

PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

18 November 2020

Report No. 20-106

Allocation of 2020-2021 Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grant

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PURPOSE:

1. To develop a planned approach for determining an allocation strategy for the 2020-2021 Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grant funding.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

2. The allocation of PRO grant-funded projects reflects the District's commitment to building parent engagement, removing barriers to access opportunities and supporting engagement with and in our community.

CONTEXT:

3. The Ministry of Education has allocated \$39, 986.03 to the OCDSB for Parents Reaching Out (PRO) funding which supports school boards to identify barriers to parent engagement in their school communities and find solutions to help more parents get involved in their children's education. Districts are encouraged to work with their Parent Involvement Committee to develop strategies for the use of these funds. The disbursement of the funds and the final report have to follow certain parameters stipulated in the Ontario PRO Transfer Payment Agreement. By the end of June 2021, any unspent funds are to be returned to the Ministry.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

4. Funding Parameters
According to the Transfer Payment Agreement, the objective of the funding is:
 - Ontario's Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants provide financial support to school boards to work with their Parent Involvement Committees (PICs) to lead projects with a focus on identifying and removing barriers that prevent parents and families from participating and engaging fully in their children's learning.

- Boards, through their PICs, are encouraged to work with their Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC), Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), school councils, and community organizations.

5. Project Activities

- The Recipient will work with their Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) to support projects that increase parent engagement.
- Projects must demonstrate a commitment to respecting the role of parents in students' educational experiences by working with parents or seeking parent input on how schools can improve in at least one of the following areas:
 - Providing a safe and welcoming school environment;
 - Maintaining open communication with teachers;
 - Respecting parents as valued partners within the education system in relation to decisions about their child's education; and,
 - Informing parents about the expectations of the Ontario Curriculum.
- Activities may include: support of school council projects, board-wide projects, or initiatives in partnership with community organizations.

6. Potential Outputs

- Projects identify and address local barriers to parent engagement are implemented through a variety of means which may include but are not limited to:
 - Parent resources
 - Parent engagement sessions
 - Parent information sessions
- Projects reflect the diversity of the school board's communities.
- Projects align with the Additional Provisions and Project Budget.

7. Outcomes:

- Parents have increased awareness of school activities and initiatives and improved perception of a welcoming school climate where parents' perspectives are encouraged, valued and heard.
- Parents are more involved in their local school environment and child's education.
- Parents experience fewer barriers to participation in their child's learning.

- Parents feel like valued partners in the education system.
- Parents have increased confidence in public education.
- Parents are provided with the knowledge, skills and tools they need to support their child's learning at home and at school.

8. Performance Measures

Performance measures are required in the Final Report and include:

- Who was consulted and involved in the allocation of the total funds (e.g., PIC, additional parent groups such as SEAC, IEC, school councils, community groups)?
- Project Details:
 - Project Title
 - Description
 - Location(s) and Date(s)
 - Funds Spent
 - Objectives
 - Number of Parents Impacted
 - Number and or percentage of parents who report having increased awareness of school activities as a result of the Project
 - Number and or percentage of parents who report feeling more comfortable in the school environment after the Project
 - Number and or percentage of parents who report learning new skills that will be beneficial to their child's learning and/or well-being as a result of the project/event

9. Developing a Plan for Allocation

The 2020-2021 school year presents many new parent involvement challenges. At the last PIC meeting, staff presented a report which identified a range of issues and invited some brainstorming. Some issues that were identified include:

- Parent needs and access to school are very different;
- Parents and students have identified well-being as a priority;
- School councils have been affected by these changes;
- Parents in OCV are creating new school councils;
- School Councils require support with virtual meetings;
- Issues of equity are a priority and we must better engage parents who traditionally face barriers to engagement;
- Translation needs are increasing; and
- Annual events such as the parent conference and school council training day need to be reimaged in a virtual context.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

10. This funding is specific and subject to detailed reporting restrictions. It will be important that any projects or activities can be clearly defined under this program. This funding could be supplemented with other budget funds for some activities, but there has to be clarity for reporting purposes.

During the 2020-2021 budget process, the Board allocated \$150,000 to support the funding of effective school councils across all schools and the work of an engaged Parent Involvement Committee to ensure it meets obligations regarding communications with School Councils and to “undertaking activities to help parents of pupils of the board support their children’s learning at home and at school.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

11. The guidelines encourage consultation with other advisory committees of the District and the Committee might want to discuss strategies for approaching this. A key challenge in this process is finding an efficient mechanism for consultation with the committees and school councils to ensure sufficient time is available to undertake any project and ensure the funds are spent and report is submitted in the required timeline.

DISCUSSION:

- A. What are some ways to consult with advisory committees and the community on this process?
- B. What did we learn from last year’s consultation which could inform our thinking?
- C. How do the unique circumstances of this school year impact the types of initiatives that might be undertaken to support parent engagement?
- D. What resources and supports do school councils need to be effective in 2020-2021? How might this impact communications and school council training?
- E. How can we bring an equity lens to the work of PIC? What specific actions and/or initiatives may help to better engage parents who traditionally face barriers to engagement?

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