

Ministry of Education

Minister

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Ministère de l'Éducation

Ministre

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January 28, 2015

Dear Parent Involvement Committee Chairs and Co-chairs,

I am pleased to extend an invitation to two parent members of each Parent Involvement Committee to attend the 6th Annual PIC Symposium in Toronto on April 24th and 25th, 2015. The Annual PIC Symposium brings together more than 200 dedicated and committed parents and ministry staff from across the province to discuss the importance of parent engagement to support student achievement and well-being in Ontario's education system.

Building on the success of previous symposia, and the valuable feedback from participants, the 2015 symposium will expand upon the elements that you told us were most useful. There will be a variety of sessions on topics of interest, including workshops to assist PIC members to reach out and engage more parents, and new tools and resources developed to support parent engagement. A wide array of informative table displays will provide parents with the opportunity to talk with ministry staff and fellow PIC members to learn about various initiatives, and to gather practical materials to help you share information with parents in your home boards. Participants can also engage in facilitated table discussions with parents from across the province and within their own regions about their shared experiences, successes, challenges and innovative ideas.

You will be contacted in the near future with more details about the Symposium.

I would like to take this opportunity to update you about some ministry initiatives to support your work engaging more parents in their children's education.

Parents Reaching Out Grants (PRO) continue to support parent engagement at the local level. Your leadership and support for this initiative are greatly appreciated. Since 2006, the government has awarded over 15,000 PRO grants to school councils and 568 regional/provincial grants; a total investment of over \$24 million. In 2014-15 we approved a total of 2,279 projects, representing a 98 per cent approval rate for school council applications, and the highest number of school council and regional/provincial initiatives funded since the grants' inception. We will notify you when the application period for the 2015/16 grant cycle opens so that you can continue outreach and support for school councils in your community.

Promoting well-being was a topic that resonated with participants during last year's Symposium. Working with all children and students to develop enhanced mental and physical health and a positive sense of self and belonging is important to their success.

We are very pleased to make you aware that the recently updated Foundations for a Healthy School resource has now been expanded to help schools and school boards, in partnership with parents and the community, create a learning environment that promotes well-being – one of four core goals for the system as outlined in [Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario](#). The updated Foundations for a Healthy School resource is now available for download from www.ontario.ca/healthyschools.

The Ministry of Education in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and TO2015 the organizing committee for the Games, launched Pan Am/Parapan Am Kids last year to support the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games. This initiative is designed to increase awareness of the 2015 Games by encouraging participation in a variety of sports/parasports, recreational and cultural activities. Activity Day Kits have also been developed. The bilingual kits are intended to bring the spirit of the Games to elementary and after-school programs across the province. To learn more please visit: www.ontario.ca/ppakids.

Applications for the Minister's Student Advisory Council (MSAC) are now open.

MSAC is a group of 60 students from across the province who share their ideas and provide advice to me on how to make Ontario's schools the best in the world. Students from our publicly funded schools in grades 7 to 12 can apply to become a member of MSAC. The council celebrates student diversity and reflects a variety of lived experiences. All students are welcome and encouraged to apply. Applications are due February 28, 2015, so please encourage students in your region to apply for membership. More information can be found at: www.ontario.ca/speakup

The Premier's Awards for Accepting Schools recognize safe and accepting schools teams across the province that have done exceptional and innovative work in creating a safe, inclusive and accepting school environment. Every safe and accepting schools team in the province is eligible for an award. This is your chance to recognize the work being done in your school to make it a better place to learn and grow, so I hope you will consider nominating your school's team. Nominations are now open and will be accepted until February 20, 2015. For more information, please visit: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/award.html>.

Thank you for your continued commitment and support of parent engagement in your board and community. I wish you a happy new year and look forward to seeing you in April.

Sincerely,



Liz Sandals
Minister

c: Directors of Education
Regional Office Leads