

January 25, 2022
PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Waterloo Region District School Board **Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)** was held on Tuesday, January 25, 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, R. Lam, H. McKinna, L. Read, S. Shadaan, G. Shantz

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

Regrets: R. Shaheen, C. Ugwuogo

Guests: Felix, K. Regan

Call to Order

Committee Co-Chair M. Bond called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm.
B. Daniel offered a Territorial Acknowledgement.

Approval of Agenda

The PIC committee approved the agenda for January 25, 2022.

Approval of Minutes

The PIC committee approved the minutes from the December 7, 2021 meeting.

Director's Update - Return to In-Person Learning

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

Current Context, Associate Director Read

- High level of community spread
- Higher levels of vaccination among staff and students
- Shift in Case and Contact Management reporting requirements
- We are in a transition phase
- Expressed gratitude and thanks to staff, administrators, and service leaders. Continue to demonstrate people can move mountains, including distribution of rapid antigen tests, new screener verification, new staffing models, new programs, etc. Thank you to Public Health and Health Care Workers and all those who are working so hard to keep schools and communities safe.
- Thank you to parents and students for your patience and grace.

Staff Coverage, Coordinating Superintendent Shantz

- Experiencing staff absences, this is a common trend across every sector of the Canadian economy
- Multiple layers of occasional staff have been created to support coverage
- First line OTs, increased the number of hires so we had a more robust OT staff
- Principals will use existing processes this is augmented with HR analysis from our central staff
- Developed contingencies if a critical staff level is reached
- May be starting to plateau and looking forward to the weeks and months ahead with optimism

PPE & N95 Masks, Coordinating Superintendent Shantz

- Non-fitted N95 masks/respirators were in place by January 17, 2022
- Allocation of one N95 per staff per day
- Staff may use board issued ASTM-rated medical grade masks or board issued N95 masks

Ventilation & HEPA Filtration Units, Coordinating Superintendent Gerard

- 70 additional units arriving at a date TBD, local needs will determine the allocation of these units
- Existing HEPA
- Ventilation and air quality concerns should be brought to the attention of the school Principal
- Safety stock of 17 units unallocated to respond to needs as they arise, readily deploy if needed, given supply chain challenges

WEFI Campaign, HEPA filtration units - Coordinating Superintendent Gerard

- <https://www.wrdsb.ca/blog/2022/01/25/wefi-announces-hepa-filter-fund/>
- Total unit and first year operation cost: \$900 cost (procurement + energy + filter)
- To ensure equitable access and that units are deployed to classrooms that require them, we have created this Board wide campaign. Donations go to a general fund and Facility Managers work with Principals to allocate them to the system

Rapid Antigen Test Kits (RATs), Coordinating Superintendent Gerard

- Arrived in bulk (boxes of 20 tests) on Jan. 14
- RAT kits assembled and distributed to elementary schools and co-located childcare centres
 - 1 kit per student/staff (each kit contains 2 tests)
- Subsequent shipments will include tests for secondary students
- Tremendous amount of staff effort went into this

Transportation Update, Coordinating Superintendent Gerard

- 90% of STSWR routes are operating normally
- Some routes experiencing more frequent and prolonged delays
- [Some routes will be canceled for a short period of time when driver absences cannot be covered](#)
- Temporary measure from January 25 – February 18, 2022
- Provides more certainty for parents and families to arrange for alternate transportation
- Important for parents/guardians to stay informed: STSWR website Bus Delays page

Vaccination Efforts, Associate Director Read

- Vaccination efforts continue, focus on children aged 5 to 11
- Promoting clinics at schools, both before and after school
- Working with PHU to identify schools to host clinics during the school day
- Parent consent would be required
- Forms would go home in advance and number of forms returned would determine if there is a clinic
- Support for ongoing access to vaccinations, including boosters for school and education staff

New School Screener, Associate Director Read

- Expectation continues for staff and students to self-screen on a daily basis
- Screener reflects the most up to date information from the Ministry of Health

- PH guidance provided in the screener
- If there are questions reach out to your medical health provider

Case & Contact Management, Associate Director Read

- Individuals who have only been exposed at school with all public health measures in place are not generally considered high-risk contacts
- Where a child, student, or staff member has been advised that they may have been exposed to a positive case of COVID at school, they should self-monitor

Reporting and monitoring school impacts, Associate Director Read

- Schools required to monitor and report on student and staff absences and school closures through the Absence Reporting Tool (ART)
- Reporting to begin January 19th shared via Ontario.ca starting January 24th - directions to boards have been evolving
- Schools and childcare providers no longer routinely notifying all families of positive cases
- Will communicate possible exposure within a cohort of a reported positive case via school day

