learning and social-emotional development. Parents understand how to navigate the school, and who to contact when they have questions. Provincial progress reports and report cards, part of reporting structure and engagement and information sharing. Ongoing communication centrally from the board.

Opportunity to create a richer more robust definition of parent engagement and develop administrator and educator capacity on how to effectively facilitate deeper parent engagement beyond some of the formal processes that have been in place for many years.

PIC Member C. Laughren stated strategy drive's structure. Often a structure is set up to deliver on the strategy. Currently, PIC work is done through subcommittees, it is not directly related to what the board is doing and does not provide meaningful feedback within the subcommittees. PIC parent members contribute substantial volunteer time and often they do not feel that they are making an impact. For consideration, can we consider PIC as a body that creates working groups of parents that focus on specific items such as i) school council participation and operation and how that can be improved. ii) communication tools for parent/teacher relationship development iii) how to improve the way parents navigate their schools and school system. Working groups would be comprised of PIC parents that put together information for the school board and deliver it to the board at PIC meetings. PIC would be integrating the work the board is doing and providing meaningful feedback on what is happening now, rather than being sidelined and working in isolation. The structure of PIC should be supporting the strategy the board is trying to deliver.

Director Chanicka concurred with PIC member C. Laughren, these are things that would be helpful for the board in supporting and improving parent engagement with deeper, more meaningful relationships with families and the communities that we serve so we can enrich what is happening.

If PIC decides this is along the lines of what you can help us with, working groups would be so much value added, especially at this point with the strategic planning process.

Trustee Report, Trustee Tremble

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

Trustee Tremble provided an update on the Inaugural Board meeting held December 6, 2021, confirming Trustee Piatkowski was elected Chairperson of the Board and Trustee Woodcock was elected as Vice Chair of the Board.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer C. Laughren shared the Treasurer's Report which is included in the agenda package. There were no questions.

Co-Chairs Report

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

C. Laughren acknowledged the work that went into developing the plans for the PRO Grant Regional Project.

Consent Agenda

Co-Chair B. Daniel shared that the following three reports are included in the Agenda Package for information: Governance, Membership and PRO Grant.

The PRO Grant Report discussed conducting a survey on parent needs.

Consider sending a survey to WRAPSC representatives. This could help to build PIC relationship with WRAPSC. Consider that WRAPSC only includes a select group of parents and PIC may wish to include all parents.

Can the WRDSB connect PIC with SEAC and IAC? The advisory groups are comprised of not only parents but staff, community partners, agencies and organizations. Not sure these groups would provide sufficient parent connections. The board can connect the PIC to these groups.

Policy Review

- [P1007 Education Development Charges](#)
- [P2004 Character Education and Social-Emotional Skills Development](#)
- [P3003 Trustee Professional Development](#)
- [P4004 Emergency Needs - Expenditures](#)
- [P5002 Leave of Absence – Federal and Provincial Political Candidates](#)
- [P6008 Student Discipline](#)

Policies will be reviewed by the Board on January 17 and 24, 2022.

PIC Committee member noted that P1007 Educational Development Charges expired on June 1, 2021.

Policies are reviewed on a regular review cycle. Sometimes policies come up for review out of cycle due to requirements from the Ministry.

New Business / Future Agenda Items

Parent Engagement – PIC / WRAPSC

Co-Chairs and Trustee Tremble can meet with WRAPSC Co-Chairs to start this conversation.

Follow up from today's discussion. How we get to what parent engagement means, PIC/WRAPSC relationship and how we move forward, next steps, etc...

Teacher / Parent Communication

Create a list of what is working well and is effective, while sharing constructive feedback. Important to bring up any issues so they can be addressed and it's also important to share positive feedback. PIC Committee will schedule a meeting to discuss. Schedule this for discussion during the January PIC meeting and reach out to some other parents to facilitate. Create a shared document to capture ideas prior to the meeting.

PIC Strategy and Structure – Subcommittees

How are PIC's efforts are improving parent engagement and what has the most positive impact on parent engagement? Open discussion on what PIC is focusing on/contributing and if it's meaningful. PICK chart is used to look at solutions and ideas and look at payoff and how easy it is to implement, etc. Allows an organization to look at solutions to determine if they are effective.

Next Meeting

To be held virtually, Tuesday, January 25, 2022, at 6:30 pm.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn A. Misra, seconded by C. Laughren.

The Parent Involvement Committee Meeting adjourned at 8:51 pm.