

September 28, 2021
PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Waterloo Region District School Board **Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)** was held on Tuesday, September 28, at 6:30 pm virtually on zoom, with the following members in attendance:

Trustees: J. Weston

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, C. Chugh, B. Daniel, C. Laughren, S. Lehal, A. Misra, R. Shaheen, P. Shaw, N. Sheen, C. Ugwuogo, M. Wang

Regrets: D. Ballantyne, Z. Gent, L. Tremble

Call to Order

Committee Co-Chair B. Daniel called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm.

Formation of Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)

B. Daniel brought forward the names of six new parent members and the following new members of the 2020-2021 Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) are acclaimed:

- Hassan Asif
- Chhavi Chugh
- Sandeep Lehal
- Anjali Misra
- Patricia Shaw
- Mengda Wang

C. Laughren proposed M. Bond be welcomed back as a PIC member as her term had expired. B. Daniel concurred and M. Bond was acclaimed to a new term as a PIC member.

Approval of Agenda

1. Moved by M. Bond, seconded by C. Laughren:

That the agenda of the September 28, 2021, Parent Involvement Committee meeting be approved.

-Carried-

Approval of Minutes

2. Moved by C. Laughren, seconded by M. Bond:

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

-Carried-

Elections/Acclaiming of Executive Positions

M. Bond is acclaimed as Co-Chair of Parent Involvement Committee.

C. Laughren is acclaimed as Treasurer of Parent Involvement Committee.

PIC Introductions

PIC Committee members and staff introduced themselves.

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

Director chanicka shared it's been an amazing, busy start to the school year, and he is very honoured to be part of team that had dedicated so much time, effort, and heart to getting the 122 schools up and running that serve our 64,000 students.

In terms of parent engagement, when speaking to the WRDSB System Leaders, he shared 5 key words:

1. Innovation – recognizing that we are currently in education (broadly speaking) using infrastructure that is 200 years old, to try and prepare children for life heading into the 22nd century. We are using old systems and structures to try and serve children going into a very different world. Based research today's students will hold 15 jobs before they land their final job; they will not necessarily find jobs in the same place that they live, and they will be trying to solve problems in jobs that haven't been created yet. This is the reality they will face. To use the same traditional systems for life in the future is a huge challenge.
2. Transformation – it is incumbent on us to look at which systems and structures serve us well and are helping students and look at where we need to dismantle, rebuild and transform how we are working/helping to prepare students for their future.
3. Service - we are here in service to the 64,000 children and their families. All our decisions need to centre our students and our families must be partners in the relationship as we move forward.
4. Relationships - the value and significance of relationships. As we engage in this work, there are going to be challenges and we need to work together to solve them. This requires honest conversations that are anchored in deep relationships. When there are disagreements it becomes easy for people to walk away and my hope is for everyone to stay at the table and have those difficult conversations. Part of that reality is that education systems are yet to serve all students well. There is 40-50 years of research that shows that education systems from all over the world have not been successful in serving Indigenous, Black, Racialized, 2SLGBTQ identifying children, children with identified learning needs, children coming out of poverty, they are yet to be well served by education systems. There is work for us to do in how we change things so those students can succeed.
5. Healing - use this word deliberately and intentionally. There is a lot of work to do, starting with the realities of residential schooling, where we continue to uncover and recover children that never

made it home and the inter-generational harm and trauma created that was created through schools. Additionally, thinking of how we engage in healing for children and staff as they come back to school through the pandemic. We can always remember our best experiences in schools, and we can also remember our very worst experiences and for many people it can take many people years to recover from those experiences. We're working towards the conditions for learning exist so that our schools are safer and more inclusive spaces, and all of our children see themselves reflected.

Specifically, with regards to parent engagement, we know from research that where families are engaged students are more successful and we can see improvements in achievement and well being. It's important that we continue to work together to build a system where parents are partners and are engaged and can share their expertise regarding their children and their communities. This combined with staff expertise and working together in partnership with the students so we can give them the best opportunities and potential for themselves and their future.