Cohorting, Associate Director Read

- Elementary Schools should maintain student cohorts for Nutrition Breaks and Outdoor Play
- Extra-curricular, mixed cohort activities are paused until further notice
- Curricular activities can continue within cohorts, using previously issued Health & Safety measures

Short Term Elementary Virtual Learning Option, Associate Director Read

- Ministry has directed school boards to offer a remote learning option
- Support families who are not comfortable with their child(ren) returning immediately to In Person
- Will be available from January 19 - February 11, 2022. Students may return to In-Person anytime.
- Centrally developed lessons for all grades and subjects
- For privacy and security reasons, students are required to use their WRDSB google account
- Students will have access to daily support provided by central staff
- There will be no assessment and evaluation of student work
- Families are invited to reach out to their home school for more information

Short Term Secondary Virtual Learning Option, Associate Director Read

- Students may choose to learn from home as per the Ministry of Education. Details shared on school websites. Will be available from January 17 - February 11, 2022.
- To access Short Term Virtual Learning in Secondary:
 - Students should call school attendance line to notify schools
 - Attendance will be taken weekly based on student engagement with learning
- Teachers will post learning activities to the Virtual Learning Environment
- Learning opportunities will be asynchronous. Students may return to In-Person learning anytime
- Central Staff Specializing in Science, Math, English/Social Studies available to support students

Director Chanicka thanked everyone and expressed gratitude to staff that have been working evenings and weekends to help us get to this point

Questions

- Q. Will parents be informed if and when cohorts will be combined?
- A. Discrepancy in the guidance from the MoE directed to maintain cohorts for Elementary for nutrition breaks and outdoor yet in another place in the document, cohorts can be combined to manage staffing issues. We work very hard to maintain cohorts and combining would only be done as a last resort. Communication would depend on the context and circumstance. Doing our utmost to help families feel there is transparency and everyone is as safe as possible.
- Q. Do you take into consideration the age of the secondary school buildings when making decisions for deployment? Teachers feel they have to have the windows open and kids are cold.
- A. Age of the building is one factor. There is a multitude of factors and confinements that compel us to deploy these units. Have conversations with the facilities manager and the principals at the schools. Sometimes there is another problem such as mechanical.
- Q. Vaccinations for children for ages 5 – 11, before and after school. Would the parents have to wait with the child?
- A. Before and after school and clinics on weekends and evenings – children attend with the parents.
- Q. Hepa filters and air quality tests. A. Air quality tests were all part of the initial assessment and this is part of how we determine our capital funding. CRVIS – covid funding, used the same analysis, to determine how we would fund. The success we've had articulating our business cases resulted in \$26 million dollars, we know our needs and how to keep our buildings in good condition.
- A. Ventilation Report url: <https://www.wrdsb.ca/our-schools/health-and-wellness/public-health-information/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-information/ventilation-in-wrdsb-schools/>
- Q. Masking guidelines/ requirements. A. Masks required K-12 and accommodation process is still in place. Schools are providing 3 ply medical masks to students who want them. Some staff use N95 and other staff use ASTM masks. No sense other than broader community tracking of covid transmission in schools
- Q. Requirements for volunteers. A. Screening required, vaccination requirements and PPE/masking, continue to review regularly with PH.

Strategic Plan Update

- Process has begun to identify key stakeholders to engage and tools to obtain feedback.
- How do we center the voices of students to really help us prioritize their voices and family voices? PIC will be a part of this process. PIC will be engaged to gather feedback once the tools are ready and this will help us develop the strategic plan for the next five years.
- As a board we're contemplating the structures, questions about how PIC can engage and support us this year, to be a stronger and better district.
- Three specific suggestions:
 - I) School council participation and operations – how it can be improved.
 - II) Communication tools, for better, deeper relationship development between parents and teachers.
 - III) Suggested ways to improve how parents navigate their schools and the school system. School structure can be bureaucratic.
- PIC's insight would help us. Some of you had suggested looking at the committee structure and aligning your committees to these three things to add value to some of the work that we're doing. It would help us to strengthen some of the work we're doing related to the strategic plan.
- Supported by external and internal partners. Building on strengths and using the information available to us.

Trustee Report, Trustee Meissner, Trustee Tremble

Trustee Meissner introduced herself and thanked Trustee Tremble. The Trustee Report is included in the agenda package.

