

Ministry of Education

Deputy Minister

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Sous-ministre

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September 2, 2011

Dear PIC Chairs and Co-Chairs,

We are all aware of the positive link between parent engagement and student achievement and well-being. A genuine partnership between parents and schools results in improved student achievement, reduced absenteeism, positive student behaviour, and increased confidence among parents in their children's schooling. In support of parent engagement activities, funding is provided to school boards with annual base funding of \$5000, plus 17 cents per student for a PIC, and an additional \$500 per school council.

The Parent Engagement Office continues to develop and implement initiatives that support learning and student achievement across the province. In 2010, the Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grant program received international recognition through a McKinsey & Company report analyzing high-achieving school systems across the world. The successful, innovative and grassroots PRO grant program sets Ontario apart from other provinces and countries by helping parents identify barriers and find local solutions to involve more parents in their children's education.

Since the inception of the PRO grant program in 2006, the ministry has invested nearly \$14 million, supporting more than 9,000 school council and regional/provincial projects. This year, 93 per cent of school council applications were approved, representing all 72 publicly funded school boards – the highest number and percentage of approvals ever. We are pleased with the strong interest shown by school council and PIC members who are working to involve more parents in their children's learning.

A practical and user-friendly handbook for PIC members was distributed to you in draft form on April 6, 2011. We hope that you will find it useful as you move through the transition phase to full implementation of the PIC mandate outlined in Regulation 612/00. Your feedback would be appreciated by November 30, 2011 using the survey form provided. The draft handbook, *Making a Difference: A Practical Handbook for Parent Involvement Committee Members*, can also be found online at:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/HandbookPIC.pdf> .

A Tool Kit for parents was sent to PICs in February, 2011. It was developed by the Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association (OPSOA), to support parents' important role of contributing to improved student achievement for their children. We hope you found the resource useful for enhancing parent engagement in your board. The material draws on broad consultation with PICs, parents and board personnel from across the province. The resource is also available at <http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/> .

During the consultation for the Tool Kit, many parents expressed an interest in a supplementary resource designed to support adolescents. Building on the success of the Parent Tool Kit, a supplement for parents of teenagers is being developed. It will be evidence-based and reflect the input of PICs, parents, and educators through extensive consultation across the province. The website <http://www.buildingparentengagement.com/> is still available if you wish to answer the questionnaire that is being used to gather input to shape this adolescent supplement.

Additionally, Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA) has developed an innovative new educational resource to enhance parent engagement in the province. *The Capsule Family Gets Involved* was introduced at the second annual PIC symposium and is designed for all parents, including newcomer parents and other members of the education sector in Ontario. Two copies of the resource on DVD, including closed captioned versions of the animations, and accompanying discussion guides, will be sent to directors of education with the request that one copy be shared with the PIC. It may be used by PICs, school councils, school staff, board staff, and others with an interest in enhancing parent engagement in support of student achievement and well-being. The Capsule Family resource is available at <http://www.infocopa.com/capen.html>.

Thank you for your strong participation in this year's PIC symposium. Your energy, great ideas, and important reflections not only led to rich and vibrant discussion reinforcing the key role of parents and their importance in supporting student achievement and well-being, but also allowed everyone to discover commonalities among their boards, and to learn from each other's experiences. We value your comments about the symposium provided through the on-line survey, and will use this feedback to plan future events.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the Canada Learning Bonds, and to thank you for encouraging eligible parents to take advantage of the program. This Government of Canada program helps encourage early saving for post-secondary education by providing \$500.00 plus an additional \$100.00 per year up to age 15. To be eligible a parent must be in receipt of the National Child Benefit Supplement as part of the Canada Child Tax Benefit, and their child must be born after December 31, 2003. Additional information can be found on the Government of Canada website at <http://www.canlearn.ca/eng/saving/clb/index.shtml>

I hope that you have enjoyed the summer break. As we move forward to another successful school year, I thank you for your commitment to supporting and encouraging parent engagement in support of student achievement and well-being.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. Costante', written in a cursive style.

Kevin Costante
Deputy Minister of Education

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