PIC is a very important committee, one of several, that we engage with to receive input and advice. It's always important for us to think of who is present at our table and who is missing from our table. This comes from Indigenous elders, on Turtle Island, to leave an empty seat in the circle. The empty seat represents the voices who are not in the circle and who we may not represent through our own lived experiences. This is not to take away from the lived experiences that we bring, but to be mindful as we're making decisions of those who may not be present with us, who we also have a duty to represent. We must ensure those voices are also represented and we build an education system that will truly move towards transforming the world we live in.

Director Chanicka is honoured to be joined by members of the senior team tonight and welcomed them to introduce themselves, including, Associate Director: Lila Read; Coordinating Superintendent Human Resource & Equity Services & Coordinating Superintendent, Information Technology Services (interim): Graham Shantz; Coordinating Superintendent Business Services & Treasurer of the Board - Matthew Gerard; Chief Communication Officer (interim): Euis Dougan-McKenzie.

Associate Director Read thanked PIC for welcoming them to the meeting and reinforced and affirmed the importance of engaging and partnering together with parents. Parents are children's first teacher, and this is fundamental in their learning, achievement and well being. To do this work well we need to do it in partnership with parents. I appreciate the work, insight and feedback PIC provides and am incredibly grateful to be here this evening.

Graham Shantz, Coordinating Superintendent Human Resource & Equity Services & Coordinating Superintendent, Information Technology Services (interim), Matthew Gerard, Coordinating Superintendent Business Services & Treasurer of the Board and Euis Dougan McKenzie Chief Communication Officer (interim), all introduced themselves and their portfolio responsibilities and thanked PIC for welcoming them to the meeting and they look forward to working with PIC this year.

Senior Staff welcomed questions from PIC

Question: In regard to COVID-19 vaccinations, will the school board be coming out with a plan to host vaccination clinics in schools when the vaccine is approved for children under 12 years of age?

Answer: Vaccination for 5-12 years old have not been approved by Health Canada. We do hope to hear something with more clarity in November. If vaccinations are approved for this age group, we will work with Region of Waterloo Public Health like we have throughout the pandemic and so whatever we can to support the community. There is no direction from the Ministry, Public Health or Health Canada that vaccinations are required.

Question: What are some examples of parent engagement strategies?

Answer: A complicating factor is what does parent engagement look like during a pandemic? The centre of parent engagement is being able to honour the knowledge and expertise that parents bring. Including but not limited to School Council; it is one form of parent engagement but not the only one. Important to be mindful that School Councils often have more middle and upper classes families able to engage, compared to working class or underemployed. Some families may not have time to attend School Council. It is important to engage families to be active and involved so children and families see themselves reflected in their environments. Reflecting on Dr. D. Pushor's work, as educators we are often visitors on the landscapes of schools, and it is the children and community that are anchored in those communities. We must be mindful that we come as visitors and although we bring expertise it needs to be shared along side the expertise that families bring. What does that look like and how can we work together? For those of us who have more to be able to bring experiences to those children and families who may not have that type of access. If we look at schooling like pie, there is enough pie for all of us to share. For the world the children are going into being able to anchor them in collaboration and co-creating, recognizing it is in our many varied lived experiences and the solutions that we need will come.

Question: How, as engaged parents can we support Principals, so they look at School Councils as partners and not as more work?

Answer: The Principals are committed to the safety of the children and the safety of their school communities. Principals are thinking of how best to support and engage parents, being mindful of all the challenges with the pandemic. Currently schools/Principals are focused on safety while trying to get back to as close to what was typical as possible. A good option to engage with Principals is to let them know you are there and what ways you are interested and able to help. If they do not respond right away, know they are interested just juggling many things.

At J F Carmichael, there is a Visitor sign – "All visitors are welcome, please report at the main office" – consider a change in that vernacular – the truth is every worker in the building is a visitor, we are a visitor in that community. For us to have a true partnership, Principals, Teachers, staff, should be going to Parents and Families, asking what is wanted, what is needed, what is required, for their well being, safety and involvement, for the students that we serve every day.

Director Chanicka indicated that he prefers a less formal structure, when we create spaces and thinking of it as a circle where we're all sitting equally, together we are all looking for the best outcomes for the children that we serve. There is a responsibility in knowing families have trusted us with their children and there is nothing more sacred or beautiful knowing parents/guardians have trusted us with this. There is a commitment to keep growing and doing better and continue to cultivate this idea that it is all of us together to focus on the best interests of the children.

Question: How can parents support their children at home? How do parents bridge the gap between the school and home; for example, if my child needs additional learning opportunities or resources?

Answer: Engagement is what we're really talking about. It is important for parents being actively

engaged in their children's learning, knowing what's going on in the classroom, developing that relationship with the classroom educators. As an extension of this relationship, natural conversations can happen regarding how to support your child at home. There is no short answer, it is about connecting early and in an ongoing way and being engaged in your child's learning as much as possible. It may not be tutoring or additional workbooks, it could be focusing on activity or something in the community of something they are interested in. Parents, Community, School coming together and providing support and opportunity. It is important to recognize the ability for children be disconnected from technology to have time for play, talk, listen, talk to them in their first language, cook with them, sit with them. Nurture natural curiosities and interests. It's in through exploring their interests and curiosities that learning happens.

Question: PIC would like more information about the direction given to staff about orientation and involvement this school year and how are staff engaging with parents this school year?

Answer: The focus is ongoing communication with families and parents and making that really clear to staff. If parents are reaching out to their teacher first and if they are not getting a response that reasonable then you need to reach out to the Principal. It is in the Education Act that teachers are to provide ongoing communication to parents on student progress. It is an expectation for staff. That is the role of the classroom educator.

Question: How are we supporting parents that do not have cell phone, or email and other technology?

Answer: Focus on building relationships is key to understanding our families and what they need. Staff understands all parents/families do not have technology and use different tools to communicate with them, such as sending home paper copies in their language. If parents or families do not have the chosen method of communication, it is our responsibility to find a way to communicate with them that works for them. We are a human based industry and at times you're going to receive things that will not be as consistent as we would like but we will keep trying to improve that experience for families. It can be challenge with the pandemic to communicate in the ways we would have prior to the pandemic. PIC can help us and help support us as a system, and look at how we might support Principals, Staff and schools so we can reach more parents in ways that will support them in the best ways possible.

Ventilation

Coordination Superintendent Gerard provided a link to the Board's [Ventilation Report](#) [Ventilation Report](#) which provides information on the Board's strategy and investments in ventilation at individual schools.

The intake of fresh air is important to ensure the air is changed out and fresh air is coming into the schools. It is one of many tools for us to help address COVID-19.

The report talks to mechanical ventilation, partially mechanical ventilation, and other mechanisms, such as portable hepa units. The board may augment the spaces that do not have the appropriate amount of ventilation with something like a hepa unit. Newer schools such as Janet Metcalfe, Groh have mechanical ventilation, older schools and buildings need more work to augment what is there. The board has been leveraging as much of the federal and provincial funding as possible to allow us to do the infrastructure work that is needed to upgrade our schools. If you have concerns about your student's classroom, always connect with your Principal. The Principal is in a good position to explain what mechanism are currently in place and any upcoming projects. If there are issues the Facility Department works closely with the Principals and Custodians to ensure the policies and procedures are followed. An annual or semi-annual update for this report is a likely frequency, given the lifecycle of a construction projects. A substantial amount of infrastructure/construction projects were completed

in September with a small number extending into October. The next time we'll begin substantial work in our schools will be June 2022.

Flow of Information

Coordination Superintendent Graham Shantz discussed flow of information. We know how busy our Principals and teachers are, but we also know they are well positioned to answer many parent questions on a variety of topics.

It was great to receive the positive feedback about the recent video that was released to discuss parent questions featuring our Director, Associate Director and a Superintendents. This will be one of the tools and approaches that will be used to communicate with families, moving forward. The reality is we have to use a lot of modalities to communicate, we have a large school community in the broadest sense, across the region.

There is a variety of preferences in the ways parents like to receive the information. There are the more traditional methods of newsletters, paper copies, website, and newer channels such as social media that will continue to become more prevalent. A single approach in communication would not work well and having multiple methods/channels allows families/parents to engage in a way that works best for them. It is a partnership, and we look forward to continuing to work together.

Further questions can be emailed to Beth and Mandi.

Trustee Report, Chairperson J. Weston

Chairperson Weston welcomed Director Chanicka to the Waterloo Region District School Board and thanked the PIC Chairs for participating in the consultation process for the search for a new Director.

The Board of Trustees approved the budget in June, thanks to staff for bring forward a balanced budget.

Two Ad Hoc Committees wrapped up in June, including the Ad Hoc Suspension Review Committee and the School Resource Officer (SRO) Review Committee. The recommendations by the Ad Hoc Suspension Review Committee were approved, including to prioritize the role of restorative practices in schools and to develop a strategy for ongoing monitoring and analysis of suspension and expulsion data at the school and system level. The recommendations of the SRO Review Committee were also approved, the most significant of which was to end the School Resource Officer Program in our schools and request funding be reallocated to community based services for children and youth.

The Ad Hoc French Immersion Review Committee continues to meet and a recommendation is expected in early 2022.

The first few meetings of the Board focused on reopening of schools and we recognize staff has worked very hard to put things in place and realize there is still more to do offer more opportunities, once classes are settled.

The Board of Trustees has advocated to the Ministry to: i) extend infrastructure funding for ventilation improvements (now extended to the end of next year), ii) to supply enhanced masks for staff and students and iii) add COVID vaccine to the list of mandatory vaccinations for eligible students. We've also asked staff to investigate the option to enhance the Ministry's current reporting system for staff.

This year the Board is going to be spending a lot of time on updating our strategic plan. More information and requests for feedback will be provided throughout the process.

Sharing a request from Deepa Ahluwalia, Human Rights and Equity Advisor and Kim Radersma, Human Rights Officer to share feedback on a learning video that they are developing for School Council members. Staff are working to ensure School Councils are representative of school communities. The video is intended to help all members of School Council understand their responsibilities for creating inclusive and welcoming spaces for all members. The focus will be on race and identity, a historical understanding of race, creating spaces of belonging and the responsibility to create equitable schools for all students and families. The virtual feedback session will take place on Thursday, October 14 from 6:30-7:30pm on Google Meet. This information will be shared with PIC by the Co-Chairs. Welcome to everyone on the PIC Committee and thank you to everyone for volunteering to represent families in the WRDSB.

Question: Would it be worthwhile as a team building measure and as a way of gathering feedback where PIC members can watch the video and provide feedback as a group?

Answer: J. Weston will confirm with Deepa if there is a limit in how many people can attend and/or provide feedback.

Treasurer's Report

Co-Chair M. Bond shared the Treasurer's Financial Report that is included in the agenda package. There were no questions. Director's Account - \$5000 – used for continuing education for our members, parent conferences, etc... Central Account - \$10991 – PIC can decide how to use these funds. PRO Grants will be shared by Coordinating Superintendent Gerard later this Fall. There were no questions.

Co-Chair Report

Co-Chair B. Daniel shared the Co-chair Report that is included in the agenda package. B. Daniel welcomed everyone to PIC.

The Membership subcommittee met in the summer, there were over 40 applicants for the PIC parent positions, they interviewed 30 candidates.

PIC orientation was held on September 21. A google drive folder is set-up for PIC. Consider adding Board Staff (Principal/VP, Teaching Staff) to Subcommittee Drive folders. This is being discussed by Governance within the PIC By-Laws, in the context of how we use our tools and resources. Staff indicated they are happy to help PIC and please reach out let us know how we can help.

Virtual meetings are working well for everyone. Committee benefits from small in-person meetings, perhaps a team building, and we can investigate how we can make that happen safely.

PIC Member Comment: There is a steep learning curve, in terms of understanding the content, process, people, etc... Concerned that half the year will go by before new members will figure things out such as communicating with each other in-between meetings. In an offline conversation there would be a lot of level setting and relationship building, etc.. Can we decide today about some of these suggestions and recommendations?

PIC meetings are an update on what our subcommittees are doing and are not where the work of the subcommittees happens.

Subcommittees meeting date options:

- i. pick one or two nights a month where all subcommittees take place

- ii. individual subcommittees determine what nights work best for them

PIC Member Question: can people continue to join the subcommittee on an ongoing basis?
Answer: First establish the subcommittees and then this can be decided.

Consent Agenda

Co-Chair Beth Daniel stated there is a Membership Report and Governance Report included in the agenda package for information.

Subcommittee Sign Up

Co-Chair B. Daniel asked for volunteers on the following subcommittees:

Communication Officers: Anjali Misra, Beth Daniel;
Leads: Anjali Misra, Beth Daniel

Membership: Mandi Bond, Chhavi Chugh, Hassan Asif;
Leads: Chhavi Chugh, Hassan Asif

Governance: Zac Gent, Chiazor Ugwuogo, Patricia Shaw, Mandi Bond
Leads: Zac Gent, Chiazor Ugwuogo

Recent/New Immigrant Engagement: Rozina Shaheen, Nisha Sheen, Patricia Shaw, Mengda Wang, Beth Daniel;
Leads: Rozina Shaheen, Mengda Wang

Parents Reaching Out (PRO): Sandeep Lehal, Chhavi Chugh, Beth Daniel, Mandi Bond, Marcus Hoare, Sharon Shadaan;
Leads: Sandeep Lehal, Chhavi Chugh

Safe Caring and Inclusive Schools: Anjali Misra, Patricia Shaw;
Leads: Anjali Misra, Patricia Shaw;
Assess if there is a need for this subcommittee. It was last active at the start of 2020. Consider keeping a placeholder committee as Trustees go into their strategic planning, if something comes up we can strike the committee.

M. Bond proposed that PIC explore the relationship between PIC and WRAPSC and how PIC can support the School Councils of the Board.

C. Laughren clarified that they are talking about parent engagement across the Board and WRAPSC is an organization for representatives of School Councils but PIC's mandate is engagement across the Board, so WRAPSC is a piece of this and looking at how this piece functions within our overall mandate.

PIC mandate is supporting parent engagement and School Councils across the Board and part of this might be utilizing PIC's relationship with WRAPSC. The Board has 121 schools and WRAPSC reaches 45. How to reach the other School Councils of the Board.

- 3. Moved by M. Bond, seconded by A. Misra:

That PIC forms a School Council subcommittee.

School Council subcommittee: Mandi Bond, Beth Daniel, Christina Laughren, Chhavi Chugh;
Leads: Mandi Bond, Beth Daniel

Co-Chairs will follow up to determine how often this committee will be meeting.

Policy Review

- [P1000 Display of Flags](#)
- [P4010 Video Surveillance in Schools](#)
- [P4006 Parking on School Board Property](#)

Provide any feedback to Beth and Mandi by October 5, 2021, Policies will be reviewed by the Board October 18, 2021.

Questions / Future Agenda Items / Final Remarks

No new business or future agenda items were suggested. If you think of any items later, please email M. Bond or B. Daniel.

Next Meeting

To be held virtually, Tuesday October 26, 2021 at 6:30 pm.

B Daniel/M.Bond will plan a full PIC working group brainstorming session and send a doodle poll with date options. B. Daniel will communicate the dates to all PIC members by email. Subcommittee meeting model will be discussed and considered at this meeting.

Adjournment

4. Moved by B. Daniel and seconded by M. Bond.

That the Parent Involvement Committee Meeting be adjourned.

-Carried-

The Parent Involvement Committee Meeting adjourned at 9:12 pm.