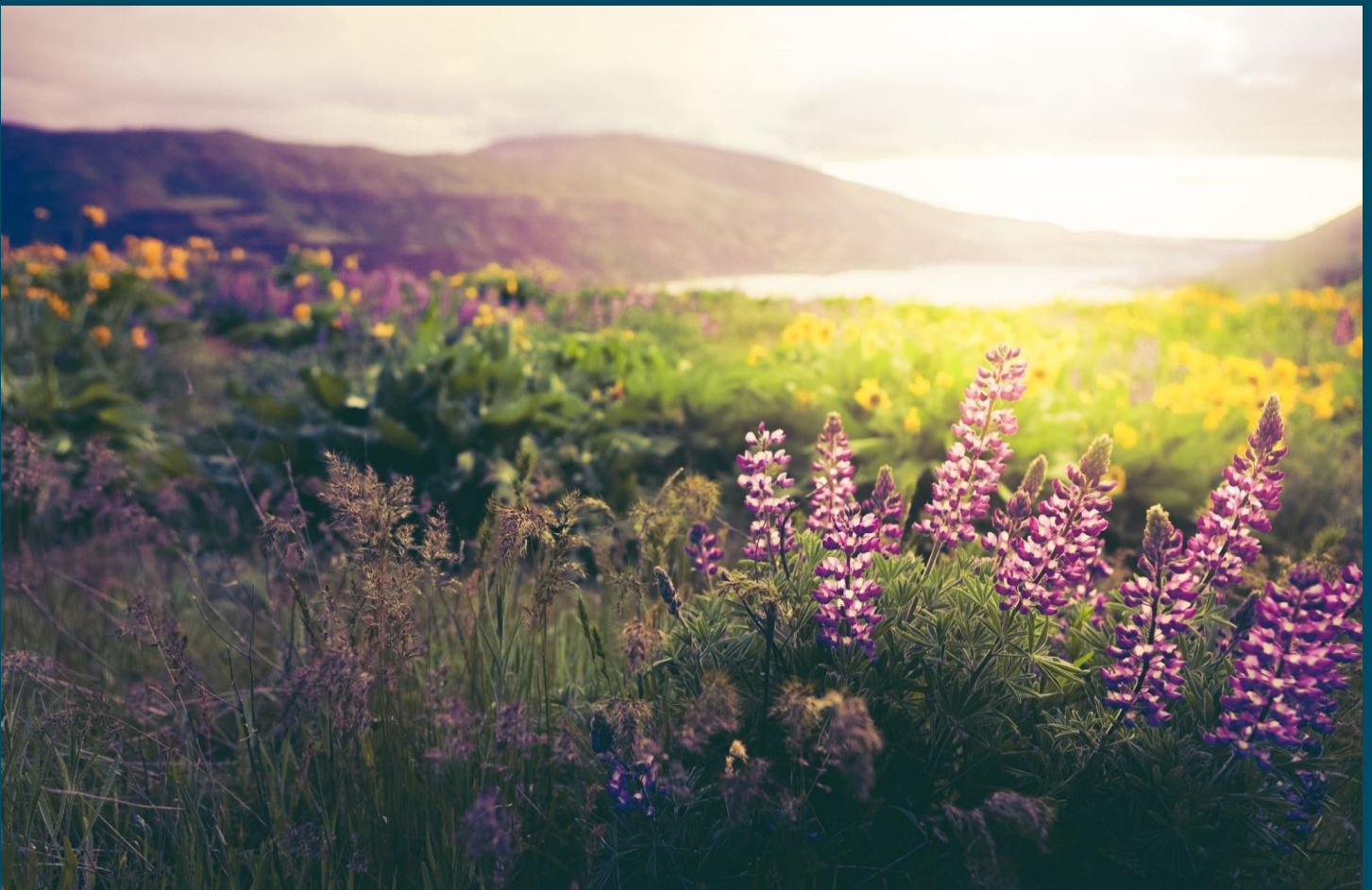


Ministry of Education

MEETING SUMMARY

School Board Leads & Parent Involvement Committee Chairs



May 15 and 17, 2023

Inclusive Education, Priorities and Engagement Branch

Introduction

On May 15 and 17, 2023, the Ministry of Education (EDU) held the Spring sessions, part of the 2022-23 series of virtual meetings with Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) chairs, co-chairs, and school board parent engagement leads. After each session, a summary is shared with participants.

Throughout the virtual engagement series, now in its third year, participants have shared their local challenges, successes, and promising practices to support parent engagement in their children's school and in their learning. In past PIC meetings, there have also been opportunities for Government of Ontario representatives to present priorities and programs to participants for their feedback.

What We Heard

Part 1: Updates from the Ministry

The meeting began with a brief recap of recent announcements by the Ministry of Education:

- [Ontario Helping More Students Enter the Skilled Trades Faster](#): Ontario government is preparing young people for in-demand and well-paying careers by allowing students in grade 11 to transition to a full-time, skilled trades apprenticeship program.
- [Ontario Preparing Students for Jobs of the Future](#): details on new requirement to help better prepare students across our province for the jobs of tomorrow. Starting with students entering Grade 9 in September 2024, all students will now be required to earn a Grade 9 or 10 Technological Education credit as part of their Ontario Secondary School Diploma.
- [Ontario Launching New Mental Health Learning and Increasing Funding](#): mandatory resources for teachers and students on mental health literacy in Grades 7 and 8 and an additional \$12 million this year and \$14 million next year to provide mental health services over the summer months.
- [Ontario Launches Plan to Boost Math, Writing and Reading Skills](#): investments of more than \$180 million in targeted supports in the classroom and at home to help students build the math and reading skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce. This investment will support nearly 1000 more educators to help students develop these important skills.
- [Province Improving Accountability and Transparency in Ontario Schools](#): on April 17, the Ontario government introduced The Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, which would, if passed, ensure the province's public education system focuses on what matters most: important life-long skills, like reading, writing and math. The act would also ensure accountability and transparency for parents and families.

In addition to sharing these announcements there was also an update on the one-time tutoring supports program. School boards have reported significant success and the program, that was to end March 31, and has been extended to the end of the school year, allowing school

boards who have funding remaining to maximize the investment and deliver the greatest impact to students.

Part 2: Grants for Students Needs Presentation

In response to suggestions made by participants in earlier sessions, this engagement focused on Grants for Student Needs (GSN) – bringing information on how school boards are funded to parents.

This part of the meeting was hosted by the Education, Labour and Finance Division. In their presentation, they shared that information on the calculation of GSN, responsibilities and flexibility for school boards to use funding, various indicators used to address cost drivers, and Parents Reaching Out Grants funding.

Part 3: Learning and Listening: Supporting Parent Engagement Together

Discussion: *Sharing on what PICs and school boards are hearing from parents in their community.*

Confidence

- School boards and PICs shared their success in communication with parents; some share using a portal for parents to communicate, others are using emails, or/and open house.
- Some school leads reported that consulting the Chair and Co-Chair in advance on the meeting agenda has improved PIC meeting function.
- It was also noted that parents are interested in sessions that focus on mental health, and resources for students and for parents to support their children. Other successful events such as wellness fairs include hybrid options so more parents can participate in those sessions.
- Parents are happy that school events are resuming, and it was reported that parents are confident in how the school year has gone coming back from COVID, as excursions and events, are happening. Parents are taking initiative to take precautions when there is illness.
- Parents are quite satisfied with the efforts put into catching up
- There is greater transparency from some school boards as different types of information are shared by school boards. It was suggested a more standardize for information sharing within the province would be helpful.

Challenges

- Since COVID-19 behaviour issues in the school were on the rise. For example, there was an increase in challenges with taking the bus, as the students did not have the opportunity to learn about school bus instructions.
- Gaps in the student's learning were expressed, more specifically for students who are transitioning to Grade 1, Grade 8, and Grade 11. It was noted those students continue to fall behind due to a lack of resources. Students, especially those in Grades 6 and 7, are also experiencing challenges with their learning skills and study habits. Some parents feel like their

kids are not “prepared” and “caught up.” There is lot of pressure on students and some students lack to experience to write exams.

- Parents noted that teachers support as much as possible, but they cannot teach one by one given the number of students in the classes; parents want smaller classes and more teachers in classrooms.
- There are difficulties in the transition from secondary level to post-secondary education due to the pandemic; it was reported that students had not had an opportunity to be exposed to transition activities to support and ensure a successful transition to university, and it seems that post-secondary has not adjusted with the pandemic. It was suggested to have a discussion with colleges and universities to address all the gaps experienced by students as a result of the pandemic.
- Not repeating grades can also be a challenge because students continue when they need more time to learn, and tutoring does not always help especially for students with major challenges. It was reported that the more students fall behind, the harder it is to catch up. There is also confusion with de-streaming and how it should be implemented and concerns that students might be left behind.
- Parents reported students have lost many academic tools on how they can learn together and from one another, thus the need to mitigate this issue.
- Parents want more emphasis on mental health for high school students as parents want to better support their children in secondary school.
- School board communications to parents is not always in a parent-friendly language (not plain language).
- Some parents raised the importance of strengthening the transparency aspect of the school board system.
- There were concerns raised on the student census survey - some of the questions were of concern or were confusing for children.
- There is a need for additional training and sharing of parent engagement information, policies, practices and procedures - for example on the annual \$500 school council budget, how to conduct school council elections, giving school council chairs access to school council email addresses, and sharing the school and board improvement and equity plan. Participants shared about the need to restructure the PIC and making it more representative and more of a central committee to all so they can all learn together as a network. Partnerships between PICs and school councils can also support equity initiatives to better understand data and the needs of students from equity seeking groups.

Discussion: *Parents’ preferred methods of communication*

- There are many communication methods and platforms that are being used across Ontario school boards and schools. These methods and platforms are inconsistent and vary across school boards and schools. They are generally school-specific rather than board-coordinated. Often times these methods and platforms require a fee and/or charge for the users.
- Teacher communication is the preferred method and generally parents are more receptive to hearing directly from them.

- Social media platforms provide a good avenue for communication (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.). School Messenger and Seesaw are other preferred communication tools/methods. Consideration for CPIC to be involved in dissemination of communications.
- Elementary parents and students prefer direct and regular communication, such as the weekly “backpack mailer”, and invitations to help and/or volunteer. Parents want to know from teachers about what is happening and how parents can support their child’s learning – report card time is not enough.
- Secondary parents and students prefer weekly emails; however, there are challenges for parents who do not have access to email or have a personal email account.

Discussion: *PIC and board promising practices to support families’ engagement in their children’s*

One key promising practice identified by participants was making available webinars and school sessions on topics of interest (i.e., artificial intelligence, anti-Black racism, etc.). Some participants indicated board leadership would benefit for more systems training and should engage in more information sharing policies, procedures, and practices (e.g., budget information, how to conduct school council elections, sharing board improvement plans). Some participants mentioned the creation of guides for newcomers by PICs as a best practice.

Discussion: *Future parent engagement meetings*

Participants experienced interest in how to affirm identities of students and how to resolve inequities regarding family supports. Participants also expressed interest in how PIC funding works and how PIC funding can be used to engage schools. Fundraising parameters and limitations were also raised by some participants. Apart from general information on funding, participants were interested in learning more on how PICs operates, as well as how to ensure consistency across how PICs operates (i.e., through guides, toolkits, etc.). More information on ministry trends on student performance (e.g., EQAO) was also requested. Some participants suggested launching a call for best practices by PICs at the beginning of the year for the purposes of information sharing. Discussing concerns with other ministries (specifically the Ministry of Colleges and Universities) was also mentioned as a potential future meeting subject. Some participants also requested a discussion on changes to the format of future meetings to encourage more participation.

PART 4: Resource Links

To support the work of PICs and school board leads, selected topical source links were shared:

Ministry of Education home page: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-education>, constantly updated with news and information

Curriculum:

Parent and Curriculum Resources: <https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/parents> where you will find resources to help you support your child's learning. We invite you to visit this site regularly – as new digital versions of the Ontario curriculum in all subjects and grades are added, more parent guides will be available here

Curriculum Guides: [Digital Curriculum Platform](#) where you will find full descriptions of all the elementary and secondary curriculum.

Conclusion

Throughout the series of engagements, PIC chairs/co-chairs and school board leads have continued to demonstrate their commitment to enhancing parent engagement and supporting parents and families of their boards. The Grants for Student Needs presentation was an opportunity for parents to learn more about how the Ministry funds school boards. The discussion enabled PIC chairs/co-chairs and school board leads to reflect on their experiences this year, including highlighting some shared challenges around transitions between grades or to post-secondary. Communications preferences are not always the same between different groups of parents and different regions, but the use of social media was highlighted as a best practice in some areas.

We are grateful to all participants for your willingness to share challenges, innovations and effective practices that support parents and families. The perspectives, questions and concerns shared will be used to inform Ministry actions, and to plan future engagements.

Thank you for your continued commitment to work with your school boards to support, encourage and enhance parent engagement in support of student achievement and well-being. As this was the final session for 2022-23, we also want to take the opportunity to thank PIC chairs/co-chairs and school board leads for their participation this year, and their commitment to supporting parents and students in their boards.

Funding to Support Parent Engagement 2022-23

Contents

Parent Engagement: Overview	2
Parent Involvement Committees (PICs): Frequently Asked Questions.....	2
Parent Engagement: Funding	3
Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants: Frequently Asked Questions.....	5
Purpose and Funding	5
Project Eligibility and Project Examples.....	6
Reporting	8
Contact	8

Funding to Support Parent Engagement 2022-23

Parent Engagement: Overview

Strong and effective parent engagement begins with parents supporting parents at the local and regional levels, through vehicles such as school council and Parent Involvement Committees (PICs).

O. Reg. 612/00 *School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees* outlines the role that school councils and Parent Involvement Committees play in supporting student achievement, equity, and well-being.

At the school level, school councils work toward improving student achievement and enhancing the accountability of the education system to parents. At the school board level, PICs serve as an advisory body by:

- providing information and advice to the director of education and the board of trustees on how to enhance parent engagement
- developing ways, the school board could use to help more parents support their children's learning at home and at school
- sharing information with and supporting the work of school councils

For more information about school councils and PICs, please visit: [School councils: a guide for members | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/school-councils) – and – [Parent involvement committees | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/parent-involvement-committees)

Parent Involvement Committees (PICs): Frequently Asked Questions

1. How often are PICs required to meet?

- s. 40 of O. Reg. 612/00 outlines requirements for PIC meetings. A PIC is to meet at least four times in each school year. Meetings are open to the public and are held at a location that is accessible to the public, in-person and/or by electronic means.
- PICs are to be parent majority and parent-led. To provide a direct link to the board, a trustee and the director, or supervisory officer designate, are members of the PIC.

2. Will the Ministry be sharing a directory of PIC Chairs and Co-Chairs and how does the Ministry facilitate networking between PICs?

Not all parents are comfortable sharing their personal contact information in a public directory. Some boards have a generic PIC email account, others communicate through the personal email accounts for their PIC members. The PIC/school board lead engagements provide PICs with the opportunity to connect with each other to

Funding to Support Parent Engagement 2022-23

share their challenges and successful practices. Some PICs, particularly in coterminous school boards, boards of similar sizes, or in close geographic proximity, have built partnerships through the engagements.

3. Is there an annual conference for PIC Chairs to attend?

The annual provincial conference, while providing an opportunity for parent members of PICs to network in-person, was not accessible to all parents due to travel and time away from family and employment. Using lessons learned during the pandemic, we now have several virtual engagements so PIC Chairs can continue to learn about ministry priorities and share their experiences throughout the school year, rather than through one large in-person annual event.

Parent Engagement: Funding

- **Grants for Student Needs (GSN)**

The Ministry of Education provides most of the operating funding to Ontario's 72 district school boards through the annual Grants for Student Needs (GSN). Funding is allocated to boards through a series of grants based on student enrolment and the needs of students in each board. For 2022-23, the total allocation to support parent engagement specifically is \$5.47M, allocated as follows:

- **School Councils and Parent Engagement Committees – Base Funding**
Through the GSN, the ministry provides each school board with base funding to support the parent engagement activities of its school councils and Parent Involvement Committee (PIC).

For the 2022-23 school year, the total Parent Engagement allocation is \$5.47M, and has three components, calculated as follows, per board:

- PIC component (\$5000 + \$0.17 per average daily enrolment of pupils)
 - School Council Component (\$500 per school)
 - PRO component (\$1500 + \$500 per school)
-
- **Parents Reaching Out (PRO)**
Starting this school year, the Parents Reaching Out (PRO) funding will be allocated through the GSN. The total allocation is \$2.44M allocated across all boards, with the expectation that boards will work with their parent involvement committees (PICs) to lead initiatives that address local parent needs and/or remove barriers that prevent parents from participating and engaging fully in their children's learning and educational progress.

Funding to Support Parent Engagement 2022-23

Essential to this process is ensuring that parents have access and inclusive means to support their engagement. School boards, through their PICs, are encouraged to work with their Indigenous advisory council (IAC), special education advisory committee (SEAC), school board's equity and access body, school councils, and community organizations to identify projects that support the diversity of parent needs and parent communities at the local level through an equity and inclusion lens.

This component is calculated as follows: \$1,500 + (\$500 per school).

- **Reporting Responsibilities of PICs and School Councils**

O. Reg. 612/00 requires annual reports from both school councils and PICs. Any funds received, including PRO and base funding in the GSN, must be accounted for in the yearly report.

- PICs: Each year, the PIC shall submit a written summary of its activities to the chair of the board and the director of education. The report must include information about how any funding it received through the board was spent, and a summary of activities undertaken by the PIC
- School councils: At the end of its term, a school council must prepare and submit a written report to the school and to the board, outlining the council's goals, activities, and achievements.

Funding to Support Parent Engagement 2022-23

Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants: Frequently Asked Questions

Purpose and Funding

1. What is new for PRO Funding in 2022-23?

This year, the PRO allocation has moved from Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) into the GSN. Moving the funding into the GSN reduces the administrative burden for school boards and provides an opportunity for early planning with PICs and relevant committees for upcoming school years.

2. What is the purpose of PRO Funding?

The Parents Reaching Out (PRO) funding enables school boards to work with parents to support projects and initiatives which remove barriers at the local level that prevent parents from participating and engaging fully in their children's learning and educational progress.

3. Who is eligible for PRO funding?

Boards are to administer PRO in collaboration with their Parent Involvement Committees (PICs) and are encouraged to work with their Indigenous Education Council (IEC), Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), board's Equity and Access body, school councils, and community organizations to identify projects.

4. What is the GSN formula for base funding and PRO funding? How is the number of schools for a board determined?

Funding of \$2.4 million to support the Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants is moving from Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) into the GSN as a new component of the Parent Engagement Allocation.

With this change, the Parent Engagement Allocation has three components – PIC, School Council, and PRO – each with its own funding calculation.

The PRO component is funded through a combined amount of \$1,500 per school board and \$500 per school. With this change, the Parent Engagement Allocation has three components as follows:

- PIC component (\$5,000 + \$0.17 per ADE – Average Daily Enrollment)

Funding to Support Parent Engagement 2022-23

- School Council component (\$500 per school)
- PRO component (\$1,500 + \$500 per school)

School boards are reminded that they are expected to comply with Ontario Regulation 612/00: School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees.

5. Can unspent PRO components be deferred for future spending? Can unspent Parent Engagement Allocation be deferred for future spending?

The Parent Engagement Allocation is not enveloped. Therefore, Parent Engagement funding must be recognized in revenue in the year in which it is received, which is in keeping with all non-enveloped GSN funding. If a school board wishes to set aside unspent Parent Engagement Allocation amounts for spending in future years, they may segregate a portion of their accumulated surplus.

6. What is the role of the board's PIC in determining how PRO funds will used?

The PIC has an important advisory role. O.Reg.612/00 outlines part of the PIC role is to determine, in consultation with the board's director of education and in keeping with the board's policies, how funding and engagement of parents should be implemented.

Project Eligibility and Project Examples

7. What types of projects are eligible for PRO funding?

Boards are required to work with their respective PICs and are encouraged to work with additional parent groups to design and deliver PRO projects that meet the local needs of parents. Essential to this process is ensuring that parents have access and inclusive means to support their participation. Boards will use their established communication tools and mechanisms to ensure all parent groups are aware of the funding, guidelines and eligible projects.

PRO is intended to be used by local communities to identify and address barriers to parent engagement. Projects that support the diversity of parent needs and parent communities at the local level through an equity and inclusion lens are eligible for PRO funding.

8. What are some examples of projects funded with PRO Grants?

Funding to Support Parent Engagement 2022-23

PRO funding continues to support initiatives that remove barriers to parent engagement in their children's education.

Examples shared by PICs and Board Leads from the 2021-22 school year include but were not limited to:

- Initiatives to combat Anti-Black Racism and anti-Indigenous racism, as well as anti-oppression initiatives
- Parent/caregiver engagement supports (e.g., evening conferences)
- Enhanced multi-lingual and technology support (e.g., virtual presentations, online networking)
- Food sovereignty and environment (e.g., hiking, community gardens);
- Mental health and well-being (e.g., workshops on student and family mental health)
- Physical health and wellness (e.g., Zumba)
- Providing targeted resources to meet specific parent needs so parents can be resilient (e.g., parent curriculum-briefing workshops)
- 2SLGBTQI (e.g., awareness building by offering culturally responsive experiences)
- STEM (e.g., in-person learning nights)
- Online learning software and safety (e.g., cyber-literacy); and,
- Literacy supports for parents to help their child(ren).

Funding to Support Parent Engagement 2022-23

Reporting

9. How will boards report on PRO component funding?

As a result of the move from PPF to GSN, a separate reporting component is no longer required. Funding will be flowed through the GSN, and expenses will be consolidated with other board-level expenses and reported through Schedule 10 in the Education Financial Information System (EFIS)

10. When is the Final Report due?

The final report is no longer required to be submitted through PRO@ontario.ca as part of school board Transfer Payment Agreement. School boards are to report through the Education Finance Information System (EFIS) and will receive further information regarding EFIS data collection for PRO in the coming months.

Contact

11. How can we get in touch if we have questions?

For more information about PRO grants, please contact PRO@Ontario.ca.
For inquiries about supporting parent engagement, please contact IEPEB@ontario.ca.