Trustee Meissner provided an update on two school naming projects the school at 650 Laurelwood Dr and a new school in Kitchener, there are links in the report regarding the process and how to engage in it.

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 M Bond will share the Co-Chair Report after the meeting.

Communications, continue working with the board on parent posts and PRO Grant communication.

Consent Agenda

Co-Chair M. Bond shared that the PRO Grant Report was included in the Agenda Package.

The PRO Grant Report Event – Connect, Relearn, Reboot

Looking to bring in experts from the following areas: Leverage Experts – parenting; Wellness – nutrition; Reboot – difficult conversations.

Have received some quotes. We are targeting April for the event. The next major deliverable is the poster and communication. Once we receive grant approval solidifying speakers. The event will be hosted over 3 days.

Policy Review

- [P1006 Prevalent Medical Conditions](#) - to be reviewed February 14
- [P5009 Travel, Meals and Hospitality Expenditures – Staff](#) - to be reviewed March 21
- [P6003 Scholarships, Bursaries and Prizes](#) - to be reviewed February 14
 - Trustee Tremble confirmed the Board of Trustees has formed a Policy Working Group that is currently developing a new policy review process. Would like PIC to review IEHR Policy Review tool that focuses on equity and we would ask PIC and other committees to use this tool when reviewing the policies. Can approach D. Ahluwalia about this training.
 - P6003 – Q. What are the guidelines around scholarship approval and companies using scholarships for financial gain?
 - Trustees would appreciate all the feedback PIC would like to provide.
 - Policies need to be clear and straightforward even for people that are not familiar with them. Policy Working Group is looking to ensure anyone reading the policy easily understands what it pertains to.
 - Consider the “Why”, what is this policy trying to solve?
 - Consider a framework for PIC to review the policies through a parent engagement lens. It may be five to six questions. This is a specific skill set and we may want to consider striking a subcommittee to review the policies. A. Misra work on this process. P. Shaw will also help.
 - B. Daniel and M. Bond will request Policy Equity training for the March meeting.
- [P6006 Adult and Continuing Education](#) - to be reviewed March 21

Discussion

In relation to the strategic plan, there are two parts, The What – trying to gather information and The How - how would we conceptualize this? Simon Sinek's book Find Your Why, knowing your why,

how, what and being able to identify those things.

Strategic pillars such as engaging parents, families, communities and others. Reconceptualizing parent engagement structures – the how – what are the structures that will support and how are they all aligned in a coherent meaningful way? Currently conceptualizing what the structure will look like.

When you think about these three questions, we're trying to integrate and flatten the structures so it's easier to navigate. We have a System Navigator but may need more. School Councils, examples of best practices, what's working well, what have you seen, what have you seen that's building relationships?

Building the pillar with your feedback, design coming from our families into the system vs us saying here's what it should be. In general terms, the questions are in simple language. If PIC can focus on those three things and provide feedback on those things that would be really helpful to the strategic planning process. Feedback would be helpful the end of April/early May but please do not feel you need to get this done right away; this work will likely carry over into next year. Part of the strategic process is what you think we need to focus on over the next five years. Grades K-6 and 7-12.

We know that engagement is not limited to School Council. We know lots of people will never engage with School Council. If you could share other ways that families are being engaged and are engaging that would be useful so that we begin broadening how we conceptualize parent engagement.

In all three of those questions, the voices that we usually never hear from are marginalized and racialized people, including, Indigenous, Black, Racialized, LGBTQ2S+, those coming from poverty, etc. If you find how those families are engaging and what's helping them engage, that would be very helpful.

There are systemic outcomes for students coming from these backgrounds. Our commitment at the system level is to challenge those systemic outcomes. What is good for some will be good for many. Grass roots based information would be helpful. How do we get rid of the bureaucracy and be more responsive at the school level? Need your experiences as a parent. Reach out to other parent groups and could benefit from working together.

We can think about who we represent as a parent, who is our network, who can we talk to about best practices. We can reach out to WRAPSC and our own school councils. Start there, looking at it from a parent lens. Skills will help direct and augment the conversations. If we're trying to think about the empty chairs, we need to be ok that we're giving the parent view. As a parent how do I gauge success? Why do I choose to engage or not? How do we engage and why?

PIC's work on this is very valuable and greatly appreciated.

Next Meeting

To be held virtually, Tuesday, March 1, 2022, at 6:30 pm.

Adjournment

The Parent Involvement Committee Meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm.